Hmong's Search For a Homeland
Service Workers Struggle at CAL
Injustices Against Muslim Chaplain Yee
The OC's Bleaching Effect
Queer People of Color
The most significant detail about Berkeley’s recent APIA “Rock the Vote” movement was the spankin new letter added to our beloved acronym. Where did that come from!! Born on democratic soil and the land of fifty stars (not five) gives me the right to vote and an extra “A” tacked on to my category of choice. Yeahhh 4.0!

Oh if politics were that easy. The fight against apathy is still going strong, both on our campus and the national front. This time, it’s led by Mark Allen, director of a movie trailer calling itself a PSA and featuring all the familiar APIA young actors aged 18-35. Airing on MTV, the network of choice for all young Asians, the ad gives us the usual pathetic numbers and dares us: “you can change that. Choose or lose.”

But what attracts Asians most to this ad in particular (because Justin Timberlake wouldn’t have the same effect), are the computer graphic backdrops, kung-fu fighting, and anime-esque crying females that glorify Asian cinema in the United States. Of course this would trigger any red-blooded Asian male to pause Naruto and haul ass to the nearest APIA registration table because Kelly Hu said so. Egad, what were they thinking?

Aside from being portrayed as a sultry and kick butt Asian American female on TV, the most alluring aspects of Rock the Vote are the trends. Stats can lie, but unfortunately this campus does not. As a substantial number of Asian Americans at the university which blazed the phrase “free speech” we are a sad, pathetic lot when it comes to the world beyond our bubble. The very least time-consuming route of activism we could possibly do is fill out a form and push buttons on a computer. But, you ask, why bother?

At the presidential level, California is pretty much decided, unless Orange County enforces a ban on abortions and consequently overpopulates. My backup plan is simply to cancel out my dad’s vote with my own. But electoral votes aside, there are officials at the state and local level and propositions that shovel our money around. My backup plan is simply to cancel out my dad’s vote with my own. But electoral votes aside, there are officials at the state and local level and propositions that shovel our money around. My backup plan is simply to cancel out my dad’s vote with my own. But electoral votes aside, there are officials at the state and local level and propositions that shove...

But if you still need an academic reason to get out there and be heard, boning up on current events really floors those grad school interviewers and you can always ask for extra credit for an “I Voted” sticker.

tina pattaratornkosohn
hb story editor
ANSWERING THE DEMAND FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

by donna ho

Only rarely do we see Asian American history taught in the elementary to high school curriculum. U.S. History barely glosses over the experiences of Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, not to mention those of Pilipinos, South Asians, and Southeast Asians. Growing up in San Francisco and being surrounded by such a large community of Asian Americans, it was obvious what the history books lacked. If you were lucky, you would see a paragraph. If not, then maybe a few sentences. We are left with a skewed perspective of the history of the United States and a curriculum that the school board places a high value on. In an increasingly diverse country, this can become problematic. It is imperative to understand the histories of not only the various ethnic groups that have contributed to the development of the United States, but also to recognize the diversity in the API communities.

In recent years, the API community has had the second largest population growth, producing a trend of increasing interest and demand for Asian American Studies across the nation. However, the fight for recognition in the academic world has not been an easy one. The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a multiracial coalition formed in the 60s, involved students and activists who took an active role in the fight for diversity in education and demanded an Ethnic Studies department in the university. As a result, San Francisco State and U.C. Berkeley became the first to have the Ethnic Studies programs, which now house Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Native American Studies. The students fundamentally reshaped higher education through these strikes and soon many other schools followed their example. However, over the period of three decades, the administration was on the verge of cutting programs, funding, and resources. Therefore, a new TWLF was formed in 1999 and in the spirit of the original TWLF they organized another strike due to the budget cuts in the Ethnic Studies department, demanding for a multicultural center, eight new spaces for ethnic studies faculty, a mural space to celebrate Ethnic Studies, and much needed funding for the department.

It has been five years since the 1999 strikes, and the multicultural center has yet to be opened. The proposed location, Heller Lounge in the MLK building on campus, will replace the temporary multicultural center at the Cesar Chavez Student Center. The funding of the multicultural center has still not been negotiated beyond the $126,000 for renovation, but the cost to keep the center running, will definitely be more. The demand for a diverse education and the struggles of the TWLF, which led to the formation of the Asian American Studies programs are an ongoing battle. Currently the funding for the Ethnic Studies department is not enough for the programs to continue for very long. However, of now, Asian American Studies still has a lot to offer its students. The curriculum has remained steady and strong with the devoted passion of professors and lecturers.

One of the courses that is usually offered at least once a year is Asian American Studies 20A, the gateway to all the upper division Asian American Studies classes here at Cal. The History of Asians in the United States is an introductory course that is a must. This class will lead students on a historical journey. In an interesting location, Heller Lounge in the MLK building on campus, will replace the temporary multicultural center at the Cesar Chavez Student Center. The funding of the multicultural center has still not been negotiated beyond the $126,000 for renovation, but the cost to keep the center running, will definitely be more. The demand for a diverse education and the struggles of the TWLF, which led to the formation of the Asian American Studies programs are an ongoing battle. Currently the funding for the Ethnic Studies department is not enough for the programs to continue for very long. However, of now, Asian American Studies still has a lot to offer its students. The curriculum has remained steady and strong with the devoted passion of professors and lecturers.

This course introduces students to films and videos by and about Asian Americans; presents an overview of the development of the Asian American film, literature, and theory. Upper division courses offer a more in depth focus into the Asian American experience, from a specific history to gender, film, literature, technology, and even sports. With a closer look at the different ethnic groups in the API community, students are able to distinguish and learn about the heterogeneity among the API community. Listed below are descriptions of upper division courses that are offered this spring. Various other upper division courses are also offered during the Fall, so students have a wide array of classes they can take.

(181) Chinese American Literature
This course analyzes literary representations of contemporary and/or historical experiences of Chinese Americans; genre, formal, and stylistic features; definition of cultural identity and development of literary tradition. Primarily English-language works, some translations from Chinese.

(183) Korean American Literature
Critical readings of major Korean American literary work, including autobiography and personal memoir, autobiographical fiction, poetry, short stories and novel, with attention to conditions surrounding the production and consumption of these writings.

(150) Gender and Generation in Asian American Families
This course examines the influence of cultural legacy, ethnic background, immigration history, community structure, class and economic status, and racism on gender and generational relations in the Asian American family.

(125) Contemporary Issues of Southeast Asian Refugees in U.S.
This course introduces students to the socio-cultural, economic, educational, and political issues facing Southeast Asian refugees in the U.S. While the course focus is on the Asian American experience, references will be made to the pre-migration experiences and histories of the Southeast Asian refugee groups. The processes and problems in the formulation of refugee programs and services in the U.S. also will be addressed in their implications for refugee resettlement and adaptation experience. Emphasis will be placed on comparative analyses of the Southeast Asian refugee communities.

(127) South Asian American Historical and Contemporary Issues
This course examines immigration and social history of South Asian Americans from the early 20th century to present, discussing the development of South Asian American communities within the social, political and economic contexts of South Asia and the U.S.

(165) Research Methodologies in Asian American Communities
This course offers different approaches to research in the Asian American community, with emphasis on the San Francisco Bay Area. Problems of research design, measurement, and data collection, processing, and analysis will be considered.

(171) Asian Americans in Film and Video
This course introduces students to films and videos by and about Asian Americans; presents an overview of the development of the Asian American media arts field in relation to current cultural theories and American film history and theory.

(190) Seminars on Advanced Topics in Asian American Studies
Lec 1: Chinese Americans in Science and Technology. Limit 30.

(121) Chinese American History
This course covers Chinese American history from 1848 to present, discussing influence of traditional values, Eastern and Western; patterns of immigration and settlement; labor history; the influence of public policy, foreign and domestic, on the Chinese individual and community.

(123) Korean American History
This course covers the history of Koreans in America from 1876 to the present, discussing comparative immigration and settlement patterns; labor and socio-economic life; political activities; community organization; and issues related to the contemporary population influx.

Prof. Elaine Kim

Prof. Michael Omi

Prof. Ronald Takaki
The identity of two Southeast Asian groups also known as “hilltribe people” has become blurred during their history of continual displacement. The Hmong and Mien are two groups that have continually endured waves of war and conflict with no escape. They are the original inhabitants of Chinh and Southeast Asia and fought against the continual waves of constant flights from China to Southeast Asia and later to the United States as war refugees. The Hmong and the Mien came to America under similar circumstances. Although both groups have been in the United States for more than twenty years they have begun to address common problems and issues through a shared culture.

A NO on this proposition would not affect the state’s existing law on accessing information. A YES on this proposition would give Californians the constitutional right of access to governmental funds to reimburse physicians and hospitals for uncompensated emergency and trauma care and to advance to the general elections. A NO on this proposition would not affect the state’s current authority over local government finance.

The migrant peoples lived in Laos as they did in China. Even though they had little contact with people outside of their isolated villages, they were still despised and labeled as “outsiders.” Their lifestyles remained nearly unchanged for about a century and a half until the 1950s and 1960s. Laos became engulfed in the Vietnam War. The United States saw the strategic value of the hilltribes in Laos and recruited them as anticomunist forces. They were trained and equipped as guerrilla soldiers with modern weapons and equipment. Because they knew the terrain—their language, culture, and history—well, many Hmong and Mien people fought alongside the U.S. against communist forces in Laos. This fateful relationship ultimately led to tragic losses and further dispossession.

The losses from the Vietnam War were staggering. Shortly before the end of the war, about one-third of the Laotian-Hmong population perished. Hmong villages turned into battlefields, forcing many to flee once again. The Hmong were left stranded without immediate aid from the United States and they lived in constant fear of the communist armies. Fearing for their lives, many Hmong families were forced to migrate from “Mountain” to “Plain” areas of Laos. Another 50,000 Hmong people perished from the chemical warfare in the Phu Bia region along the napalm and chemically destroyed the crops, and caused massive starvation. Hmong rebels were forced to join other Hmong refugees in Thailand. They risked their lives as they tried to trek across the borders into Thailand for asylum.

The Hmong and Mien people hoped for safety in Thailand. Even in Thailand, the indigenous groups were relocated and continued to experience displacement with no escape. They are the original inhabitants of Chinh and Southeast Asia and the contentions of constant flights from China to Southeast Asia and respectively to the United States as war refugees. The Hmong and the Mien came to America under similar circumstances. Although both groups have been in the United States for more than twenty years they have begun to address common problems and issues through a shared culture.

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A couple of weeks ago, guest speaker Peter Tadao Gee, a former hardboiler himself, made me think twice about my knowledge of Asian American history. It was a Wednesday evening in 85 Evans where fellow hardboilers had gathered for our weekly meeting. Peter started the meeting with a game in which each of us picked a date that was important to us. I had simply chosen my birthday; it was the only thing I could think of at the time. However, the rest of the hardboilers chose much more meaningful dates and events such as their first Christmas celebrated in the United States and their first eye opening experiences.

With these dates and others, we made a timeline that chronicled not just our own special dates, but critical events and legislation that have impacted Asian Americans, from the past to the present. What I had assumed to be a simple date game of “what-year-was-the-Chinese-Exclusion-Act” was actually a revelation in understanding the emergence of Asian Americans and their trials and tribulations in the United States. Perhaps, this was my eye opener.

I quickly picked up the obvious ones: 1862, Chinese Exclusion Act; 1882, Vincent Chin murder case; 1992 Rodney King verdict and the Los Angeles riots. But then again, I realized that I had only learned about these issues a year ago, and it wasn’t through high school social science courses that these events and legislations had been instilled in my head. It was through my own interest, my own time and effort actively researching a history that affects my life every single day, which provided what brief history I knew about Asian Americans. But there was still so much that I didn’t know, so much that I yearned to know.

As a Berkeley student, I was used to overlooking the fact that Asian American Studies classes were relatively available. It seemed natural that these courses were accessible and on hand—after all, wasn’t I going to a school that had a large percentage of students that classified themselves as being of Asian descent? I could even call myself a

My lack of knowledge is a burning question: If I were to come to UC Berkeley, would there be the opportunity or even a major to pursue my interest? And the answer is no. For me, and many others, the hunger for knowledge is changing. Slowly programs like Ethnic Studies are being expanded to include African American, Native American, Chicano and Asian American studies. It’s legitimate. But why are Native American, Chicano, and Asian American Studies lumped together to form one Ethnic Studies department? What constitutes the legitimacy of that? The answer certainly isn’t simple or clear but instead, it raises more issues.

According to Professor Harvey Dong, “Strike tactics involved informational picketing, blocking of campus entrances, mass rallies, and teach-ins.” Also common during the year of TWLF included arrests and police brutality against the students actively participating in this demonstration. At one point, even troops from the National Guard stationed themselves on the UC Berkeley campus. After the tear gas stopped and negotiations were made, Berkeley (and SFSU) found their campuses with an Ethnic Studies Department.

While some students have only recently begun to embrace an Ethnic Studies type major, especially in regards to Asian American Studies, other university campuses all over the nation are struggling to keep these programs alive and well funded. We are in what seems like a never-ending struggle to legitimize the importance and necessity of the Ethnic Studies Department, which represents Chicano Studies, Asian American Studies, and Native American Studies. How can something so potent to students be under constant attack?

Just five years ago at Berkeley, in 1999 (only 30 years after the actual formation of Ethnic Studies), the Ethnic Studies Department faced threats of extinction. Barrows Hall was occupied; hunger strikes and protests filled the Berkeley campus as many were arrested for expressing their desire to have an Ethnic Studies department. After twenty-four days of striking and protesting, negotiations were made with former Chancellor Berdahl. According to Adam Ritscher of Youths In Action, “Berdahl backed down and agreed to funding, faculty, and office space for the Ethnic Studies department. The hunger strike was then ended and victory was proclaimed.”

But, whether or not the victory was going to be long-lasting was an entirely different issue. Ethnic Studies continuously faces various threats that may shut it down. This isn’t what TWLF students fought for; this isn’t why so many have dedicated their time and energy just to see a fundamental department wither away. The University as well as the general public needs to wake up—we won’t ever give up on our Ethnic Studies.

It’s important to note that African American Studies is actually a separate department from Ethnic Studies. What seemed like a combined effort from the TWLF, somehow, maintained a hunger separate entity for the sole purpose of African American Studies. It’s legitimate. But why are Native American, Chicano, and Asian American Studies lumped together to form one Ethnic Studies department? What constitutes the legitimacy of that? The answer certainly isn’t simple or clear but instead, it raises more issues with Ethnic Studies.

However, there is still hope. With the spread of Asian American Studies across university campuses, one can envision that soon, rather than later, more schools will follow this trend, set by the brave TWLF students in the ‘60s to create Ethnic Studies (which include Asian American Studies) programs. Otherwise, this generation may need to form its own coalition demanding our rights to learn about our history.
Service Workers Struggle

by Kristina Oranaza

The University of California at Berkeley attracts many university employees with its academic prestige, reputation, and its rich history of social movements for progressive and liberal values. Service workers, most of whom are minority and immigrant workers, are drawn to this university with hopes of opportunities to engage in cultural, intellectual, and academic community. They are food service workers, custodians, parking attendants, shuttle drivers, and buildings and grounds maintenance workers, drawn to the prospect of job stability and good benefit packages for their families. But in the past two years, despite increases in the cost of living in the Bay Area, the university has not increased their wages. In fact, over the past decade, many workers have received less than a 2% raise. Instead of feeling included as part of the campus community of students, professors, and administrators, many service workers “feel invisible” on this campus.

On Friday afternoon, October 15th, 2004, more than 200 people rallied on Sproul Plaza in support of low wage service workers at UC Berkeley. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) organized the rally in collaboration with other university, student, faculty, and community members in support of university service staff. AFSCME represents over 7,000 UC service and clerical workers across fourteen campuses, which includes all nine UC campuses and their five affiliate medical centers. The rally took place in the midst of a standoff in wage negotiations between university management and UC Berkeley service workers. For the past two years, service workers have not received a pay increase, and once again this year the university claims there are insufficient funds for wage increases. With inflation up 6.95% over the past two years, workers have taken a considerable pay cut. Three buses full of UC service workers from the eight other UC campuses and five medical centers came in support of UC Berkeley service workers to demand an end to corporateization and poverty wages at our university.

More than 7,000 UC service workers across California have been working without a contract since June 30, 2004, when the last fiscal year’s contract expired. The UC management has since rejected the UC Berkeley workers’ proposals to improve working conditions through a wage increase that meets Berkeley’s living wage. The workers demand a fair increase in wages, an increase that California Budget Project (CBP) reports have shown are necessary for living in the Bay Area. The City of Berkeley’s living wage as of October 2003 is $15.75/hour. CBP reports that 66% of UC Berkeley food service workers, and 20% of all service workers make less than this per hour.

In 2001, along with a team of student volunteers and academic advisors, UC Berkeley postdoctoral graduate students directed an extensive study in which they investigated wage, health, and safety issues, as well as service/clerical worker relations with university supervisors. The thirty-one page report, titled Berkeley’s Betrayal, was published earlier this year. Much of the urgency of the rally was inspired from the results of this study, which documents persistent problems concerning unjust stagnant wages, lack of opportunities for promotion, and lack of communication between top university administrators and service workers on the Berkeley campus as found through sixty-three in-depth interviews with UC Berkeley employees.

As the rally began, students and academics flocked to educate the rest of the Berkeley community of the poor wages and working conditions on campus, mobilize union and student support for the service workers to gain leverage in negotiations with university administrators, and hold the University accountable for improving university employees’ wages and working conditions. The report also details issues of inadequate transportation and parking space for workers, and personal stories of families struggling to survive on meager wages. The authors report an inadequate system of checks and balances for workers to evaluate their supervisors and ensure that supervisors are not exploiting workers or abusing authority.

Michael Fonseca, a worker and a union member of the Coalition of University Employees (CUE), expressed how important this rally was for the current negotiations with university management. “What you’re seeing here is a lot of militancy, which is good because we need to be strong and persistent in making these demands to the UC administration. Rallies are a strong step, but in the end, the only way to get what we want will be to strike.” He urged the need for unity with all seven unions on campus, and stressed, “This is a worker struggle, and it’s the same thing.” Fonseca clarified that this rally was to give support to AFSCME workers on campus, but he hoped that all the other unions that represent various workers on campus unite.

The most common concerns expressed among the people I interviewed at the rally were the needs for increased wages that at least meet Berkeley’s living wage, more respect from their supervisors, and the need for more union support in providing opportunities for their own children’s higher education.

Three of the five people I talked with were parents who were deeply concerned with higher education for their children. The answers that workers have when their kids want to go to the UCs, but it’s just too expensive.” He continues, “They [university supervisors and administrators] don’t answer our questions when we call them. Eventually they ignore us. We’re trying to make a point here that we’re not playing around.”

Deborah, an African-American woman with the Patient Care Technicians (PCT) from UC San Francisco, filled me in on the background situation of the negotiations and why the rally was organized. She said that PCT was able to get a raise from their university, but her colleagues and she were compelled to come to Berkeley because university management has repeatedly told workers here that they have no more money to provide a raise for service workers. She argues that it has not been an issue of lack of funds, but rather an issue of the university’s indifference to the well-being of families of dedicated service workers. Wages for service workers have remained the same over the past two years, while salaries of top university administrators have increased significantly. In June 2003, UC Senior Vice President Joseph Mullin received a $75,000 annual raise. Earlier this year, UC Provost Marc Greenwood was granted a $111,000 raise, and our new chancellor, Chancellor Robert Birgeneau, received a $75,000 raise over former Chancellor Robert Berdahl.

After the rally, as hundreds of supporters from other UC campuses walked back to their buses, I talked to two women from UCLA. Marta, a South American woman who has been working at UCLA for over a decade, explained how she struggled to pay her daughter’s way through a UC education. When her daughter enrolled at this campus, Marta had hoped that her daughter would be eligible for partial financial waivers since Marta had at that point already been a university employee for several years. Marta said that as a university employee, her dependents were eligible for financial waivers. To her dismay, the university claimed she did not qualify for financial assistance. Dina, an Armenian woman whose daughter currently attends another UC, detailed a similar story of her efforts to finance her daughter’s higher education. She explained, “They [the university] rose parking fees so now we have to pay more parking, they rose health care, even the complementary/discounted meals we used to get from the cafeteria were cut. Now we have to pay as much as the students for food. They rose everything except for the payroll.”

In Berkeley’s Betrayal, Grace Dunham, Amy Sorket, and Other Sharpone document personal testimonies of workers who have dedicated years to this campus, whose stories greatly mirror the experiences of the individuals I talked to at the rally. Through their extensive interviews with service workers, they raise awareness of the increasingly debilitating wage and working conditions on our campus, but they also remind us that these poor conditions are not exclusive to UC Berkeley. They remind us that UC Berkeley is not the only university with these issues.

The names of the interviewees in this article have been changed for purposes of confidentiality. For more information on Berkeley’s Betrayal, please visit: www.berkeleybetrayal.org.
Philosopher George Santayana once said that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Perhaps, then, on September 10, 2003, when Captain James J. Yee was arrested, America had forgotten the story of Dr. Wen Ho Lee. If this is the unfortunate case, then a retelling seems to be in order.

Wen Ho Lee was born in Taiwan in 1939. He became an American citizen in 1974. Years later, with a doctorate from Texas A & M University, he began work as a nuclear scientist at a laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico. He had been working there for twenty years when he was arrested for suspected espionage in December of 1999. Dr. Lee was slapped with fifty-nine counts of “mishandling classified information.” If found guilty, he faced thirty life sentences. All this was the result of Dr. Lee’s having downloaded CIA information on diskettes (which were later misplaced) at his internet-accessible, home computer.

Around this time, a similar case involving former CIA director, John Deutch, had been underway. Deutch, a white male, had similarly misplaced and transferred restricted material onto an internet-linked computer. He received the proverbial slap on the wrist, was never arrested, and was later given a presidential pardon. In contrast, Dr. Lee had been chained and sent to solitary confinement for nine months. Even after federal Judge James A. Parker cleared him of all charges, Lee was never given an executive apology. A petition demanding presidential pardon for Lee (which you can happily add your John Hancock to at http://www.petitiononline.com/) continues to circulate. Why the differences in the two cases?

Federal authorities justified the stringent security measures, saying that they were enforced to ensure that Lee would not be pillaged or disarmed in the country in a “Ninja-style commando raid,” writes Eileen Welsome of Denver’s Westwood newspaper. Japanese ninjas coming to the aid of a Taiwanese nuclear scientist?!

Unfortunately, Dr. Lee is not the first Asian American to be racially profiled, and even more disheartening by his root. Perhaps to maintain some sort of tactical edge, the United States had been supplying Taiwan, a foreigner. Yee’s faith and practice as a Muslim marked him a suspect-traitor in the eyes of post-9/11 dispeled the ideal of an “invincible America.” The fear that bloomed like an atomic mushroom cloud on September 11, 2001, engulfed the whole country in a “Ninja-style commando raid,” writes Eileen Welsome of Denver’s Westwood newspaper. Japanese ninjas coming to the aid of a Taiwanese nuclear scientist?

On September 21, 2004, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations to voice Japan’s desire and right to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This was Japan’s latest desperate attempt to obtain a permanent seat along with other UN members including India, Germany, and Brazil who currently are not on the security council. If Japan wins, it will become a permanent member of the Security Council, which will interfere with their responsibility as a permanent member. This interference can even be seen by the other’s bill, it might be viewed as an attack out of personal interest. This can potentially cause hostility between countries.

Furthermore, he mentions how Japan is providing 21 million dollars of humanitarian aid in Darfur, a region in Sudan where Muslim militants are fighting and driving Black Africans out of Sudan in order to ethnically cleanse Sudan of non-Muslims. Japan is also providing help to Southeast Asian countries to develop a stable and growing economy.
Honestly, how many of you watch soap opera primetime television and enjoy it? For many people it is a guilty pleasure as they tune in every Thursday night to watch a new episode of The OC, as they truly are. It is all fictional anyway, and are you really not happy with what you know if fans and Marissa will get back together even though Theresa may be pregnant with Ryan’s baby or if Seth will come back from sailing the Pacific Ocean and stay with Summer. You don’t have to hide the fact that you are completely and hopeless obsessed with this type of television. You can quit providing the visage to your friends that you are one of the few who will not sell out to mainstream television.

For those of you who are not familiar with The OC, is about a guy, who has the bad boy image working for him, from Orange County (The Cohens) because his brother is in jail and his mother abandoned him. He sticks out like a sore thumb, and quickly develops a crush on one of the most popular girls in school who already has a boyfriend. And I’m sure you can tell what the rest of the show is about. Drama, love, money, parties, etc., etc., etc. 

Last year when I lived in the dorms, my whole floor would get together every Wednesday night to watch The OC together as a kind of “OC Party.” Sounds pathetic, right? But seriously, we would all meet in the common room and watch in silence, and if anyone tried to talk during the show we would all shush them. During the commercials we would recap and give commentary on what just happened; the attention we gave to this show could have qualified it a decal class.

Laguna Beach is another show that focuses on the high school lives of upper class white teens. This show is not as fitting just because it is part reality and rather petty. The basic concept is that two girls are fighting over one guy and one day, in the not too distant future, they are going to realize that they both do not need him.

But until recently I never realized that for some people shows like The OC and Laguna Beach are really only about rich white people’s lives, who have nothing better to do but have parties every week and throw around cash on things that they do not really need. It has become apparent to me that there aren’t on these shows. The place in Orange specifically Newport everyone is in is made up a 1% Latinos make up a 14% and 30 % of the population, respectively, but none of them are portrayed in the show. They are not even given supporting roles. So where are all of the people of color and any other underrepresented? Asian-Americans make up 3% of the Newport population and 2% of the Laguna beach population. These figures may sound small, but it would not hurt to show a face of color every now. Even if people of color were given temporary roles or guest appearances it would add to the diversity of the show. For those of you who are die hard fans, Teresa is a rather inaccurate portrayal of diversity. Her real ethnicity is South Asian/Indian, but in the show she plays a Latina. And, of course, she plays the stereotype of an undereducated pregnant single mother in Chino. Even though she is a South Asian in real life her both her race and ethnicity is masked by the character she plays. Cities like Buena Park, Irvine, and Westminster have Asian populations of 14.5%, 18%, and 23%. Westminster is a predominant Asian American community, and houses the largest concentration of Vietnamese Americans in the United States. It is famous for Little Saigon where there are shops, restaurants, and markets catering to Asian shoppers.

One could argue that these are only T.V. shows and it is not really important if they represent people of color or they truly are. It is all fictional anyway, and are you not happy with what you know if fans and Marissa will get back together even though Theresa may be pregnant with Ryan’s baby or if Seth will come back from sailing the Pacific Ocean and stay with Summer. You don’t have to hide the fact that you are completely and hopeless obsessed with this type of television. You can quit providing the visage to your friends that you are one of the few who will not sell out to mainstream television. For those of you who are not familiar with The OC, is about a guy, who has the bad boy image working for him, from Orange County (The Cohens) because his brother is in jail and his mother abandoned him. He sticks out like a sore thumb, and quickly develops a crush on one of the most popular girls in school who already has a boyfriend. And I’m sure you can tell what the rest of the show is about. Drama, love, money, parties, etc., etc., etc.

So why are some people obsessed with shows like The OC and Laguna Beach? Here is a theory that may not apply to everyone, but it makes sense. People enjoy drama and gossip. It is interesting and fun to talk about as long as the drama is not happening to you. With shows like this, the audience is able to engage in the events of other people’s lives from the outside. Ryan may be torn between staying with Marissa in Orange County where he is able to escape from his past, but we do not have to deal with his dilemma. We merely watch from the sidelines and are able to comment on where he should go next and give commentary on what just happened; the attention we gave to this show could have qualified it a decal class.

The overwhelming whiteness of television’s Orange County
by veronica louie

Coolest asian ever?

Japan’s design hero heads to the US.
by kris capello
Pow! Drunken Master. Ha-daal! Snake In the Eagle’s Shadows. Hai-ya! Drunken Master 2! Kapow, kapow! Police Story! Kick-to-nuts! Rumble In the Bronx. Uh oh... The Tuxedo. Ugh gaah! Around the World In 80 Days... Whether or not the API community likes it, Jackie Chan is our ambassador to the rest of America. His successes are our successes, and his failures are our failures. Just think back to 1998, and the time you had trouble hearing what someone was saying. “Pardon me, I did not quite catch what you just said my good man. The boisterous traffic behind us muffled our intellectually engaging conversation.” Which would be responded with the aggravating Rush Hour quote, “Can yoooon-der-stand the words that are com-ing out of my mouth?” Jackie Chan has redeemed himself, sort of. Chan was recently quoted in an interview in a Singapore newspaper, The Straits Times, saying:

“I’ve been seeking a breakthrough for many years. I’ve always wanted to change, to become a real actor, like Robert De Niro. I don’t want to be seen as an action hero anymore. I mean, how long can I continue doing that? Of course, I know what everyone expects when they go to watch a Jackie Chan movie. You can’t even do one stunt less. But now I just want to try something different.

Ever since Rumble In the Bronx was dubbed, shipped, and screened to American audiences in 1995, the Asian martial arts genre has never looked back. America had never seen so many Asian faces in a single film since Bruce Lee karate chopped his way through a thousand inscrutable Asian henchmen in Enter the Dragon. Jackie Chan re-opened the doors to American cinema after Lee’s death, for actions stars such as Chow Yun Fat, Jet Li, and Sammo Hung. However these are all actors who started their careers in Asia. It is primarily because of their Asian background that they were accepted to star in leading roles in American films. However it is not solely because of their extraordinary martial arts skills and abilities that they are cast in American films. Rather, it is because they maintain the undying image of Asians as foreign. America has never been presented with Asians beyond Asian faces playing characters from foreign countries. These martial arts action actors are representative of all Asians in their movies. What I mean by this is that Asian Americans are viewed as Asians from Asia. Asian Americans are not Americans to America because of the images of “Asian-ness” portrayed by these imported actors. This all leads back to Jackie Chan being the ambassador of the API community, and how he speaks for the community through his films. When he acts, it is with martial arts that he expresses himself, which implies a shallow character who is often confined to a simple premise. Chan’s films send a message to Hollywood that Asian and API actors are only capable of success through the martial arts genre. Asian and API actors have seldomly showcased their skills through any lead characters that have real, raw, and deep emotions, in any recent American films. Why is it that white actors in the 2003 film Lost In Translation, have to fly all the way to Japan to tell a story about emotions of loneliness, isolation, self-reflection and self-discovery, when those emotions are equally prevalent amongst non-white, non-English speaking, naturalized immigrants in white American communities? The answer is simple, white people identify with other white people, but to be fair Asian Americans tend to identify with other Asian Americans. But why then are Asian Americans being identified as Asians from Asia when many Asian Americans do not solely identify with an Asian culture? Again the answer is simple, Asian Americans look just like Asian actors in the films that America watches. Therefore all APIs must all be karate experts.

People identify and relate to what is familiar to them, and for the average American moviegoer, white and black actors are the most represented faces. In fact, people most of the time expect the lead actor to be white. The diversity of roles for white actors is limitless, but the diversity of roles for APIs are limited because anything beyond the martial arts action genre is something seldomly seen, and is overshadowed by the familiar image of Asian actors as martial artists.

Martial arts actions films are what sell in America, and until an actor with an Asian face is given the chance to take on a Robert De Niro-like role, there will continue to be limited diversity in roles for Asians and APIs in American films. Its like the old saying goes, “If it ain’t broken, don’t fix it.” It will be very difficult for Chan to break away from his typecasted role as a goofy cop who kicks butt, because his films continue to make money. If Chan truly wants to expand his horizons, he will have to accept that there is no chance in hell that he can ever be like Robert De Niro in an American film, which he has recognized by stating:

“It’s very hard to find a script which suits me [Jackie Chan] in Hollywood. I’ve rejected so many projects because I didn’t like the scripts. There was this one where I have to play a cop who takes care of seven kids, sort of like The Sound of Music. It’s all the same: cop from Hong Kong, cop from China. Jet Li, Chow Yun Fat, and I face the same problem in Hollywood. Our roles are so limited. Even if they gave me a script like Forrest Gump or Saving Private Ryan, I couldn’t do that. My English is not good enough.”

The martial arts genre continues to make a good amount of money at the box office. There is little incentive for Hollywood to change. On the other hand, Asian and API actors have never been given the opportunity to play lead characters in dramas without having to swing a sword or kill someone to show that they can make successful films in the drama genre. It is a Catch-22 for API actors.

The question then becomes, “How does the community show that it can tackle dramatic roles and still be a successful money-maker?” For starters, we can do it by preventing Jackie Chan from trying to impersonate Robert De Niro, and support him in doing quality drama films in Hong Kong. The API actors should have also have a shot at the dramatic roles in America. As the ambassador for the Asian and API community to Hollywood, Jackie Chan’s words need strength and legitimacy. Towards the end of his interview, the reporter asked Chan:

Your last few Hollywood movies - Around The World In 80 Days, The Medallion, and Shanghai Knights - were not major hits. What went wrong? So are you done with Hollywood? No, I’m doing Rush Hour III next year. I went to Hollywood because they invited me, not because I wanted to go there. Making movies in the United States gives me a sense of achievement, but there is no sense of superiority. Yes, I get treated like a king over there, but I’m not happy. I get frustrated when I see them doing things the wrong way, but I can’t say anything. In Hong Kong, I treat myself like shit, but I’m in full control. Still, we need the Hollywood experience because the American market is so much bigger.

If Chan is going to make statements that he needs to diversify his roles as an actor, there is not much value to his words if he continues to make action films such as the upcoming Rush Hour sequel. What he says will resonate within the American film industry, but what he does will keep money from the pockets of Hollywood bigwigs. If he had turned downhill his lucrative role in Rush Hour 3 for the reasons he told the Straits Times, then the Asian and API acting communities would be making some progress. He is our ambassador whether we like it or not. There is a need for representation beyond the martial arts genre, and representation that reflects the entire Asian Pacific Islander American community and its emerging East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander American actors.

Chan has opened the door for API actors, now let API actors walk through the door, to open a new door for Asian actors in American films. Dramatic roles provide the needed forum where Asian American actors can show that Asians are Americans. The API community are not all cops from Hong Kong and China or Kung Fu masters out for revenge. There is more to the API community than Shaolin death grips and spinning karate kicks, and it is the API community’s burden to express it.
In the mass-produced gay culture that we see in our contemporary media, gay men are often defined as middle-class, well-groomed, flamboyant white men. For those of you who have been brainwashed by Queer Eye for the Straight Guy or Will and Grace, this particular definition might ring a bell. The experiences of people of color in the gay community are often overlooked.

Mass media, such as television, movies, and magazines, have often promoted a predominant white-standardization of the gay community. How often do you see a gay person of color allowed to tell his side of the story, of how it would be like to grow up gay and Asian? Beneath all the glitz and glamour of the media’s portrayal of gay culture, there lie hidden stories of gay people of color and their struggles to cope with their dual-identities in a society that already discriminates them for the color of their skin. Until these stories are told, gay people of color will forever be placed beneath the white veil and will continue to be annoyed by not only mass media but also by society at large.

Well, with that said, here is my story...

Growing up Chinese and gay in the United States is not an easy thing to do; this dual identity not only means breaking social-cultural norms within the Chinese community, but also struggling with racial discrimination and homophobia within society. I live in a household that constantly reminds me that gay people are mentally ill and socially incorrect. I live within a society that constantly reminds me of how I do not belong because of my skin color. I live within a society that generally rejects homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Through these struggles, I have learned to live separately; living in and out day worrying about what my parents would think of me, about how people would judge me in ways or another, and, at the same time, about how I need to keep in line with my Chinese upbringing. However, nothing could have prepared me for what I experienced one fateful day, the day that my world came crashing down on me.

On October 27, 2000, on the front steps of Thurgood Marshall Academic High School, my father was waiting to drive me home just like any other day. However, he had a disgruntled look about him and appeared red in the face as he held on to a crumpled sheet of paper. Earlier that day, while rummaging through my personal belongings, he came across a note I wrote about a fellow classmate; the only problem being—according to my dad—that the classmate I secretly admired was a boy.

He handed me that very note and told me to read it out loud for him. As I uttered the last words on the sheet of paper, my dad anxiously asked, “What does this mean?”

My father had always instilled in me the belief I should never sacrifice my own individuality for anybody, for anything, or anyone. As he stood there, “What did you do other than what you did?” those words drilled into me, always there to help me make my best, and—at times—and I. My mom has pretty much set up the rest of my life for me in order to give her happiness: take in a wife at 30 and bear her grandchildren at 35. My heart twists at the thought of how I may not be able to provide her with the things that would make her happy.

Believing that my father would always support whatever I felt was right, I let the words slip out of my lips as naturally as air would while one breathes, “I’m gay.” Growing more red and upset, my dad grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me. He had me sit down with him and told me to talk about what I had done wrong. He refused to believe I was telling the truth. All I thought about as we walked around the school grounds was, “What did I do wrong?” Upon finding the people my dad was searching for, what ended up happening was anything but a discussion. My dad pulled out male friends of mine and what started off as an innocent conversation turned into a lesson in what my parents considered to be moral norms.

I remember the day vividly. I was walking with a friend and my dad passed by. I was not necessarily mad about his reaction but rather the words that came out of his mouth. “Don’t mind him; he’s my dad and he’s just being stupid.” However, what I knew was best did not make my decision any easier to make. I eventually made my decision and I. My mom has pretty much set up the rest of my life for me in order to give her happiness: take in a wife at 30 and bear her grandchildren at 35. My heart twists at the thought of how I may not be able to provide her with the things that would make her happy.

I fumbled through the days to come, being forced to dress in a new costume. I joined hundreds and thousands of Korean American girls across the States, forced to dress in a hanbok, the Korean traditional costume, year after year.

If you think about it, when people asked me what I was, the only way I could answer was, “For Halloween, I am Korean. But in reality I am Korean American. Just because I’m wearing this doesn’t mean I’m not American.” You can imagine how the rest of that conversation died, with my feelings of explanations. I know many other second generation children of immigrants have faced parallel but equally awkward experiences.

View the Byron Kim exhibit at BAM from now until December 12, 2005.
A HISTORY OF NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION: THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM’S "GOLDEN CHILDREN"

by tuan cao

Amerasians, the children of Vietnamese mothers and U.S. soldiers, have had to deal with the legacy of the Vietnam War on multiple levels. They have faced hardship and discrimination in Vietnam, first for being a living reminder of the American presence in Vietnam and the Vietnam War in general, and second, because of intolerant attitudes toward interracial relationships and having children out of wedlock. Amerasians have also faced adversity upon their arrival in the United States because they were not familiar with the language. This barrier, along with their lack of education, job skills, and stable and supportive family, has made it far more difficult for Amerasians to successfully transition into American life.

Additionally, neither the Vietnamese nor the Vietnamese Americans readily accepted Afro Amerasians because of cultural taboos against darker complexions and African features. Again because of the language barrier, young Afro Amerasians initially found it difficult to relate to and be accepted by their African American classmates.

The mothers of Amerasians do not generally fit the stereotype that is often applied to them. Not all of them were prostitutes or bar servers who had casual encounters that left them pregnant. Many of them were well educated, even by Western standards. They worked in Vietnam as shop owners and teachers, hotel clerks and nurses, bank tellers, seamstresses, and interpreters.

In The Amerasians From Vietnam: A California Study, Chung Hoang Chuong and Le Van found that the majority of the mothers of Amerasians did have a regular job and were employed in legitimate work, often alongside Americans. Many came from around the countryside to the more populated areas, in search of opportunities, as war had left their rice fields un-farmable. Several women said that they met their American lover or husband while at work.

The average amount of time an American soldier spent with his Vietnamese lover/wife was two years. As one anonymous Vietnamese woman told the USCCMRS, “Bill and I lived together for two years. It was such a happy time! But then one day, just before I delivered our second child, he went away. He never told me he was going...I went to his office but his secretary told me he was gone and would not come back. I felt so Betrayed.” Less than 12% of the children had any contact with their American fathers after they had left. The men weren’t blamed, however. These circumstances were attributed to the war. For these women, their children were all they had to remember the fathers by.

These Amerasian children in Vietnam grew up in a traditional Asian society that scarcely accepted interracial relationships. Marriage to foreigners was considered taboo, especially for women. If a Vietnamese woman married a foreigner, shame fell not only on her but on her extended family as well. The taboo of having a child outside of marriage was strong as well, regardless of how meaningful the relationship was.

Amerasians and their families were also closely linked to the United States, Communist Vietnam’s enemy during the war. When Amerasian children resembled their American fathers, they were treated as enemies of the new regime. Amerasian children were often denied educational and employment opportunities. Many of these children were abandoned by their mothers for these reasons. Some of these children grew up in the streets of Ho Chi Minh City while others lived in rural villages or became settlers of the brutal conditions of Vietnam’s New Economic Zones. As many as 15,000 of these Amerasian children grew up without fathers.

It took the United States eight years to acknowledge responsibility for Amerasian children left behind. These broken images of Amerasians children with distinct Western features haunted the American public. An outcry broke in America to help these innocent Amerasian children who were being punished for the tragic legacy of America’s involvement in the Vietnam War. In 1980, Senator Stewart McKinney addressed the Amerasian issue in Vietnam and advocated for the rights of Amerasians. He called the issue “a national embarrassment” and called on America’s patriotic duty to take responsibility for Amerasians (Asian-Nation).

Despite the opposition from the U.S. State Department due to its political discord with the Vietnamese government, the Amerasian Homecoming Act was passed by Congress in 1987 through the sentiments of the American public opinion. The Act allowed Amerasians fathered by U.S. military servicemen and born in Vietnam after January 1, 1962 and before January 1, 1976 to immigrate to the United States as non-quota immigrants along with their immediate family members.

Discriminated against in their homeland, Amerasians finally felt a sense of hope when the US Congress passed the Amerasians Homecoming Act in 1987. However, all was not well. They were treated as political pawns between Vietnam and the US. They were exploited as a means of getting to the US. The legislation ended up hurting them in many ways. However, it did rectify their situations somewhat by allowing them to immigrate to the US. They were also given healthcare, English training, and other government assistance. The law was written so as to allow as many Amerasians as possible to leave Vietnam for the US. 25,000 Amerasians arrived in America with 65,000 of their immediate relatives. Though the law was designed to help Amerasians, it was exploited by Vietnamese to take advantage of the US.

In addition, they were granted refugee benefits such as healthcare, English training, and other government funded assistance. Under the Act, the eligibility requirements for Amerasians to leave Vietnam were made lenient to allow as many Amerasians to leave. In the beginning, if the applicant possessed physical implications of being bi-racial such as blue eyes, or blonde hair, he or she should be granted a Visa quite easily. Twenty-five thousand Amerasians had arrived in America with 65,000 of their immediate relatives.

Immediately after the Act was passed, all ostracized Amerasians known to the Vietnamese as “búi do” or Children of the Dust were heralded as Vietnam’s “golden children.” The Vietnamese saw the Amerasian Homecoming Act as an opportunity to take advantage of the Amerasians and use them as passports to come to America. Many Vietnamese who once ridiculed the Amerasians, now adopted them into their families and even tried to arrange marriages, hoping for the opportunity to come to America under the Act. Amerasians, once discriminated against, now became a highly sought after commodity.

Human trafficking and fraud became an apparent issue to the United States, and acceptance rates dropped due to the deception possibly involved. It made it much more difficult for Amerasians to obtain Visas. Now, having American physical attributes were no longer adequate. The applicant needed to provide supporting documents such as photos, letters, a marriage or cohabitation certificate issue by Vietnamese authorities. It was well known that invalid documents existed as required because the Vietnamese mothers of Amerasian children often destroyed them for fear of the Communist government. The Amerasian children were lucky to still possess a photo of their American father. Even with all necessary documents, a visa was not guaranteed. As a result, there are still hundreds of legitimate Amerasians who deserve the right to come to America, but may never see that opportunity.

For the fortunate Amerasians who made it to America, it was difficult for them to transition into American society. Although the experiences and success stories differed for all Amerasians, they all shared common struggles and challenges. Most were not prepared to adapt to American society due to significant setbacks. The Amerasians lacked an education, spoke little or no English, and did not possess necessary jobs skills. As a result, they could not find jobs or took low-level jobs that paid very little. Thus, many lived at poverty level. Beyond economical issues, they faced other challenges including: loneliness, discrimination, poverty, and nostalgia.

Most thought they would belong and be welcomed in their “fatherland” because they looked more like Americans, however discrimination continued to haunt them in America. Amerasians did not fit in with Americans because they grew up instilled with Vietnamese culture and that was all they knew despite their contradictory features. Their physical appearance may be more widely accepted in America, but once their peers realized they did not speak English well, or that they acted very “Asian”, the Amerasians were ridiculed and laughed at.

AfrO Amerasians probably experienced the worse of situations. They were teased and shunned because they looked African American but acted completely different in culture and did not speak English. Afro Amerasians were also not accepted by their Vietnamese peers because of the rooted prejudice against Blacks in Vietnamese culture. Once again, Amerasians found themselves as the outcasts of society as they were in Vietnam.

With the suffering that innocent Amerasians have endured, lessons should be learned to prevent anymore children to have to face such horrendous experiences. Nations and fathers should take responsibility for their offspring. Innocent children should not have to suffer for tragic conflicts made between nations. As Amerasians grow older and the Vietnam War grows distant in history, let us never forget the stories and experiences of Amerasians to prevent future tragedies to occur.
So who are you voting for, dude?

I don't know... Why bother?

It all seems so hopeless...

WHAT!!

You can't just NOT vote!!

It's your civic duty!!

It's too important this year!!

Yeah, but...

FEDERAL LOANS TO RESCUE HOSTESSES FROM BANKRUPTCY!!

You low-culture fakers deserve it!! YAAARRGGH!!

COMIC BOOK-BASED CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS!!

LIMITLESS DOUGHNUTS FOR ALL AMERICANS!!

Vote Hellen!!

WRITE THAT SHIT IN, YO!!

2GO4!!

Hellen is cool!

But... WHAT ABOUT THE ISSUES??!