VISIONS Winter 2005

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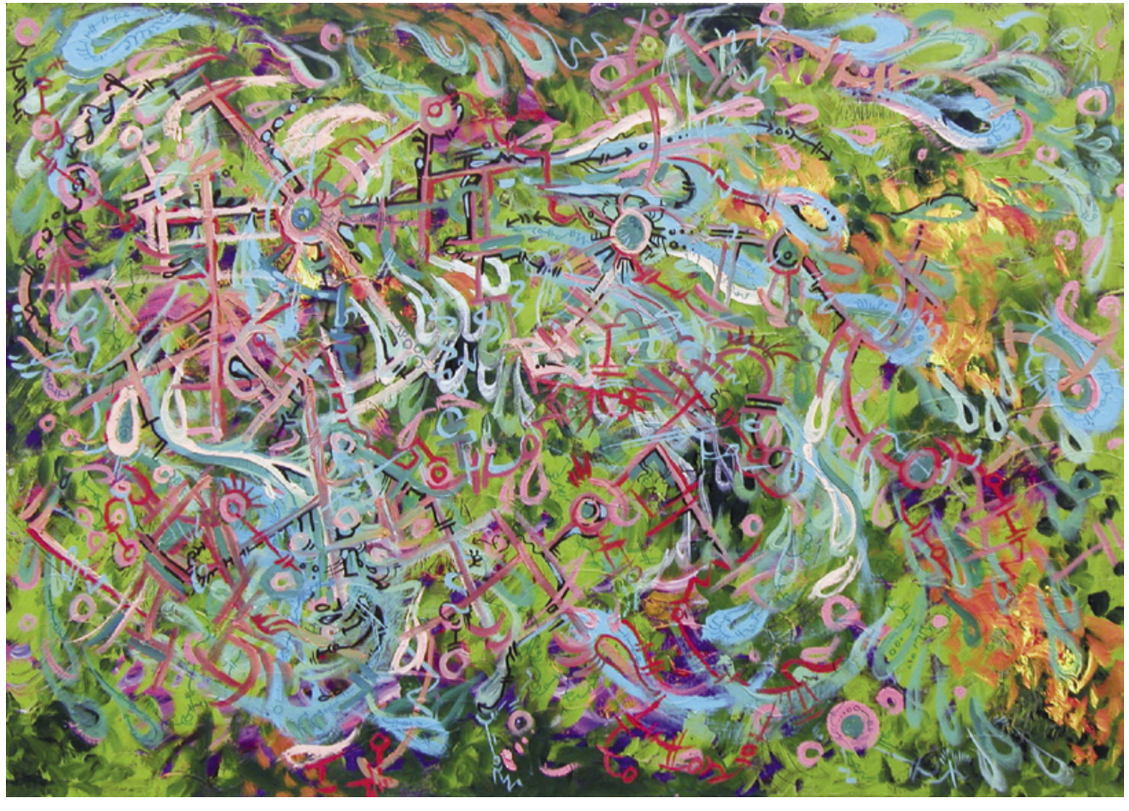
Brian Lee '06, Editor in Chief
Brian_Lee_2@brown.edu


VISIONS
envisioning and building a stronger
asian american community
winter 2005



Explosion, Quyen Truong '05

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

WINTER 2005
VOLUME vi, ISSUE 1

Welcome to the Winter 2005 issue of VISIONS. We hope you enjoy the quality and variety of artistic, poetic, and literary contributions celebrating the diversity of the Asian American community at Brown.

VISIONS boasts a dedicated staff of writers, artists, and designers, and maintains a strong editorial staff dedicated to the constant improvement of this truly unique publication. As many of you know, since our Spring 2004 issue we have been in the process of vastly improving the quality of our publication, transforming it from a small pamphlet into its current form. This has been possible thanks to the efforts of our staff members as well as our generous sponsors in the Brown community. The new format of VISIONS has also led us to consider who we are as a publication and how we may be able to better serve and reach out to both the Asian American and the larger Brown University community.

Our mission of "Envisioning and building a stronger Asian American community" is centered on the idea of both shaping and reflecting the idea of what it means to be Asian American. Clearly, there are no simple answers to this question, but we hope that VISIONS can be an open forum for engaging questions about identity that allows for many varying definitions of "Asian America." As a literary and artistic production, we are in a unique position to transcend barriers and connect the diverse Asian community and larger Brown community with issues relevant to Asian America.

We would like to sincerely thank our artists, poets, writers, and staff members for making VISIONS Winter 2005 a reality—without all of your hours of work and creativity VISIONS could not be where it is today. We would also like to thank Dean Kisa Takesue of the Third World Center and Office of Student Life, who serves as the administrative advisor of VISIONS, for her ideas, inspiration, and support. We would like to extend our appreciation to the individuals and groups who generously sponsored this publication and gave us their belief in us to succeed, and we are extremely grateful to our supporters in the Brown community for taking an interest in this publication and the issues it raises.

Sincerely,

Chris Hu '06

Sunisa Nardone '07

Brian Lee '06

Angela Siew '06

Johnny Lin '07

Kartik Venkatesh '06

MISSION STATEMENT

VISIONS is a publication that highlights and celebrates the diversity of Brown's Asian American community. We are committed to being an open literary and artistic forum for Asian Americans, as well as other members of the university community, to freely express and address issues relating both to Asia and the Asian American experience. VISIONS further serves as a forum for issues that cannot find a voice in other campus publications. As a collaborative initiative, VISIONS attempts to strengthen and actively engage Brown's vibrant community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as the larger Providence community.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this publication do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of VISIONS' advisor, editors or sponsors.

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Museum, Ellen Chu ‘07

RECOILED AND SOILED

LAM PHAN ’07

recoiled and soiled,
the fragile, false-golden slipper chokes
under her featureless weight

squatting, afraid to stand
leveled, to face
this valiant, powerful man
she smiles and
cradles her child, in a fashion
foreign to all the Americans

draped in loops and tangles,
slightly uneasy, slightly queasy
trying her best to augment answers
to achieve symphonic fitting

in the while, her fatherless middle child
stands erect in a pink frill-less dress
over pants that were worn, perhaps,
too many times before by the progeny
of her father’s body-colonizers

legalized legacy

rendered illogically legal via
drained passageways of the peasant’s brain

it’s really pain, but don’t complain

just -

show teeth
act meek
be discreet

“maybe they’ll give me money”
she reasons to her eldest son:
the one clinging to pickled pride
and numbing dirt lollipops

“poor/exotic woman
with her three children”
reads the picture caption:
too exact to be fact;
too vague to have a meaning made

“too rich to be featured”
the anti-poverty
campaign-man plans
(anti-poverty: against
his own economic insignificance)

notpoorenoughexoticwoman’s
image fades like her smiles: muted
by half-consumed bagels
and coffee in the corporate room’s
golden trash acceptor

“help will come someday”
she wishes, squatting, squished - still

recoiled and soiled,
the fragile, false-golden slipper chokes
under her featureless weight

LAM PHAN ’07 desperately wants some of his mom’s Okra-Shrimp Stew with white rice.

AMERICANIZING

JOHNNY PoHAN LIN '07

On a September morning in Providence, I took a casual walk down College Hill and made myself an American before my 10 o'clock class.

The "naturalization" ceremony, which took place at the federal courthouse downtown, was long, bureaucratic, and highly anticlimactic. With a narcissistic speech by the old white man who introduced himself as the presiding judge, and a pound of his gavel much too loud for an early Monday morning occasion, some 90 of us suddenly breathed in red, white, and blue—legally. The family members waiting outside the door flowed in and consumed all the oxygen in the room in one collective frenzy. With my family sound asleep three time zones away, I stood there awkwardly as my American-trained, Ivy-educated mind quickly searched for proper reactions. Nothing really came. How I went from getting my green card swiped at the LAX customs to being handed a letter of welcome signed by the President of the United States in the middle of Rhode Island, I was not too sure.

I opened up my letter in the local Dunkin Donuts, just to honor the local custom. I sipped my iced coffee contemplating the classic 'What does this all mean' question. George W. reiterated how important it is that I, now a citizen of this great country, must work to defend freedom and liberty, and pursue the promise of the American Dream. Identity crisis ran amuck as I bit into my glazed donut.

What does it mean, being American? Millions around the world ponder this question secretly or openly —Some in admiration, some in envy, and some in darker strands of human capacities. Like the overwhelming taste of Coca-Cola, or Angelina Jolie's cinematographically sexualized lips, there is something mystifying about the American lifestyle. Is it my ready access to the Wal-Mart style mass consumption? Or the bing-bam-thank-you-ma'am social life promulgated by the *Sex in the City* "revolution"? Well, perhaps.

Being an American citizen means holding an inviolable vote to the most powerful state that has ever existed on planet Earth. There is a certain weight that comes with that, despite popular belief. You live at the pinnacle of comfort and human progress; the food you throw away at a typical cafeteria meal could feed a hungry Pakistani for days. You have the right to burn the national flag and call the president a blabbering chimpanzee without being put on blacklists. You have the choice to not have God smacked on you in a public school and wear a turban in airports without being harassed. Now, quick reality check: are these still true? Yes, you have the right to be euphemistic. Liberal melodrama aside, I found the entire "naturalization" process anticlimactic yet unsettling. After sending in my fingerprint and residence records, I interviewed with a Homeland Security Department personnel, a fellow who didn't get the memo that dark rimmed glasses and slicked-back hair went out of fashion a while ago along with the Soviets. It involved a range of carefully selected arbitrary questions that weeded out the "bad citizens," such as "are you or have you ever been part of the Communist Party?" I laughed, and told him, "Dude, I go to Brown." He did not appreciate the humor as much as you do.

So after six years of cracking English jokes and dating American girls, plus a dozen months campaigning to unseat the American president, I got this little pat on the back, for something too amorphous to name. I noticed, with alarm, that I was having fewer and fewer dreams in Mandarin or Taiwanese by the year. In taking this step from "resident alien" to "American," or even "Asian American," have I been completely and irreversibly Americanized? Have I given up my roots, cut off my ties with my birthplace, and grew up into the perfect shape, of an ordinary jar they placed over me?

Perhaps the pertinent question here is, what does it mean, becoming American? After all, all Americans are become, if I can convince you to ignore your proper English grammar for a second. Some do so in the present tense; some did so through the memory of their immigrant grandmothers. And I think some will do so, through the pride in their kids. It might not happen in their lifetime, but one day their kids will be able to stand up and proudly say, "My father gave me the chance to live in America." I think this is just as true for me.

Something in Helen Zia's book *The Asian American Dream* always stuck with me—we don't live the dreams of our parents, "our parents are our American dreams." Losing my identity as a green card holder forced me to look back, and this phrase suddenly made perfect sense. My new identity, as American, as Asian American, and as an eager college student, carries with it an inseparable component of the old. There is something quite indescribable about this transformation process, this passing of torches and the power of people to live in non-linear time through their parents or their kids. For millions who immigrate to America every year, this is what becoming American is all about. For me, I am not just living an American life, but also that of those before me, around me, and after me.

Like a good American donut, immigration is a holistic experience that rolls together the experiences of all generations in a perfect circle. I called my mother as I hurried off to class.

But first, I finished my donut.

JOHNNY LIN '07 suggests hot pink, neon yellow, and gothic black as our new flag colors.

ANCESTRAL HELP

JESSICA MAR ‘08

At the end of every summer, I travel home to Long Island from California. Invariably I am met with the same barrage of comments from my fascinated East Coast friends.

“You’re so lucky, I was in Europe,”
“Wow, how was the beach?”
“I never get to go anywhere!”

My friends had spent their summers doing research, going to theater camp, or taking classes at Cambridge. I spent my summers looking after Po-Po, my elderly maternal grandmother, who was diagnosed eleven years ago with Parkinson’s disease, a progressive neurological disease for which there is currently no cure.

I spent my summers immersed in another world—a world of living with Po-po’s perpetual illness—cutting up her food, doing her laundry, or helping her get dressed. My mother and I even attended a weekend workshop teaching families how to deal with the impact of a disabling disease on family dynamics. Still, it was difficult for me to deal with Po-Po’s incessant demands and constant corrections. Not to mention, Chinese is one of those few languages where a background in Latin does not help. My inability to understand Cantonese and my grandmother’s limited English made communicating a daily struggle.

Nevertheless, my grandmother sketched for me in her broken English a vivid memory of a very different type of immigrant tale. Po-Po, now seventy-seven years old, grew up in Toison, China during World War II. Like many children during that time, she often went hungry hiding in caves in the hills and mountains from the invading Japanese.

But Po-po was different from the other girls. As an only child, an only daughter, in an undisputedly male dominated culture, my grandmother was one of the very few females to have access to higher education in her time. Determined, she walked two and a half hours every week to school through desolate countryside, carrying a week’s supply of rice for her and her teachers on her back. Even in California, before Parkinson’s claimed control of her limbs, she would take me for walks after dinner, up and down the slopes of hilly Monterey Park. Po-Po would always take a stick; she said it was for beating away dogs or robbers.

In 1952, my grandmother decided to move to California to join my grandfather who had been saving for several years in order to bring her to the States. Despite having won widespread respect as a teacher in China, she was forced to work in a sweatshop to support the family. My grandparents were eventually able to open a small grocery store in South Central Los Angeles with the money they saved up. After years of helping customers carry home their groceries, my mother and her siblings became convinced that it was the norm for every American family to have a picture of Malcolm X displayed prominently on the living room wall.

As one of the few Asian families in a predominately black neighborhood, my grandparents worked hard to foster a positive relationship with the community. When the Watts Riots broke out in 1965, and angry mobs vandalized and looted stores throughout the area, the neighbors protected my grandparents’ store. However, the store that escaped a six-day riot that claimed an estimated $200 million of damage (half of which affected Asian American–owned stores), could not survive the new waves of chain stores that opened up down the street. After 13 years in Watts, my grandparents were forced to sell their store.

Flute,
Andrew Ahn ‘08

In many ways this window into Po-Po's life made it easier for me to come to terms with carrying out her constant demands: I realized that demanding perfection from me was Po-Po's way of expressing her frustration at her trembling limbs, loss of coordination, and perhaps her fear that she was losing control of her life. Having overcome numerous hardships as a woman, she was used to being in control of her life and the lives of those around her. In times of hardship, she had become the backbone of the family both inside and outside of the home.

When it came to our generation, Po-Po maintained a very different standard. Even as a young child I had always sensed the power structure of our family hierarchy. The gender roles that were eroded during times of hardship were reinstated as luxuries in times of prosperity. As the daughter of the second daughter, (who was supposed to be a son), I soon learned to restrain cries of "that's not fair!" that fought to leap out of my throat. Sometimes after a long afternoon of sweaty yard work, I would watch in shock as Po-Po paid my cousin John, and ignored my cousin Jayne and me. We had not worked expecting any sort of reward, but it was hard not to find this unfair.

Yet I knew that I couldn't say anything. Voicing my feelings would be unthinkable, especially to my grandmother. I could already hear the rebukes: "American born, no brain!" or "You have so easy. I had it hard." Maybe "You so spoiled", or possibly the all-purpose "Aiya!" that could effectively convey disapproval, impatience, and disappointment all at once—feelings that seemed to pervade every conversation I have with my grandmother. Everything from vegetables to politics, she always seems to be able to make her views clear, and mine clearly wrong.

This past summer some relatives were coming to visit and I offered to mow her lawn. Since she always wanted everything to look its best for company, my mother and I set up the lawn mower and proceeded. We were about halfway done when the shrill dissonance of Po-Po's voice overpowered the lawnmower buzz. She ordered us to stop at once because John who lived all the way across town would mow the lawn next week. Looking at the half mowed patch of grass, I realized how deeply these gender roles were entrenched in my grandmother's mind. Her irrational mindset was having a tangible impact on the lives of everyone trying to help her.

Sometimes I resented her for relegating me to 'my place' in the kitchen, which meant by the sink amongst the piles of greasy dishes, over a cutting board carefully slicing mounds of vegetables, or at the stove anxiously tending to pots of rice. I struggled to understand why I always seemed to be a disappointment. I couldn't help but feel like an irredeemable embarrassment when she took me to see her friends at the senior center. I could not respond to their Chinese greetings. I knew that they were talking about me, but all I could understand was my name.

Maybe her insistence on keeping me in the box that she fought to break out of was her way of trying to protect me. But of all people, shouldn't she understand that to be a woman does not necessarily mean being defined by society's established gender roles? Though she was a pioneer, she seemed to be doing everything in her power to keep me from following in her path. Maybe enforcing those gender roles is her way of clinging to part of her past, a way of keeping the old culture alive. Coming to America meant giving up so much—status, security, and the safety of familiarity. No longer in control of her physical state, perhaps Po-po finds some solace in the memory of the old ways.

One of my earliest memories of Po-po is of her getting up in the middle of the night to pull the blankets over me. I must have kicked them off in the middle of the night. I awoke with confusion, bewildered by the unfamiliar surroundings. The assurance of my grandmother's presence and concern for me came just in time to prevent the flood of panic. I drifted back to sleep confident that I was safe with Po-po watching after me.

Another fond memory I have is of Po-po teaching my cousins and I how to make delicate Chinese dumplings called Fon Soons. Rolling the sticky rice dough into round balls, we would take turns using the Mexican tortilla press to make the balls into little circular discs, ready to be filled with finely chopped water chestnuts, meat, and green onions. Our childish efforts were bulging and disfigured, almost bursting with stuffing, while Po-po's thin, slightly transparent skins looked like true culinary works of art, elegantly plump, with just the right amount of filling.

The progression of Po-po's Parkinson's has meant that her trembling hands can no longer lead us in making these tasty creations. Instead of being able to pull the covers over me, she has to keep a walker by her bed in case she needs to get up during the night. Now I boil hot water to put on her nightstand and retrieve extra blankets to cover her with at night, checking to make sure that she has everything she needs before I go upstairs for the night.

This summer, as her condition worsened, one of my chores was to push Po-po through the Chinese grocery store in a wheelchair as she ordered me to fetch leafy greens, unfamiliar fruits, and freshly bloodied fish. As I wheeled her down the frozen food section, she began to shiver from the cold, so I draped my sweater over her shoulders. At that moment, I realized that our roles had changed.

This summer was emotionally and physically draining, yet I learned lessons that could not be learned from a book, in a lab, or through an internship—lessons that will steady me in the uncertainty of life ahead.

Now that I am in college, miles away from the complications of home, I struggle to reconcile my old frustrations with Po-po with my new realizations. I may never have the chance to talk to my grandmother about the profound effect she has had on the way I see the world or the way that I see myself as her Americanized Chinese granddaughter or as a Chinese American in my own right. I have never been able to claim my grandmother's homeland as my own. I very well may never get the chance to express the pent-up frustrations that wreck havoc on me during every visit. Or to unleash the inner turmoil that leaves me tossing and turning in a wordless quandary for weeks after I have left California several hundred miles behind. Maybe it is better to leave such amorphous feelings unvoiced; in this case, words may not be the proper tool for empowerment. Across language barriers, across generational gaps, across disparate cultures, only the power of storytelling helps me see how our lives overlap. As Maxine Hong Kingston writes, "Unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help."

Perhaps my grandmother has offered me her story when she cannot give me words. It is through these stories that I still struggle to try to find some common ground to reconcile my world with hers.

Po-po will never be a clearcut character in my mind—the complexity of our relationship defies simple categorization. Po-Po's voice holds me back, while still spurring me forward. It is a voice that I cannot quell.

The choice to love my grandmother is mine, and it comes with no guarantee of acceptance. Under all the layers of disappointment, I know that my grandmother does love me. I have learned that part of living with an illness in a family is just being present. Maybe I can never properly express how I feel to Po-po; words would only get in the way of what I really want to say. Perhaps there is the chance that my actions can communicate the love that I can never voice in a language that she will understand. While her illness separates us, it has also drawn us together, reshaping our relationship, redefining the meaning of family.

JESSICA MAR '08 might submit a byline still, White House officials announced yesterday.

EQUITY VS. EQUALITY
THE QUESTION OF JUSTICE FOR FILIPINO VETERANS OF WWII

ANGELA SIEW '06

A History of Injustice

Filipinos who fought under the United States flag during World War II do not receive full United States veteran status or associated benefits. The issue of what is just for these veterans has sharply divided the community of Filipino veterans, advocacy organizations, and service providers for a little over a decade. There are an estimated 27,000 surviving Filipino veterans—20,000 in the Philippines and 7,000 in the United States.

In 1941, just before the beginning of World War II, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order invoking his power under the Philippine Independence Act to call various Philippine military organizations "into the service of American armed forces". A year later, Congress passed the War Powers Act, which provided that Filipino non-citizens who serve in active duty in the armed forces during the war are to be granted US citizenship. For several months off and on in the years following the end of World War II, Filipino veterans underwent naturalization. However, in 1946, a year after the end of World War II, Congress passed the Rescission Act which specifically provided that service under the President's Executive Order of 1941 "shall not be deemed to be or have been military or naval forces of the United States" for purposes of determining eligibility under most veterans benefits programs.

Forty- four years later, in 1990, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act granting US citizenship to Filipino veterans. Filipino veterans now in their 70s and 80s availed of this 1990 legislation and arrived in the US beginning in 1991.

Legislation in the 1990s

In the past decade, there have been small successes in the struggle for these men to acquire the veterans' benefits that they need in order to maintain an adequate standard of living. In 1999, Congress granted special benefits to veterans by allowing them to take 75 percent of their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) check with them if they decide to reside in the Philippines. In 2000, Congress increased the rate of payment of disability compensation and the provision of burial benefits for Commonwealth Army and recognized guerilla forces. Most recently, in 2003, President Bush signed HR 2297 into law, which increases war-related disability pensions and burial benefits from half rate to full rate for about 100 Filipino veterans and 400 soldiers' widows. It also extends health benefits to the estimated 7,000 surviving Filipino World War II veterans living in the United States.
There are many bills before the current 108th Congress that address how to improve benefits for Filipino veterans. There is one bill (HR 677) that advocates for full veterans benefits, while there are a handful of bills that advocate for benefit improvements (S68, HR 644, etc.)

Questions of Equity

The different views of what constitutes equity for Filipino veterans have created a sharp division in the community fighting for Filipino veterans. A leader in the fight for full equity (and HR 677) is the National Network for Filipino Veterans Equity, a coalition that includes the Filipino Civil Rights Advocates and San Francisco Veterans Equity Center, who provide direct services to Filipino veterans in the Bay Area. On the other side, the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, comprised of more than two hundred veterans' organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars or American Legion, is fighting for S68.

HR 677 asks for full veteran status and benefits. S68 only provides health care benefits for certain categories of veterans. It allows for veterans residing in the US to have access to the Veteran Health Care System within limits of veteran facilities. It does not address any other areas such as disability pensions, educational benefits, job counseling, training and placement, assistance to homeless veterans, or survivor benefits. The difference in the breadth of these bills is reflected in the cost: S68 will cost approximately $26 million while HR 677 will cost approximately $216 million.

The Fierce Battle

Advocates for full equity cite the extreme adverse living conditions that Filipino veterans face as one reason why full benefits should be granted to these men. Those who don't live in isolation live in crowded residences with fellow veterans, with as many as twenty living in one house. According to Executive Director Luisa Antonio of the San Francisco Veterans Equity Center (SFVEC), veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area who have health problems seek badly needed medical treatment, not under the Veterans Administration system, but under Medicare and the California Department of Social Services welfare program. Only 1,000 of the 7,000 veterans residing in the United States have service-connected disabilities that fall under the Veterans Administration health care system. The rest rely on a monthly SSI check for their income, which ranges from $400–$650 a month.

In the 1990s, veterans could petition to have their families in the Philippines come to the United States, but many did not have enough money to support them. Many passed away in their homes, by themselves or in the company of other veterans. Service providers such as SFVEC often help coordinate funeral arrangements because a majority of their clientele does not have family members. In an article appearing in AsianWeek in November 2002, Antonio stated: "95 percent of them are alone and they don't have any support system other than the Veterans Equity Center and other support organizations."

The driving force behind full equity is principle. Jon Melegrito, Executive Director of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), says it's a "matter of honor." According to Antonio of SFVEC, "None (of these bills) has amended the 1946 Rescission Act - Filipino veterans of World War II are not considered to have performed active duty. These are the heroes that had fought side by side with the US soldiers and under the American flag to defend freedom and democracy. It is unbelievable that after more than half a century after the conclusion of WWII, there is still an ongoing struggle for full recognition as US veterans." Lourdes Tancinco, co-chair of the National Network for Veterans Equity points out, "Would we treat veterans from any state of the U.S. in this discriminatory way?"

On the other side of the issue, the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans (ACFV) is a major proponent for benefits improvements bills. They are throwing their

support behind S68, a benefits improvement bill sponsored by former WWII veteran Senator Inouye. According to Executive Director Eric Lachica, the main difference between S68 and HR677 is the pension component. S68 and HR 677 both ask for the same amount of pension money for Filipino veterans in the United States. They differ in the amount of money allocated to Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines: HR 677 asks for full pensions rates, while S68 asks for one-eighth of those rates.

Lachica reasons: "These figures are reasonable because there is a lower cost of living in the Philippines. If veterans were to receive the same amount as their American counterparts, they would be earning the same salary as a secretary in the Presidential Cabinet. During World War II, Filipino soldiers were paid only one-fourth of what American GIs were paid because of the difference in living standards."

When asked about Filipino veterans who have not come to the United States because of a lack of resources, he says: "They have had ten years to become naturalized. They also could have borrowed money from a bank that especially caters to Filipino veterans. They receive benefits from the Philippine government. So this is really a moot point."

American Coalition for Filipino Veterans is in support of S68 because "S68 is the most realistic and the most doable. It meets the needs for both official recognition and equitable compensation for those in the Philippines and the US. The Filipino government is in support of this measure. We honor the request of the Filipino government."

Recent developments

Recent action on HR 677 took place in the form of a lobby day in Washington, DC in early May. Organized by the SFVEC and comprised of a large DC contingency and Filipino veterans, the participants visited 23 Congressional offices in order to try to win support for HR 677. One weakness in the lobby for HR 677 is that there is no strong DC force working to push the legislation. National Network for Filipino Veterans Equity, of which SFVEC is a part, is at full capacity providing direct services to Filipino veterans in the California area. However, Tacuyan is confident that the legislation will resurface again in the next session of Congress, since it has made an appearance in every session of Congress for the past six years.

What's in store?

Executive Director Jon Melegrito of NaFFAA cites the philosophy of Student Action for Veterans Equity (SAVE), a student advocacy group for full equity. "These students say that we should fight for the cause of justice even if we fail, because to not even try for fear of failure sends a wrong message to the next generation." Melegrito adds: "Our commitment to justice will be measured not by whether we will get the bill passed, but whether we will mobilize our resources and harness our energies in the 58-year struggle to correct a grievous wrong."

Still, Executive Director Eric Lachica of ACFV counters: "Some groups are idealistic. It is a matter of what we can get done. It is a question of equity and equity's fairness. Equity does not mean equality."

Pressure is mounting as many Filipino veterans, now in their 70s and 80s, are passing away. The contributions of Filipinos to the outcome of World War II are significant. Filipino soldiers fought alongside the United States in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II. Their many guerilla actions slowed the Japanese takeover of the Pacific region and their island nation served as the strategic base from which the final effort to defeat Japan was launched. Thousands of Filipino prisoners of war endured the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity.

The Filipino veterans of World War II deserve more than they have now.

ANGELA SIEW '06 enjoys Jon Melegrito's claims that "activism keeps you virile."

Galapagos, Delphine Huang '05

Amazon, Matthew Forkin '06

CALIFORNIA ROLLS

SARAH KASUGA '06

"Kore wa nan desu-ka?" asks the surprisingly attractive airport security officer. I've just gotten off the plane and this dude has caught me off guard. I'm standing by myself, after somehow losing my family in the impatient rush of people pushing past me. I'm distracted and frantic, feeling out of place as I spot my obviously American family waiting up ahead. My pleasantly round, Caucasian mother is sporting her stylish black fanny pack and her overstuffed navy blue backpack. My naturally skinny Japanese American father stands next to her diligently reviewing a map, causing my older, wiser brother to wander off, impatient with our disorganized family. My plan of escaping the American tourist look flies away on the sea of beige coats that soar by me. The hurried clicking of shoes and rapid Japanese words fill the impeccably clean air, giving the airport an important, distant feel.

I'm left staring at the officer with no one around to help translate. I look desperately for my grandparents, but then remember that they tend to have incontinence problems and are probably in search of a bathroom. I start to panic and beads of sweat begin to form on my upper lip. The security officer looks at me with a curious, impatient look on his face.

"Uhhh," I say intelligently, "Uhhh, No comprende." Shoot. I'm trying to think in Japanese, and all that comes out is Spanish. "I mean, uhhhhh, no, I mean," I begin and then I remember the one phrase my grandparents taught me on the plane ride over. "Watashi uhhhhhh wa uhhhhhh nihongo ga uhhhhhh hanasemasen," I manage to extract from my disobedient mouth, emphasizing sounds not meant to be emphasized. I just told him that I don't speak Japanese. The guy looks at me like I have 5,000 zits on my face and chuckles to himself. Smooth, Sarah, real smooth. I wipe my upper lip with my hand.

"You don't speak Japanese? Prease, can I check your bag prease?" the guard asks in almost impeccable English. He speaks English. Of course. As he searches through my bag I wonder why he addressed me in Japanese and the rest of my family in English. Do I look Japanese enough to pass as native Japanese? If he were going to speak to anyone in Japanese, clearly he would have spoken to my father since he is the most Japanese looking person in our family. Also, didn't he notice how my casual, simple black sweatshirt, grey sweats, and grey Pumas are distinctly American, contrasting the funky, outrageous, thrown-together-at-the-last-minute-but-planned-three-hours-in-advance look the Japanese teenagers perfect? I stumble away puzzled; but feel proud that the first person I've been in contact with since landing in Narita assumes I speak Japanese. I tell myself this is a promising start to the trip I entitle, "Bonsai Roots: Sarah's Desperate Attempt to Convince the World She's Japanese."

Going to Japan had been my idea, my plea. My dream was to go with my grandparents because there was something whimsical and sentimental about experiencing Japan with family who knew its hidden secrets, like little noodle shops that serve delicious udon only locals know about. Meeting ghost relatives I didn't know I had was reason enough to beg my parents to fly me across an ocean. I wanted to see the house in which my grandfather grew up, to be able to imagine for just one instant what it was like for him as an American born, raised in Japan.

I was convinced the sojourn to Japan was needed for my personal well-being, necessary for discovering my identity and confirming my Japanese heritage. I had become militant about defending my "Japaneseness" after being discouraged from joining the Asian Club at school because I wasn't Asian enough. The scene went something like this: I walk into the room where the Asian Club meets, the conversation stops, uninviting stares are thrown my way, I introduce myself, I'm ignored, people speak in a variety of languages I don't understand, a girl finally says, "Hi. This is the Asian Club, for Asian students who want to study Asian culture," staring pointedly at me, people glance in my direction, I leave on the verge of tears, go to the teacher who approves new clubs, ask to start a Hapa club, he responds, "No, Sarah, there's no need. I don't want to approve another club that's not going to last. Just join the Asian Club," I stare horrified at him. It was one of the most traumatizing days of my high school experience.

I realized my Japanese heritage was like a partially developed picture lurking in my conscience, an artist's unfinished canvas or a triathlete's half eaten granola bar. Japan was going to be the missing piece in the puzzle that was my identity. A confirmation of sorts. After many nights of listening to my persistent begging, my mother took the reins, planned our itinerary, and justified the cost of the trip by commenting on my 88 year old grandfather's deteriorating state and the importance of seizing this opportunity.

The introductions are made, complete with a lot of bowing and nodding and smiling. I don't understand anything anyone's saying yet, I bow and nod and smile back to them, diligently fulfilling my role as the respectful, polite child. I'm struck by how different this is from introductions in America. I was trained to represent our family well when I meet adults, but somehow here the pressure to appear docile and agreeable is overwhelming enough to make me feel out of place. I reassure myself that I'm still excellently Japanese despite my discomfort as we all squeeze into two cars—our American bodies too large for the cramped Japanese cars—and drive the 20 minutes through rural countryside to my grandfather's old home.

As we pull into the unpaved driveway, I imagine we're on the set of *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. The house is one level, gray, long, with a curved and tiled pagoda-like roof. Distant relatives wait outside speaking in rapid Japanese. More bowing and nodding and smiling; our adopted form of communication. Inside, I'm overwhelmed. This is what I have been waiting for: authentic, tangible Japanese culture. My culture. Proof that I am a part of it all. Everything inside exudes traditional Japanese culture: the pile of shoes by the door, the sliding screen doors, the low tables, the cushions, the ancestral shrine, the steaming cha waiting to be drunk, the sumi calligraphy hanging on the walls, the faint smell of incense, the slippers, the smiles, the gifts. Traces of modernity speckle and clutter the simplicity of the interior: a small television sits low on the ground in one room, the humming refrigerator and cold stove in the kitchen, the gaudy, orange and purple and brown splotched lamps sit sullen and crass in the far corners of the room.

We all stand in the first room watched by the 8"x10" framed photographs of my distant, dead, relatives. My grandfather pulls my brother and me aside closer to the shrine, indicating that he wants to show us how to honor them. Light incense, tap the miniature gong three times, clap hands together palm to palm, bow, and say a silent prayer. So respectful. So genuine. I've finally connected, been accepted into this Kasuga clan. I feel like I know these serene, nonsmiling, deceased people staring down at me. I hit my brother lightly on the arm and we smile. There are no words.

Hirome, the pretty housewife who has a permanent smile on her face, has insisted I try on the kimono she wore for her wedding. This seems like a big honor, and I refuse at first, because that's what polite Japanese are supposed to do. My grandparents refer to the act of declining something actually desired as enryo. "Don't enryo," they always tell me when I visit them, as I shake my head no at their offers for another piece of cake, more chocolate, a second helping of mochi ice cream. It's like a little game. Here in this little room crowded with people, I desperately want to try the kimono on, but it would be rude if I outright accepted Hirome's offer. So instead we proceed with our funny dance. I decline, she insists, I decline, she insists, I decline, she insists forcefully this time, and I finally accept.

The traditional Japanese robe is a soft cream color with brilliant reddish orange designs swirling near the bottom hem and the shoulders. The silkiness of the kimono is pleasantly cold; the bumps on my arm respond to the sudden change in temperature. The broad obi is tied tight around my middle, shrinking my waist and holding the kimono together. I smile, despite the smell of mothballs that flutters up to my nose, daring me to sneeze. I can pretend it fits, right? The sleeves are a bit short and the end of it is a little long, but it's perfect. See?

I'm slightly disappointed as I realize I can't automatically become a perfect Japanese daughter simply by wrapping myself in someone else's kimono. I thought I could slip on a new identity as easily as I slipped on the silky robe. I am still smiling for the cameras, but am now conscious of my jeans, my freckles, my reddish brown hair, my California accent. I can put on as many kimonos as I want, but at some point I have to take them off, revealing my obvious American self.

Sick. What am I going to do? I can't eat this, I think to myself, while I smile and nod to the Japanese waitress who, according to my grandfather, asks me if I like fish custard soup. The table is full of exquisite Japanese delicacies that jiggle, smile or squish at me. It's 6:30 a.m. and I'm sitting in a traditional Japanese robe at a traditional low table on traditional tatami mats. My long legs don't fit under the table, and kneeling on my knees like proper Japanese women do is uncomfortable.

Apparently we're supposed to eat all of this food. The broiled fish stares at me with its one good eye and the sea shell seems to move on my plate. Rice is not served, nor water, nor tea because they are considered "fillers," leaving less room for the delicious raw things that squirm in front of me. My mom and I exchange frantic glances. It's impolite to not eat food in this country of extreme politeness. My stomach flips and gurgles in horror. I am disheartened. I thought I was going to come to Japan to prove how Japanese I am. I am clearly failing. I want so desperately to like the miniature, white shrimp that garnish the bright pink raw mystery meat. I can't do it. I eat the broiled fish and slyly sneak my untouched food onto my brother's plate. He looks over at me and rolls his eyes, but picks up his hashi, holding the two wooden eating utensils skillfully in his hand, pops a piece of raw something into his mouth, chews quickly and swallows. I look at the table in despair. Where are the ramen noodles? The teriyaki chicken? My stomach growls and I have a sudden craving for California Rolls.

SARAH KASUGA '06 likes sushi, drinking Snapple iced tea from martini glasses, Romans 12:12, and all things hapa.

GIRLS GUYS

ANDREW AHN '08

My brother likes to sing falsetto
in the car like a sexy female pop star
whose breasts ooze from the radio
or five fine-featured boys that girls
swarm over, trampling over guys
that may actually love her more than
I can communicate.
"Oh baby baby" he sings
like I wish she could sing to
me, but instead to thousands
and thousands of cheering
girls that slowly believe
in silicon, needles, and scalpels, handled expertly
by some horny 66 year old doctor, telling girls
like mine that C-cups are "substantial, but D-cups
are
For You!" See the fat get pumped
out of girls made into (stories about) soap
that my brother uses, everyday
"to open up pores and sweep the dirt away!" to get
a complexion like those
massive faces my brother drives by as
he sings, down a highway.

Palm tree tops line the sides like the guys
that line up to ogle a girl I once knew.

ANDREW AHN '08 is completely incapable of thinking of a byline for himself.

Omen, Johnny Lin ‘07

PAPER CRANES

ALISSA YAMAZAKI ‘08

You are pieces of a rainbow. Each band of color has been cut up into several pieces. Bright reds and oranges to rich purples, festive yellows, and blues that match the sky. All somewhat faded. Yet so vibrant. Someone has strung you together and left you in front of a fence in the middle of a desert. Or, you are decorations from a birthday party. Crinkled pieces of papier-mâché, or perhaps gift wrapping. Someone has swept you up into a neat pile at the base of a fence.

You are a group of paper cranes who have come to rest their wings here in Manzanar. A thousand paper cranes for good luck, sympathy, hopes, and dreams.

Paper cranes, how long have you been here? What have you seen other than the same blue sky, the chilly spring winds, and the barren ground? Can you see the grayish mountains in the distance? You see the same sight that the Japanese Americans in Manzanar saw when they lived in the dusty barracks. This is where they spent four years of their lives. Because of prejudice. Because of fear. Because of misunderstanding.

Your cousins I have seen in Hiroshima, too. Many, many cousins. They were at the foot of the commemorative statue, right next to the museum, the place where there is a piece of wall on which a person’s shadow is burnt forever, a clock that still points to the hour 8:15, pieces of burnt skin that once belonged to a living person, a melted bicycle. Against the bright blue sky stands the ghostly building now only its skeleton. Your cousins, too, feel what happened more than half a century ago on their side of the earth.

Paper cranes, who made you? A group of school children whom their teacher read stories to about Manzanar? Relatives of those who died deprived of freedom? Other Japanese Americans like me, who, though they have no relatives who experienced Manzanar, feel the same sadness towards this misunderstanding born in war. Someone who cares made you. Looking at you, I can feel the same wishes, hopes, dreams, and emotions of those who created you. Because they are mine too.

Paper cranes, I have made your brothers. They are not cranes that settle their wings in one place like you. My paper cranes travel to other people’s hands. I have made them to remind us of Amy Biehl, who died fighting against the disenfranchisement of black Africans in Cape Town, South Africa. She, too, was a victim of prejudice and hatred born from misunderstanding. To preserve her memory, I have asked for donations to the foundation dedicated to her cause. We handed out paper cranes born from our own hands to those who donate as reminders of Amy.

I preserve your legacy too, paper cranes. I have taught people how to create others like you. All from flat sheets of paper. They fly when the creator pulls on their tails - a miracle to many. They fly, connecting countries, minds, and emotions. They fly, just as you do, carrying hopes and dreams to unite the world.

ALISSA YAMAZAKI ‘08 acts the age of her shoe size.

MILITARIST APOLOGIA

CHRIS HU '06

A review of In Defense of Internment: The Case for 'Racial Profiling' in World War II and the War on Terror. by Michelle Malkin. Regnery, 2004. 376 pp., $27.95.

If Regnery, the publisher of *In Defense of Internment*, is any indication, right-wing presses continue to excel at producing style over substance. The press calls itself "the nation's preeminent conservative publisher," and though it might be contested by Random House's conservative imprint Crown Forum (whose star author is Ann Coulter), this is not so extravagant a claim. Regnery is certainly representative of the state of conservative publishing: nearly four years after Bill Clinton left office, the publisher still boasts three anti–Clinton titles (and one on Hilary) in the "Hot New Releases" section of its website, all purporting to explain why America's current problems are the fault of one vile man. Unlike liberal political publishers, Regnery boasts not of the serious reviews and literary awards its books have garnered, but rather of their *New York Times* bestseller status. Though the New Press (whose latest title is *Dick: The Man Who is President*) seems to be catching on, left-wing presses have been slow to ditch their analytical scruples for trashy screeds and the commercial success that results.

Where this approach to publishing has helped the right has been the development of vitriolic, telegenic pundits with a range of integrated media efforts—of which Michelle Malkin, who also moonlights for Fox News and works as a syndicated columnist, is but the latest. It will no doubt matter to Asian American readers that this particular conservative offering—a spirited attempt to justify internment of Japanese Americans and residents of Japanese ancestry during the Second World War, and by extension the racial profiling of Muslims today—is written by an Asian American woman. Malkin, née Maglalang, is the daughter of Filipino immigrants. The 'white' surname is that of her husband, whom she met in the course of D'Souza-esque rabble-rousing at Oberlin.

The irony of an Asian American writing *In Defense of Internment* cannot be ignored, but it is important to refrain from the temptation to label Malkin a traitor or sellout. Instead, it is fairer and far more interesting to note that Malkin's project, like many of its kind, is fueled by an irresistible desire to offend politically correct sensibilities; that this book's author is Asian American means it is all the more perfectly calibrated for this politics of giving offense. *In Defense of Internment* takes aim at the belief that the US government's wartime policies—which relocated 112,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them second-generation *Nisei*, and thus American citizens, to internment camps—were motivated by racism and wartime hysteria rather than military necessity.

Malkin wastes little time in resorting to politically weighted epithets, referring in the introduction to "Korematsu [of the 1944 Supreme Court case that affirmed the constitutionality of the relocation and internment] and his *fellow travelers* "[my emphasis]. Such shameless—not to mention hilariously anachronistic—red-baiting is joined by terms like "civil rights hypocrites" and "civil liberties absolutists," as well as a sizable dose of scorn for recent solidarity between Japanese Americans and Arab Americans. This crude posturing would mar a work of serious scholarship, but *In Defense of Internment* is clearly not intended as such. Here, the act of hyperbolic offensiveness is almost an end unto itself.

For the bulk of her evidence, the author relies on a set of declassified intelligence documents, the so-called 'MAGIC cables.' These intercepted Japanese communications, then available only to top US officials, pointed towards the existence of espionage rings involving Japanese Americans and Japanese resident aliens living in Hawaii and the mainland US. This information, along with a recounting of the Roosevelt administration's decision-making process, is convincing enough to show that at the time, internment was motivated at least in part by legitimate fears of Japanese espionage and potential Japanese attacks on the west coast of the United States.

Despite Malkin's case for the perceived military necessity of internment, she makes little coherent attempt to disprove the existence of racist motives. It is characteristic of her argument's simplicity that she fails to consider the idea that the Roosevelt administration's policies might have been motivated both by perceptions of necessity *and* by anti-Asian racism. Though Malkin claims, without much explanation, that Japan was the only Axis nation capable of launching an attack against the US, and that Italian and German nationals living in the US were also interned (about 3,000 and 11,000, respectively), Malkin has no convincing argument for why upwards of 75,000 American *citizens* of Japanese ancestry—including women, children, and the elderly, since individual guilt was of no concern to the government—needed to be placed in camps *en masse*.

Furthermore, Malkin makes much of the distinction between Japanese Americans with US citizenship and non-citizen resident aliens of Japanese descent (whom she refuses to dignify with the term "Japanese American"), yet she neglects to mention the 1922 Supreme Court case *Ozawa v. United States*, which restricted naturalized citizenship to whites and blacks. Were it not for this racist policy prohibiting their naturalization, one imagines, *Issei* might have been far less likely to hold divided loyalties.

Problematic as it is, Malkin's discussion of Japanese internment is at least lengthy. *In Defense of Internment*'s cover features the face of September 11 hijacker Mohammed Atta alongside that of Richard Kotoshirodo, a Japanese American who aided a downed Japanese fighter pilot on the Hawaiian island of Niihau; its subtitle promises a "case" for racial profiling in today's "war on terror." Yet Malkin's connection between Japanese internment and our nation's current situation is pitifully underdeveloped. Though offhand references to contemporary terrorism are sprinkled throughout the book, she devotes a mere 17 pages to sustained argument in defense of racial and religious profiling.

Early in the book, Malkin claims that her central thesis "is that the national security measures taken during World War II were justifiable, *given what was known and not known at the time*" [her emphasis]. It is not until much deeper in the book that the logic of Malkin's connection of this claim to the present emerges: because "ethnic activists" exploit the distorted history of Japanese internment,

"In their efforts to fight terrorism, the current wartime administration is hampered by politically correct sensitivity to, and unwarranted guilt over, a false account of its predecessors' actions to protect the homeland six decades ago."

Never mind that President Roosevelt would have balked at so crude a notion as "the homeland." For Malkin, if one demolishes the "politically correct sensitivity" and "unwarranted guilt" associated with public memory of internment, the logical path has been cleared for a whole range of policies targeted against Arab and Muslim Americans.

This conceptual leap is laughably inadequate. Malkin makes no attempt to explain how these very different circumstances—a conventional war between states and a never-ending war against 'terrorism' and 'evil'—are acceptably comparable. While the author stops short of advocating the mass internment of American Muslims, she does recommend "threat profiling" of Muslims, scoffing at the concerns of those who fear racism and erosion of civil liberties. Yet all Malkin has proved regarding Japanese internment is that it was not motivated solely by racism and hysteria—this does not and should not foreclose debate about the pitfalls of assumptions of collective guilt, the need for balance between rights and security, and the fact that religious and racial profiling in the apparently endless 'war on terror' would permanently render Arab and Muslim Americans second-class citizens (or keep them non-citizens, as it were).

Though the book weighs in at a hefty 376 pages, less than half of that total is occupied by Malkin's argument; the remainder is devoted to historical photographs and copies of declassified intelligence documents. These documents are apparently intended as incontrovertible proof, but they merely serve to underscore the author's desperate faith in the infallibility of military intelligence and the wisdom of the government's use of that information.

The dangerous assumption underlying Malkin's discussion of the MAGIC cables is a fetishization of all things military, particularly the notion of 'intelligence.' It used to be commonly joked that the phrase 'military intelligence' was an oxymoron; today, Americans seem all too willing to fawn over it. Most US citizens accept the necessity of leaving some clandestine decisions in the hands of top officials—the government can hardly be expected to make all of its current Al Qaeda intelligence open to the public. Yet an increasing number of people, Malkin included, take trust in the government's wartime decision-making powers to a profoundly antidemocratic level.

Malkin's view is that asking too many questions of the government is tantamount to risking our national security; we ought to simply shut up and accept what the Bush administration decides is best. Per her flimsy analogy to the Second World War, "'Loose Lips Sink Ships.'" Since the 'war on terror' is likely to continue indefinitely, Malkin herself admits that "we must steel ourselves for the possibility of a long-lasting reduction in the overall level of individual liberty we have heretofore possessed." Openly presenting the choice as one of "civil liberties *or* survival"[my emphasis], she forecasts this loss of liberty without any hint of regret or complexity.

As useful as Malkin's book is in reminding readers not to blithely accept the now-standard assumption that Japanese internment was motivated purely by racism, *In Defense of Internment* fails completely in its attempts to justify any current or future racial profiling policy. The conservative fondness for targeting liberal sacred cows can be entertaining—and even apt—but Malkin is hardly capable of grappling with the inescapably difficult questions of our times, for which simple militarist solutions can hardly suffice.

CHRIS HU '06 is a mocha-sipping Marxist.

River, Matthew Forkin '06

TEACUP IN A STORM

KOJI MASUTANI '05

I may soon embark on a journey that has been plaguing my mind for a number of weeks now. The journey will take me through Russia, Mongolia, and possibly India. I am told, however, that to arrive at my final destination in the shortest period of time, I should have to trek directly through Siberia. Of course, the more comfortable but less affordable route is by sea. I would simply board one ship after another from port to port with little concern over losing my way. Since British staff will compose much of the crew on these ships, my inability to speak another language will be no hindrance to my travels. My mother mailed me 1800 pounds a fortnight ago, so I can well afford to travel in this manner. It would be prudent, however, to set aside her generous gift should I need it upon my arrival in the Orient.

It was first suggested to me to embark on this trip on a quiet winter's evening about six years ago. I was inside a charming little dormitory at the school where I teach. If memory serves me well, however, the context within which the suggestion was made was not pleasant. I was arguing heatedly about colonialism with an Indian student who had come to Britain to study medicine. The student was of the opinion that colonialism was a degrading process that privileged the coloniser on social, economic, and cultural terms. I maintained that colonialism, though an imperfect system, in fact ought to be seen in a favourable light as it set out to civilise and bring rationality to parts of the world still entrenched in the dark ages. If anything, colonisation privileged and empowered those colonised. This last statement, as I recall, infuriated my student. We both lost our civility after this and commenced a debate about why one particular race was superior to another, based on sport. I argued that their mastery of horse-riding and cricket was a testament to the racial superiority of the British. My student asked why, if this was indeed the case, the best cricketer at the school was a Pakistani and the most accomplished equestrian a Thai Prince. I was displeased with his point and I believe our discussion ended abruptly when I sent the student to his private quarters. It was then, just as the student was leaving, that he remarked, "You should go to the Orient and see the injustice for yourself. Perhaps you'll learn a few things while you are there." My immediate reaction to these words is not within memory, but I am certain that this was the first time someone had suggested I travel to the Orient.

Sadly, I cannot recall the student's name, but I attribute my preoccupation with the Orient to this very conversation. Last night, the thought of re-establishing contact with my student and informing him of my thrilling travel plans greatly appealed to me, but my enthusiasm soon subsided when I realised that much of our past relationship is now lost. This recognition kept me awake at night, and my thoughts wandered in much the same way I imagined a lost ship would drift out at sea. Sitting alone in bed, I thought about how, in the duration of time I sat in darkness, people were up and about under the warm sun somewhere in a distant land.

It is possible my memory of my conversation with this student, in turn, was sparked by a recent incident in the language department. I should emphasise that the full details of this incident are still unclear, but apparently an argument broke out between French and Chinese teachers in regard to the scheduling of lessons. I can only presume this conflict was the result of a long-term escalation in bad relations since tension between these groups was already common knowledge among teachers and students alike. The working relationship between these two groups deteriorated when a debate on academic grounds changed into a political one, and due to the tendency of politics to cloud the window for rational debate, some teachers were compelled to resort to physical violence. By physical violence, by no means do I mean the kind that can inflict injury. I assume there were light slaps here and there.

In the end, the Chinese program was abolished. I should mention that a French teacher who emerged as a victor in this academic conflict was pleased with

Bangkok,
Ellen Chu '07

this outcome. This was a woman who had, on many occasions, professed that educating was her highest priority in life. I am inclined, however, to think that her devotion to education was overstated. Since less education can now be imparted to students in the absence of Chinese, one is led to ask how students' lives have changed for the better. This teacher's overall inconsistency suggests to me that the disagreement in the language department cannot be reduced to differences in educational opinions, but rather, to odds in culture.

In the absence of Oriental teachers since that time, it has been dreadfully inconvenient planning my journey. I am increasingly regretful that I had not befriended teachers from the Chinese program prior to their departure. I was disappointed the other day to find only one book in the library that engaged the topic of the Orient. The author of this work, Joseph Conrad, apparently never set foot in the Orient, and the contents of his book are based on his imagination. Perhaps this is the reason why he is considered an original writer, but I failed to see the practical applicability of his work. In the library, I wondered if dictionaries existed in other languages. I speculated whether someone in another part of the world was struck by the same inspiration that struck Samuel Johnson. The notion of cataloging soon turned my mind to maps. I sadly discovered that only European maps were available in the library, but a librarian suggested that I explore the large globe that sat at the library's entrance. I set off for this with magnifying glass in hand. I discovered, however, that the region of the world that most interested me had yet to be fully charted by Western explorers.

I was startled to find a student standing directly beneath me as I was stooped with obsession over the Indian Sea. The curvature of the globe and my optical instrument arched my line of sight, obscuring my peripheral vision. To a third party, it would have appeared as if I was inspecting the boy's hair with my magnifying glass, and I looked around hoping no one had been misled. The student before me was of Chinese descent and could not have been more than 12 years old.

"Isn't it funny, sir, how there are two places named Singapore?" he asked.

I turned my eyes to the globe and, indeed, there were two countries in the Orient labeled Singapore. An obvious error. "Very keen of you to have spotted that," I said to the boy.

To which he responded, "I have sent countless letters to the manufacturers in London informing them of their mistake, but they seem to take pleasure in ignoring me."

"Oh dear, that's really a pity."

"It is, sir," he replied, looking at the globe with concern. "This defective model was released two years ago and two-hundred thousand have been sold since throughout Britain."

"That's really a pity," I repeated.

"Which means that two hundred thousand people are under the impression that there are two countries named Singapore."

"When in fact, there is only one." I said.

"Yes, sir."

"Two hundred thousand seems an awful lot of people," I said gravely.

"This number doesn't even include those who look at the model in passing. I suspect many globes are placed in public spaces, much like this one."

The boy's observations were astute, and I was impressed with his broad sense of the world, despite his age and height. Unlike most students, his outlook seemed to transcend borders and oceans. In fact, this outlook is precisely what set him apart from British students, and I was prompted to ask him the following:

"By any chance, do you know if there are books here about the Orient? There's bound to be more than one."

The boy suddenly laughed heartily, as if I had made an extremely witty comment. I quickly realised, however, that he did think I intended a witty comment and, as I wanted to be on informal terms with young students, I too laughed with gusto.

This brief interaction in the library brought my attention to an under-utilised source of information. It occurred to me that my own students could assist in planning my journey. In my lesson, I announced my forthcoming trip and assigned the six Oriental students in my class to draw maps of any region outside Europe that they could summon from memory (the British students were assigned algebraic equations). This proved successful as I collected at least a dozen detailed maps. I then asked if there were any suggestions anyone could make in regard to challenges I might confront. A student from China, named Huang, immediately had recommendations for crossing the border from Mongolia to his country:

"It is imperative, sir, that you do not, under any circumstances, cross the border on foot. If you do, you will be arrested and God knows what will happen from that point. You will know that you are too close to the border on foot if locals approach you with their wrists pressed together. They are trying to explain that you will be arrested."

"Thank you," I said, "but how am I to cross the border if I need to?"

"You can do so on a horse-drawn cart, sir. They can be hired in the Mongolian region. However, when you negotiate prices, you must not, under any circumstances, bargain the driver down too low. If you do, the driver would rather transport fruit across the border and earn more money that way."

"So, at a certain price, fruit is more expensive than a person?"

"Yes, sir."

I ordered four students to commit this information to paper. Another student said, "My family would be honored to have you as a guest at our palace, should you find yourself in Thailand, sir."

"You are most kind." I replied.

"However," he said, "if you travel there by train from Delhi, and local passengers look at you and make cutting motions with their hands at their throats -- as if mimicking a beheading -- there is nothing to be alarmed about, sir. They only mean to convey your tall stature and express that you would be able to stand in the train without stooping if you had no head. This has been a common misunderstanding with past European guests."

"Excellent," I said.

Seated somewhere behind me, an Egyptian student caught my attention with a light cough.

"Sir," he whispered. "If you find yourself in Cairo at any point on your journey, please do not order watermelons in restaurants. It would not be in your best interests to do so."

"May I ask why this is the case?"

"There are merchants who capitalise on the watermelon trade. Since watermelons are sold on the basis of their weight, merchants are known to inject water into these watermelons -- water from the river, I might add, and water from the river is detrimental to one's health."

"I see," I replied.

"Sir," interrupted another student. "You should also not be alarmed if tour guides in Cairo say, 'Here is a place for you to spread your legs.'"

"I beg your pardon?"

"They don't mean spread your legs sir. They mean stretch them -- stretch your legs."

"Excellent!" I said.

That evening, I invited all my Oriental students to tea and biscuits. In the comfort of the school dormitory, discussions about my anticipated trip led to many rare insights about foreign customs. I cannot stress

how grateful I was for everyone's support. Some students even volunteered to accompany me on my trip, but I would hear none of this as I suspected they only wanted to avoid school.

In my university days, a respected Professor once told me that one's education was not complete until one had traveled to Europe. Thus, when I completed my studies at the age of twenty, I ventured to Paris, Rome, Berlin, and many other European cities. I must say that the trip made an ever-lasting impression on me as a young man. To see paintings and touch sculptures that people at home could only read about were beautiful experiences. The Eiffel Tower had been completed the week I arrived in Paris, and for a period of two hours in my life, I stood in the highest structure on earth with thirty other people, many of whom had come from distant parts of the world.

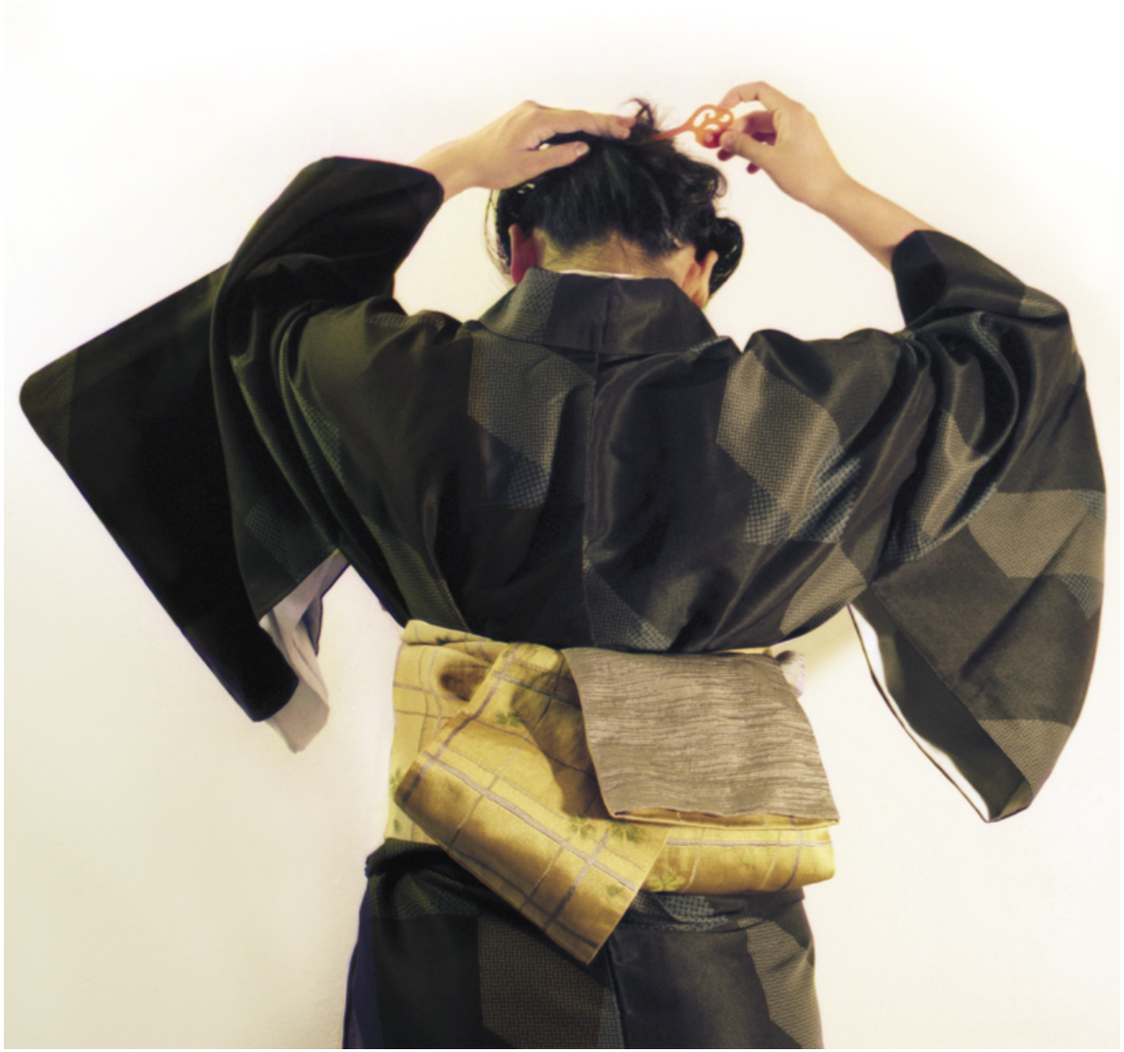
I remember, at nine hundred feet above the city of Paris, I happened to be squinting through a telescope when a smart-looking Oriental gentleman in top hat and tailcoat tapped my shoulder. He must have mistaken me for a tour guide as he asked me an awful lot of questions without seeming apologetic for my time. In fact, he behaved as if I was expected to respond to his questions and even serve him refreshments. Nevertheless, as I am by nature hospitable even to strangers, I answered his questions as best I could, and brought him wine (at my expense) when he asked for it. It was only after I returned home to London that I saw a photograph of this very gentleman in a prominent local newspaper, under the headline, "Emperor of Japan Visits Paris for World's Fair."

Only recently do I remember a peculiar concern I had before setting off to Europe all those years ago. I remember being troubled by the idea of arriving in Europe and being unable to find English tea. I was quite nervous about this at the time, and I now seem to experience similar anxieties as I make preparations to travel again. This time, however, such concerns are warranted as Oriental cultures do not overlap with European ones, significantly lessening my chances of finding tea.

In recent weeks, my nights have been thoroughly upset by dreams about spilling tea. Since I will no doubt board a ship at some point on my trip, the question of how to prevent tea from spilling on a rocking ship has been pressing my mind night and day. The most terrifying image haunting me at the moment is one where I stand on the deck of a ship with teacup in hand, and suddenly I see an oncoming storm, a most terrible storm with clouds so dark I cannot distinguish them from the darkness of a night sky. I try to prevent rainfall from falling into my teacup, but the mere thought of doing so overwhelms me to the point that I am paralysed. So I stand immobile on the deck of the ship, with teacup clutched between my trembling fingers – and thunder, lightning, and heavy rain all around me. In another dream, I pour myself a hot cup of tea the second I set foot off British soil, and I try to ration this single cup of tea throughout my trip. The realisation of how small each portion would have to be in order to last the trip, and the impossible task of safely carrying a delicate teacup as I journey through jungle, sea, and desert is deeply overwhelming.

I cannot anticipate from this side of the earth and at this present moment what I will encounter in the coming weeks. Perhaps I will learn things that are not even remotely conceivable from this point in time. I cannot help thinking that I will find ways of seeing the world that will not easily be interpreted or understood in the context of Western paradigms. I have many reservations about my forthcoming trip, but I must admit that I am also delighted and curious about what I will discover. I suspect that, in many ways, my true education will begin henceforth.

KOJI MASUTANI '05 plays the bagpipes.



Untitled, EunSung Kim '05

BENDING

KATY TSAI '06

They say humans are creatures of habit. My father sleeps and wakes at the same times every day. My brother sweats through regular homework and workout schedules. But while they divide their lives into neat, predictable segments, I drift from moment to moment, flitting from one to the other as the mood takes me. I laugh at those other creatures of habit; I could never live with their planned periods and ruts of routine, could never tie myself down to the steady tick of a clock. I laugh at these creatures; and then remember that almost every summer, I make a twenty-four-hour pilgrimage to Taiwan with these very same creatures to visit my grandfather.

Almost every summer, my family leaves Toronto and journeys west across Canada, across the Pacific Ocean, across the International Date Line, until we reach Chia-Yi, the capital city of a province in southwestern Taiwan. My grandfather lives here with my grandmother in a house—no, a mansion—that is entirely too big for two elderly people to live in by themselves. If I close my eyes, I can picture it perfectly. I can see the thick iron gates out front, and know if I walk through them, I will hear the furious barking of the guard dogs to my left, and the serene rush of swirling water in the fish pond to my right. I know if I walk straight ahead, I will pass through the front door, pause to take off my shoes and open the screen door that keeps the mosquitoes out. I also know if I gently close the screen behind me and turn right, I will see my grandfather shuffling his way down the hall, slippered feet polishing the hardwood floor. The corners of his mouth will be turned downwards, his back will be gently curved, and his shoulders will push forward as he moves towards me.

My grandfather is never late for anything; he has breakfast at seven, lunch at noon, dinner at six. A brisk walk before breakfast, a quick nap before lunch, a shower before dinner. For a long time, this schedule seemed dull, tedious, and suffocatingly monotonous to me, yet my grandfather follows it faithfully with the start of each new day. His movements are guided by the two clocks on the first floor, clocks that have been there for as long as I can remember. The rustic wooden one mounted on the dining room wall chimes a delicate melody every half hour. The glass grandfather clock in the living room, edged in brass and outfitted with gleaming pipes, strikes its melancholy bass tones every quarter hour. The clocks in this house are a punctualist's dream, but I, of course, pay them no heed. I get up in time for breakfast one day, and completely miss it the next; my grandfather and I can live in the same house for a month yet rarely see each other for what feels like days on end. Whenever I do see him, he is always doing the same thing—eating, exercising, reading, writing—in the same places—kitchen, outside, study room. Every time I return to Chia-Yi, I wonder at his strict adherence to routine, at his boring rigidity, and I cannot help but feel smug that my spontaneous days are so unlike his.

I could not have explained then that my haughtiness stemmed from incredulous admiration, admiration that he had the discipline to follow through with his routine every single day. I wrapped my spontaneity around myself, as if using it like a security blanket were the only way I could make myself different from the rest of my family. My father and brother—and to a lesser extent, my mother—all understood the importance of being organized, of being efficient, of creating a routine and sticking to it. They called me the idealist, the daydreamer, the oblivious one. Far from being insulted, I was secretly pleased; spontaneous daydreaming was my small rebellion, my small escape from what I felt was the dry world of routine.

None of this was going through my head the morning I saw my grandfather smile. I remember waking up early one morning to use the bathroom, and on the way back heard the sounds of the front gate opening. The heavy clanking of metal against metal drifted in through the open sliding doors that led out to the balcony. I padded over to peek outside, and saw my grandfather, far away and far below, stepping briskly through the pink air as I had seen him do countless times over the years. He wore his gray and navy blue sweatsuit, and the spring in his step was visible even with his slightly bent back and gently rounded shoulders. He exercised in his peculiar way, lifting both arms in front of him before throwing them back behind him with each brisk step. His tall, gaunt figure moved back and forth across the cement path outside—his makeshift track. He walked from left to right, to left, to right, as a gradually brightening yellow light replaced the pastel streaks in the sky. I soon bored of the repetitiveness and moved to go back to bed, but just then I swear I caught the slightest lifting of the corners of his mouth, his version of a smile. I looked again, squinting to study him closer, and realized I had not been mistaken. I was touched. Smiles from my grandfather were rare. Could it be that, trapped in monotonous repetition, he was actually enjoying himself? I went back to bed, restlessly thinking I might be missing out on something. I didn't realize then that his routine, far from constraining him, opened up space for him to create time for things that mattered most.

I began to take more careful notice of just how different my days were from his. Assuming I got up before noon, I squandered my mornings; perhaps by reading, perhaps by walking idly around, perhaps by gazing out the window. By the time I woke up, my grandfather would already have exercised, showered, eaten breakfast, and sat down at the desk in his study to read or to do paperwork. I usually found him there, at his desk, for the politeness instilled in me (by my parents, or by myself?) urged me to at least say good morning to him before I went to get food for myself.

That morning, my voice was quieter than usual; he didn't hear me speak. Feeling self-conscious, I waited a moment before speaking up again. I can see him now in his scoop-necked, short-sleeved undershirt, the white cotton worn thin and soft from vigorous washing. He sits in his padded leather chair so that his right side faces me. He tucks his feet under the desk. His forearms may rest on the desk's surface as he studies a book, or he may hold a pen carefully with his shaky right hand as he leaves inky black marks behind on a sheet of paper. His motions, careful and deliberate, are exquisitely unassuming in their slowness. The quiet scene before me is one of peace and joy, not—as I might have thought before—of boredom. I trace my eyes over the white of his shirt and the brown of his skin; he leans forward, and his back curves smoothly like the upper half of a question mark. His head of white hair is slightly damp from his morning shower, and his bushy white eyebrows are knitted over the thick black frames of

his glasses. He is concentrating. For a moment, I see the quietness, the calmness, the pleasure he takes in his routine. Suddenly self-conscious, I withdraw.

Why? I realize now it was embarrassment and guilt. Embarrassment because I found myself wanting to reach out to someone who I, for so long, had purposefully avoided modeling myself after, and guilt at not having felt this way sooner. I had begun to find perfect, quiet beauty in a situation that I would have previously found dull. I thought of my father's many attempts to make me talk regularly to my grandparents, and of how much I had resented those moments. I thought of the time my father called Chia-Yi from our home in Toronto, handing me the phone even as I scrabbled to find an excuse, any excuse, to avoid the awkward pauses and broken small talk I knew lay just over the line. I thought of the time my father had left me alone with my grandfather when he knew very well I could barely hold my own in Taiwanese. I thought of how my grandfather had bent toward me, his watery but intelligent eyes magnified behind his thick glasses, waiting, expecting, listening to what I was struggling to articulate. I hadn't been ready. So I gave up on reaching out, and contented myself with letting time slip by, unnoticed.

These days, time no longer passes me by; I mark its passage with changes wrought in myself as I watch my grandfather going about his routine. I see him slowly bending over to the delicate chimes and sonorous peals of the clocks—bending to read, bending to write, bending toward me—and the carefulness with which he bends reminds me that he was a surgeon. Sometimes I catch him bending over to read, and suddenly my imagination transforms the book lying open on the table into a patient—perhaps my grandmother, or perhaps his own leg, depending on which story from my childhood I am remembering.

As I continue to observe, I realize he is my future as well as my past. I see in him my own aspirations to be a surgeon. We are perhaps more alike than I thought. I am slowly drawn to the quietness of his routine. The tedium recedes, the beauty and strength of character emerge, and I cannot help but wonder if I am destined to appreciate the world of routine.

KATY TSAI '06 wants to age gracefully.

COMMUNITY TIES: GROWING UP JAPANESE AMERICAN

JESSICA KAWAMURA '07

Defining Community

From the time I was 8 years old, Friday nights were synonymous with Japanese American basketball. After dinner was over and it was dark outside, my mom and I would head out to my basketball practice, often driving over a half an hour to get to our destination. I still distinctly remember the chill of the evening air, the yellow glow of light as I would open the gym door to the sound of bouncing balls, and the squeak of shoes. I can still see the parents sitting on the bleachers chatting while their kids practiced lay-ups and jump shots. As I recall these childhood memories, there is a strange sense of familiarity and belonging that made basketball more than simply the act of playing the sport, or in my case, often warming the bench.

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, known for its ethnic diversity and liberal politics, I could take being Asian American for granted. As a kid, I doubt that I ever thought about ethnicity in the context of community. At school, I always had a diverse group of friends, while at other activities such as church and basketball, my peers were Japanese or Asian American. That was just the way life was.

Looking back on my experiences as a *Yonsei*, or fourth-generation Japanese American, I ponder the meaning of ethnic community. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, my Japanese American community would most clearly fall under the definition of: "A group viewed as forming a distinct segment of society." Although this may make sense in terms of checking a Census box, I feel that there must be more holding the Japanese American community together, more than our ethnic and racial differences from the rest of society. Hence, a broader definition of community may be more apt: "a group of people having common interests." Our experience of forced segregation and the need to preserve our culture and history necessitate the existence of a community in which we can come together to support each other. Therefore community is more than the result of an imposed category, but the consequence of shared needs and interests.

Roots of the Japanese American Community

Historically, the Japanese American community in which I grew up has a unique experience that has rendered us different from other Asian American communities. Unlike those formed by recent immigrants, ours consists of mostly third and fourth generation Americans, no longer intimately linked to our native tongue and homeland. The roots of our community lie with the Japanese American immigrants who came to the United States in search of economic opportunity around the turn of the century. Restricted by laws that would not allow them to own land or become citizens, the *Issei*, or first generation immigrants, struggled with racism and language barriers. Consequently, these immigrants created their own insular communities that served both their needs, as well as their American-born *Nisei* children. By the early 1940s, many of our families had become targets of anti-Asian sentiment. Immigration from Japan was halted in 1924.

World War II and the resulting internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast turned the community upside down. Internment resulted in the loss of

homes, businesses, personal belonging, and income. Family structure broke down as a result of communal life and families and communities were divided over the question of loyalty to the US government. Soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested *Issei* community leaders, leaving their *Nisei* sons and daughters, only in their teens and twenties, with the responsibility of holding the community together. Despite the hardships of incarceration, these young people reorganized their community in the camps. As they tried to keep life as normal as possible, they organized baseball, dances, and religious groups. When Japanese Americans returned home after the war, they could rely on church hostels and family friends to help them cope with the sense of loss and begin the normalization of their lives.

For the Sansei, or third generation, who grew up in the 50s and 60s, the community was ever present. Activities such as basketball and baseball, scouting, and social clubs, kept young people involved with one another in the evening and on weekends. Many of the organizations, including churches and temples, would continue through the years to support the *Yonsei*. This is reflected in my own experience as a *Yonsei*, growing up playing basketball, attending a Japanese American Christian Church, and participating in cultural summer school. This is my community.

The Challenges of Maintaining Community

The stereotype of the "model minority" as quiet, hardworking, and successful originally referred to the Japanese American community. In 1966, its author William Peteresen claimed that we were doing everything right—keeping our kids in school, adopting American culture, achieving economic success—yet if this were the case, we would not longer need the support of the ethnic community.

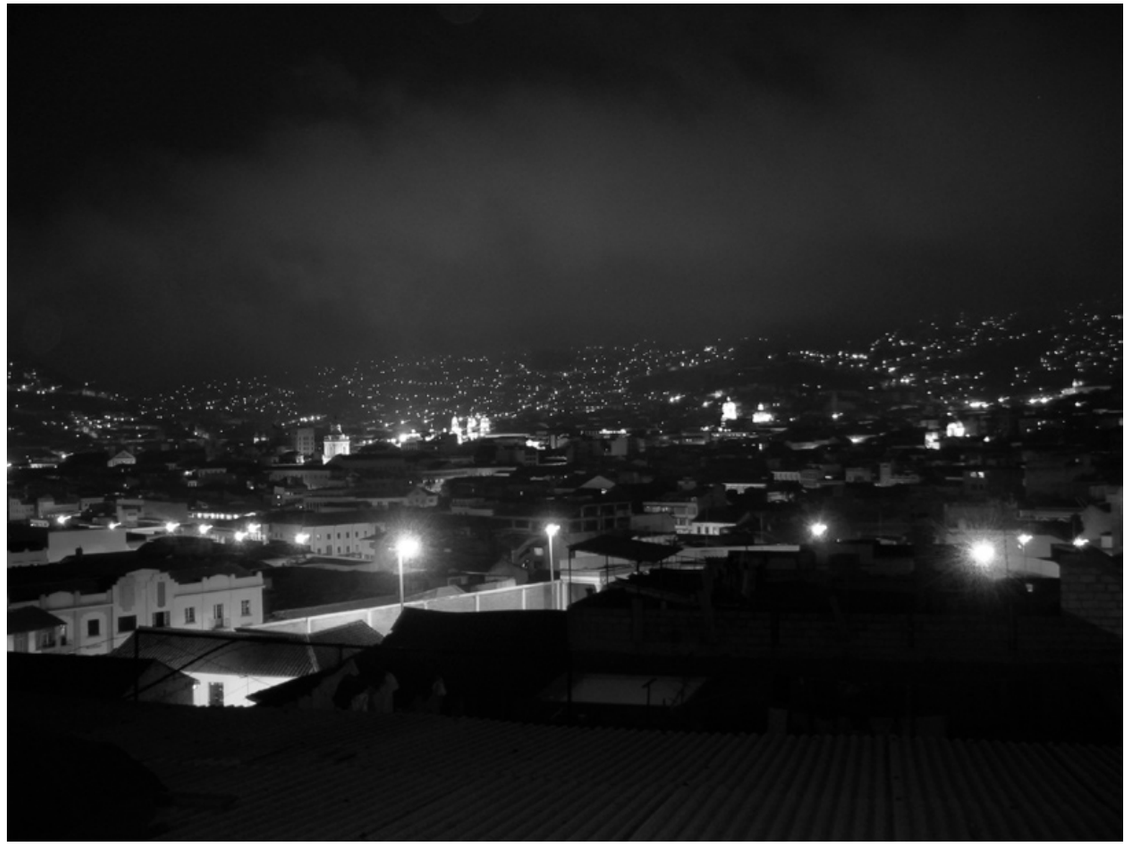
The forces that created our community, most notably the language barrier and discrimination in home ownership generally, no longer apply to the experiences of many Japanese Americans today. Although we may attend a church where our parents grew up, we no longer live in those same neighborhoods. Probably less than half of us are bilingual, let alone speak solely Japanese. In fact, most Japanese American churches no longer hold services in Japanese. Language barriers do not confine us to the ethnic church nor does overt discrimination solely bind us to Japanese American social clubs. Furthermore, it is more convenient to participate in these broader community activities as families move out to the suburbs. In addition, as our community continues to diversify, we are faced with question of how we can incorporate the *Shin-Issei* (recent immigrants) and Hapas (Asians who are biracial and multiracial), both of which groups have been historically isolated from the community.

The Japanese American community has for years been feeling the effect of these changes in demographics and population composition. Many church congregations are dwindling in numbers, some scouting programs have ended, and basketball leagues have been opened up to all Asian Americans. For example, my church, which once supported a thriving Scouting program, no longer sponsors one. Most basketball teams include a large number of players who are not part Japanese American, most often Chinese Americans. Some teams have even pulled out of the Japanese American leagues, instead opting for Asian American ones. Questions have arisen about whether youth programs are exclusionary or whether they are just primarily serving Japanese Americans as they have in the past. Personally, I have even heard some older community members say that we will cease to exist as an ethnic group. I believe that it is not a matter of if we will exist, but a matter of what form our community will take. Meeting the needs of the next generation will involve effectively transitioning leadership to younger generations. As needs change, the community must change as well—activities that worked for the last three decades may not serve the next generation of Japanese American youth.

The Future of Japanese America

In the future, what will hold the Japanese American community together is what always has: a shared common sense of identity and belonging. Historically, members of the Japanese American community have come together to support one another, as in the face of the adversity posed by internment. Friendships formed and nurtured over generations create a sense of shared history and experience. Community is more than collective difference, more than even the activities in which we participate—community is connections between individuals, families, and organizations arising from common experience. It is about my mom's high school classmates who bring their kids to basketball practice and the ladies at church who send me care packages on Halloween, the peers with whom I grew up and the new people I meet. While I have always had a diverse group of friends at school, I have remained grounded in my ethnic community. The Japanese American community continues to be a safe place for me to learn about my history, express my culture, and be an activist for change.

JESSICA KAWAMURA '07 is continuing to come to terms with what it means to be an Asian American, and a person in general.



Quito at Night, Ecuador, Delphine Huang ‘05

Sunset, Matthew Forkin ‘06

MONSTER FANGS AND FAIRYTALES

LANA ZAMAN ‘08

Devanshi loved the story of Sleeping Beauty when she was a little girl, but she never truly understood it until she was twenty-five and pregnant for the third time. She poured the tea into her husband’s cup and stared at him unable to understand how she had ever been attracted to him. Her ears were ringing with Ammu’s incessant screeching lectures: she was holding the teapot all wrong and her hair looked like Kali’s, and if this child was another girl she would have to kick her out of the house. Devanshi had long since learned to block out her mother-in-law’s voice as well as her husband’s, upon the rare occasion that he actually spoke to her. Most of the time he sat quietly like a scared little boy with his eyes flashing about, and let his mother do the talking.

Devanshi was shy as a little girl, but she had slowly gotten over that, thanks to her mother’s gentle speeches—not lectures, not scoldings, just delicately woven, deliberate speeches. Devanshi remembered running out of her cousin’s fifth birthday party, tears streaming down her puffy pink dress. There were so many people there, people she’d never seen before. She looked up at Ammu’s face, eyebrows scrunched up making wrinkles on her forehead and nostrils beginning to flare. She didn’t say anything. They just walked home quietly. Ammu began preparing another speech. She never yelled, not since the time Devanshi had pricked her finger on her mother’s sewing machine.

Devanshi was 6 years old. Papa was at work fixing Mrs. Malhotra’s T.V set, and Ammu was in the kitchen roasting chapattis for dinner. Devanshi was enchanted by her mother’s sewing machine—the magic little monster that roared and screamed and replaced buttons on sweaters with a tiny silver fang. Devanshi had always wanted to make herself beautiful gowns like the ones she heard of in fairy tales that Ammu read to her at bedtime. Her hand wandered over to the machine’s spinning handle. Ammu had warned her before never to touch the sewing machine, but Devanshi knew she would be forgiven when Ammu saw the beautiful job she’d done stitching her silk lehenga. Her glance shifted from the machine to the lehenga and back again. She moved instinctively, one hand twirling the handle, the other holding the lehenga, softly pushing its gossamer magic under the fang of the monster. Her eyes were fixated on the little white spool of thread as it spun into the most intricate patterns. It took her a minute before she even realized the needle had gone straight through her finger. As she yanked her hand away, she saw the blood smear across the lehenga and she cried more. Ammu flew in.

“What happened?!” she screamed. Before Devanshi had a chance to answer, Ammu had run her finger under cold water and bandaged it.

“Now Devanshi,” Ammu began after the girl had settled down. “I have told you many times before not to use the sewing machine! Why don’t you listen to me? Look what you’ve done! You’ve cut your finger and spoiled your new lehenga. Now what are you going to wear to you cousin’s wedding? Do you think we can just buy you a new one? You papa and I saved money to buy that silk. Don’t ever do anything so foolish again!”

At this Devanshi burst into tears all over again. Just then Papa walked in.

“What have you done to my girl?” he demanded. When he had heard what happened he insisted that Devanshi was only a child and not responsible for her actions. He took her outside for a walk down the dreary street, wet with the monsoon rain. Devanshi watched the taxis and autorikshas noisily speeding by. She clung tighter to Papa’s hand.

“It’s okay Devanshi,” he told her.

They walked to the market down the road. A snake charmer sat on the ground with a sly grin and a cobra that looked like it was on the verge of starving to death. Middle-aged men knelt by the sidewalk selling brightly colored bangles. A man dressed like Hanuman danced about like a monkey with a wild smile. Devanshi watched them all with eyes as big as gulab jammuns.

“Devanshi, you can have anything you want from here,” Papa told her.

She whirled about, eyes leaping from shop to shop. She stared at the glittery bangles and fluorescent hair barrettes, the plastic mirrors and hideous frilly golden frocks. Finally a colorful picturebook caught her eye. The cover showed a beautiful girl like Cinderella but dreamier, darker, heavier, as if the weight of her dreams was weighing her down. “Sleeping Beauty” it read across the top in dark blue letters.

“Papa, I want that!” she told him. Papa laughed and bought her the book after bargaining with the bookseller. On the way home Papa stopped her.

“Are you feeling better now Devanshi?” he asked. She nodded. “I think it’s good if you try to listen to your Ammu from now on. It would make her happy. Okay?” She looked down nervously and nodded her head. Ammu apologized that evening, and Devanshi was never scolded again... Not until she was married anyway.

“Would you stand up straight Devanshi! The way you slouch I wouldn’t be surprised if your child were born a cripple!” Devanshi came back from her little daydream. Her childhood fears now seemed so foolish. She had once had the luxury to cry over a silly cut, which was nothing in comparison to the bruises Ammu had given her when she had her last daughter.

Devanshi went to wake up the girls, Din and Raat, the tiny beauties that soaked up all her frustration and symbolized her suffering. Devanshi loved the first baby she had, hoping she’d finally found an escape from her dreadful life at home. She had been foolish to hope. Every time Devanshi looked into the child's eyes she was reminded of her irritable, selfish mother-in-law. Devanshi could see her child growing into her mother-in-law. How could Din be beautiful? How would she ever be beautiful growing in a house as twisted as it was, with a grandmother whose soul had died the day her husband was buried and a mother who was still a little girl? Devanshi did her best, raising her daughter with all the love and compassion her parents had given her. But no girl raised in such a house could ever grow strong or confident or happy. She would see pain and heartlessness. She would grow fearful and bitter and angry. It was like trying to

bake cookies in a furnace.

Raat had been equally disappointing. Devanshi hoped to have a son so Ammu would finally stop nagging her and let her raise her children in peace, but as fate would have it, Devanshi bore another girl. This time Ammu was not so forgiving. She beat her and told her if she had one more daughter she would send her back to her parents. Devanshi looked down bitterly and nodded her head, knowing that Ammu would never send her away. She did her best to keep Ammu away from her daughters and give them happiness, but she'd lost that the day she left her parent's house. And so she had no happiness to give them. Only love. And though her love was plentiful, it was somehow empty.

"Wake up girls," Devanshi called her daughters. "Come on. It's time for breakfast." They got up slowly, rubbing the sleep out of their eyes. Devanshi helped them dress and brought them to the kitchen. The girls sat down and began chattering about their recently married cousin's husband and what their husbands would be like when they got married. Devanshi couldn't help but smile. Of course Ammu was already hushing them with her lectures on how they were too young to be thinking of marriage, and husbands die anyway, leaving you with a son to raise all by yourself.

Devanshi thought about her own wedding. She remembered the weeks she had spent preparing with all her female relatives. She was so excited—excited to marry the most boring man she'd ever met.

Ammu and Papa thought they had found her the perfect husband. They arranged the dowry and her aunts told her all the marriage secrets: how to tie her hair at night, how to serve tea to her mother-in-law, what potions to mix to make her husband desire her. It had all seemed so important then. Yet she discovered that these were only the frills that masked a hopeless marriage. For the first few months, Devanshi rarely left her husband's side. Catering to his every need (although he could barely tell the difference) and trying to get to know him. Somehow he always seemed to hide from her. She loved that air of mystery. It wasn't until about a year later that it truly dawned on her. She already knew him. She knew her husband inside out. There was nothing more. He was just an empty man who worked as a doctor and listened to everything his mother said. When she told him how awful his wife was, he stared at the floor. When she told him she needed five hundred rupees for no apparent reason, he gave it to her. When she stole Devanshi's wedding jewelry, he looked the other way. It was amazing how Devanshi thought she loved such a man. It had been all the excitement from the wedding.

Devanshi woke up early the morning she was to be married to finish packing up her things. As she swept beneath the bed, she stumbled across Sleeping Beauty. She had not read it in years and seeing it brought out an overflow of childhood memories. She read the fairytale that morning for the last time. Devanshi knew she would never read it again because now she was going to become a woman. She read slowly savoring every last word... About Sleeping Beauty's father who carelessly failed to invite one of the fairies to his daughter's baby shower. How the angry fairy set a curse on the girl to fall asleep for one hundred years after pricking her finger. How Sleeping Beauty spent one hundred years dreaming in her palace, protected by a wall of briar roses. How she was awakened by a handsome prince when her curse was over. How he married her in secret because he knew his mother wouldn't approve. How he finally brought her home after she bore two of his children whom she had named Night and Day. How his mother abused her while he was away. And of course, most importantly, how his mother was finally defeated when she fell into the boiling pot of snakes and insects.

Devanshi closed the book nostalgically. She missed her childhood and knew she would miss her parents, but she had to prepare for the wedding. There was no time for such thoughts. She pushed them to the back of her mind, the way we push Diwali candles to the back of the cupboard every day of the year, save one. Little did she know that these would be the sole light of her existence.

"Would you look at what you're doing!" Ammu screamed as Devanshi absent-mindedly stirred the soup she was cooking. Devanshi looked at her mother-in-law screeching like the single-toothed monster she had feared as a child. She thought of the first time she had called her "Ammu," and how scary and misplaced it had sounded to call a stranger by her mother's name. What had once sounded safe and comforting was turned into the dark figure that stood before her. Devanshi could now hardly remember a day when a simple echo the word didn't make her cringe.

It was two hours until the wedding and Devanshi was mending her blouse. She ran the needle as quick as she could with her fingers: up, down, up down. She never did learn how to use the sewing machine. She had been too scared. She began to daydream of how beautiful she would look at her wedding in her red silk sari. Before she knew it, the needle was caught in her finger. "Ammu," she hollered. Devanshi cried that morning, not because it hurt, but because she knew Ammu would never again be there to bandage her finger for her—well, at least not this Ammu. She wondered what her new Ammu would be like.

Devanshi snapped back into reality as she realized the soup was boiling over. She quickly turned off the stove and stirred it.

"You clumsy fool! What did I ever do to deserve such a graceless daughter," Ammu moaned.

Devanshi looked at her and wished that she were back at home—her home, with her own room, and her own bed, and her own mother. There was no use in wishing. Devanshi would just have to block out the woman's voice and wait for the day that her evil mother-in-law would finally be defeated when she fell into the pot of boiling soup.

LANA ZAMAN '08 is a first-time VISIONS writer.

HALLOWEEN IDENTITY CRISIS

CRIS SALES '90

I hadn't dressed up in several Halloweens. I'd been reluctant to do so since third grade when I came to school as Diane Keaton in "Annie Hall." I blew my wad that year. This year would see no disguise.

The better part of the day would be spent with my friend Sabine killing time before our respective Halloween parties by shopping for her costume. We met at noon at our personal Mecca, Century 21. As we ascended the escalator to the second floor, I spotted a rack of Diane von Furstenburg wrap dresses, under a sign that proclaimed "$50." I pointed them out and chuckled smugly,

"Not the best way to restart a business, methinks." To my horror, Sabine shrieked, pushed me aside, and made a beeline to the rack. She began combing through the garishly colored wrap dresses like a squirrel foraging for nuts.

"You'd actually wear one of those?" I asked, half bemused, half horrified.

She stopped, looked up and said, "I'm gonna be Alexandra Miller von Furstenburg for Halloween..." Sabine was going to dress up as a socialite—a Brown-educated, duty-free princess who markets her mother-in-law's wrap dresses. The joke of it was so specific that I knew it could only work within a very narrow social context, like a work party for a Condé Nast magazine. Fortunately, Sabine was going to a work party. And since she works at Condé Nast, her party did fall within the boundaries of said social context.

After trying on four dresses three times each, she picked a garish teal, blue and black number. Anticipation of the impending success of the costume had made us hungry and we hopped in a cab. We headed north to grab some chow at Hop Kee on Mott Street, and, as it always happens when I have dinner in Chinatown, the waiter addressed me to order for the table. I played along, because I don't have the heart to tell them that I'm Filipino and not Chinese and therefore, a pretender. It's nice to have someone look at you like you belong - even if they're just bringing you razor clams in oyster sauce.

We spent the post-dinner section of our adventure combing the little emporiums that line Canal Street, hunting for the perfect faux designer handbag to complete her costume. When Sabine spotted it, I again put on my ruse de chinois. I bargained with the saleswoman, as I had learned from my mother when she brought me on shopping trips into Chinatown as a child. My mother had learned from the Chinese women who shopped alongside us how to negotiate the price she wanted to pay. I knew the skill would come in handy at some point, although this scenario hadn't been one I would have anticipated.

Triumphant, Sabine and I walked west on Canal to the subway home. We parted at Sixth Avenue and as my partner in crime disappeared down into the subway station, I turned to look up the avenue. I saw the beginnings of what looked like the annual Village Halloween Parade. As I continued towards Varick Street, I caught glimpses of as many costumes as I could. There was a Catwoman (more Michelle Pfeiffer than Eartha Kitt), a couple of cows and a pretty good Austin Powers.

"EXCUSE ME..." Out of nowhere, a woman appeared in front of me. The cab she and her friend had just jumped out of peeled off with a screech. She was blonde and dressed the way LA folk think New Yorkers dress when they take in the downtown nightlife - black, and shiny-sleek. She was frothing.

"EXCUSE ME - DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH? She was panicking - all over the sidewalk and all over me. "That fucking cab driver! DO - YOU - SPEAK - ENGLISH?"

What? Stunned, all I could muster was a mumble: "Uh. Yes."

"Do you know where- GRAND - STREET - is?"

"Where are you go- "

"GRAND - STREET...That fucking cab driver - Jesus! Do you know where - GRAND STREET - is? GRAND - STREET"

I couldn't figure whether she thought I was Chinese or deaf.

"Where on-"

"The SOHO GRAND HOTEL - I'm LATE - DO YOU KNOW WHERE IT IS?"

This woman clearly needed my assistance. I paused as her froth settled a bit, awaiting my response. Momentary moral dilemma. All of a sudden, she shot me a look that said, 'why am I even asking you -- how would YOU know?' That's when I gave her the answer she asked for.

"You have to go east. Grand Street is all the way east. You're on the West side—you have to go EAST. Towards the RIVER."

"JESUS!"

And just like that, she was gone. Not even a thank you. I stood there for a moment, less angry than disappointed. I was disappointed in her for being a bitch, but more in myself for being a bigger one. I crossed the street, looked around the corner and there stood the Soho Grand Hotel. It had been several years since something like that had happened to me. The last time was when a co-worker told me he thought my command of English was impressive. The fact that English was my only language hadn't even entered his mind. I didn't think to reply that I hadn't picked up much Tagalog the one year I spent as an infant in the Philippines.

I walked the last block to my subway stop. It was ironic that I should spend the whole day delighting in constructing a false identity for a friend, only to perpetrate a false identity to others superficially like me, before being infuriated by someone for imposing that same false identity upon me.

Was it cruel of me to misdirect that blonde woman? Was it just as mean of me to play Chinese when it gets me better service at a store or in a restaurant? Does it make me a hypocrite?

CRIS SALES '90 promises she'll give you the right directions if you ask.

CREATING A NEW INDIAN TRADITION IN AMERICA[1]

KARTIK VENKATESH '06

Roots of Indian America[2]

About a year ago outside Framingham, Massachusetts, a traditional Sanskrit scholar who serves as a ritualist for the local community remarked to me: "I don't know why so many Indians of varying linguistic groups—Bengalis, Oriyans, Gujaratis, and Hindi speakers—call on me to officiate at festivals. When I'm a native South Indian Tamil speaker, I don't know why people with traditions and languages I don't know respect me. I speak only a little of their language and I am not very familiar with their local customs and rituals. Yet they still respect me and ask me to officiate at their festivals and rituals."

Hearing this intriguing social analysis, the following thought came to my mind: What happens when a specific community in America relies on a ceremony to be performed by a traditional outsider? In America, who is an insider or an outsider in the community? Are we creating new social identities and hence, traditions and festivals, in America?" These questions loomed large (and still do) over my head as I tried to understand the ritual culture of Indian America.

The Indian American community basically grew in America starting in the early 1960s and then exponentially took off in later decades leading to today where Indians are the second largest group of legal immigrants to the United States each year. The boom in immigration, often dubbed a brain drain back in India, would change the picture of America forever—soon colossal monuments rivaling those of ancient India would rise from cornfields and be visible from interstate highways. Indeed, the physical landscape of America would be transformed for future generations. By the late 1980's, the community was truly a diaspora culture living in cities both small and large, colorful festivals full of rich costume and Sanskrit ritual were vibrantly alive and available in small-town America, though most Americans didn't take notice of what was going on in their backyards.

Identity in America: Who am I?

When many Indian immigrants came to America, they came with not only their linguistic and religious affiliations, but also with more subtle regional traditions, customs, and caste classifications. The first wave of immigrants, generally composed of professionals, thought America was a place to make some money, get a good education, and then go back to mother India. However, soon these immigrants were vested in America, both economically and socially, with jobs and children. Along with these "American" obligations came the desire, the nostalgia, to somehow recreate what had been physically left behind and hence bring India to America.

The question then for many early Indian immigrants was how to maintain a sense of identity and place when there might only be five other families in a town with the same linguistic, sectarian, and caste background that they would have traditionally identified with back in India. The natural result has often been sharing traditions with other Indian groups and creating a new fusion. Though some would argue this too is slowly changing today as there are Indian communities of critical scale, such as in New York, California, and Texas, where sub-groups can choose to socially organize within themselves.

[1] Research for this article has been funded under a Royce Fellowship (Swearer Center) and UTRA program.
[2] Though many of these findings may apply to other Indian-American subgroups and other diaspora communities, here Indian-American refers n most cases to the Hindu community, as the largest sub-community within Indian America.

Moving Beach 2, Arthi Sundaresh '05

Thus, creating a fusion Indian identity transcending linguistic and caste barriers may no longer be necessary—the same social group of mono-lingual individuals who chose to associate with each other back in India can now effectively do the same thing in San Jose.

An American Celebration of Culture

A ritualist who has been in America for over two decades spoke animatedly about how in America his young daughter always loves to have her birthday at that paragon of American childhood culture, Chucke Cheeses. I was taken aback by what he was to say next. He said: "Just like my daughter celebrating her birthday at Chucke Cheeses, the temple is the community's Chucke Cheeses everyday of the year—the gods celebrate their birthdays here everyday and in the process the community celebrates everyday." I thought to myself only in America could I ever hear comparisons between centers of Sanskrit ritual and Chucke Cheeses. In reality, the temple/community center can be a cultural party on both human and divine levels worth celebrating.

The community center is a key component of identity for any new immigrant community trying to find its bearings in an alien society and preserve its historical roots. Constructing centers that rival those of ancient India in architecture and ritual serves to create a physical tangible reality of the homeland in America. If a community can no longer be in its traditional social atmosphere, then the re-constructed temple in America with a professional staff of highly trained traditional ritualists, cooks, and musicians allows individuals to reconnect to a past and present. Living in a society with cultural norms and practices very different from those of traditional India, the temple/community center is a place where individuals can freely experience and celebrate an identity otherwise concealed to mainstream America.

Rituals American Style

When one woman's son was married, she was ecstatic when the South Indian ritualist performed three fire rituals during the marriage. She reckoned that thirty years ago in her marriage back in North India she and her husband had only received one fire ritual. In the final analysis, the three fire rituals meant three times the merit, three times the good karma, and thus three times the donation to this highly skilled ritualist!

Perhaps a less dramatic example of microscale cultural fusion is in my own local community back in Ohio. For the nine day festival of Navaratri ("Nine nights"), each local linguistic sub-group sponsors the day's activities performing the festival with the ritual, song, dance, and food of their ancestral part of India. The festival in America becomes a pluralistic "show and tell" of different regions where different sub-groups can learn about other regional traditions to which they may not have been exposed to back in India.

No Difference Between India and America

As in the case of any new immigrant community, no one ever wants to admit that things, culturally, are changing—rituals and music are indeed slowly adapting both aesthetically as well as in practice. Recently, a ritualist in the Midwest told me: "even though I have been in America for close to twenty years, I really haven't changed. The way I perform rituals in America is the same as I would do back in India. There is no difference!" I simply knew that though he, the participants in the ritual, and perhaps even I had hoped this was true, it simply couldn't be. Here, I was looking at this aesthetically arranged ritual display that had been adapted for Western sensibilities of décor. Moreover, his own clothing as well as the organization and execution of the ritual could not have happened in India. Only in America is time the determining factor in the length of a festival observance!

The gradual "Americanization" can be disturbing to the older generation who often yearn for a more static nostalgic tradition; the second-generation may view the adaptations as necessary if their parent's traditions are going to survive and be relevant in this culture. Ironically, cultural adaptation and changes may be taking place at a faster pace back in "old India." Since those back in India are not in an alien culture bombarded by all things not Indian, they are often not as aware nor as concerned about changes in tradition. Indian Americans, on the other hand, may be acutely aware of their minority status within mainstream culture and thus hold on to all they left behind.

America as the Talk of the Town

Back in India, the social developments of the Indian American community have not gone unnoticed. Many Indian newspapers and television stations often carry headlines of major temple/community center openings and large cultural events taking place in the United States. In the suburbs of Madras, middleclass housing complexes are full of parents who have lots of news to share after recently visiting their sons, daughters, and grandchildren in America.

In a globalized world full of every conceivable mode of communication, villagers couple hundred miles out of Madras all seem to personally know someone in America and that there are not only more Indian doctors and engineers in many American cities than back here, but also more highly trained Sanskrit ritualists as well. For instance, there may be more Sanskrit ritualists today in Southeastern Pennsylvania than in some Indian cities.

This past winter, a Sanskrit scholar in a remote village in Tamil Nadu told me when I said to him that I had come to interview him regarding the contemporary practice of a set of Sanskrit rituals: "Why have you come all the way to India? As far as I know, traditions are being more closely and accurately followed in America compared to India." In America, everything can be had with great pomp and circumstance, including traditional rituals.

The Final De-exotification of Culture

Twenty years ago, India's traditions may have appeared "exotic" and "peculiar" in the eyes of many American observers. To the Indian community, all of their festivals and traditions were never exotic—what you actually do and view as your culture is indeed never exotic, things are only exotic to the outside observer. Of course, those were the days of Indiana Jones and before the time when Bollywood film had become part of the American pop culture scene. Today, wedding and life cycle rituals with all their color and vibrancy are somehow cool in an American culture where the "exotic" has been turned into "cool."

Indian Americans find themselves in a unique position where their cultural identities can be shaped by two diverse societies, their culture can be shaped by recent development both in India and America. To say that the Indian American cultural experience is only defined through American culture would be too narrow a perspective to take when events in India continue to re-shape and redefine the "Indian" in "Indian American." I hear parents telling their children growing up in America that they have an opportunity of a lifetime to combine the best of the West with the best of the East: the second generation can make their own eclectic masala culture through taking aspects from each culture that they find most appealing and relevant.

KARTIK VENKATESH '06 is a Sanskritic culture vulture.

LETTER TO FILIPINA NANNY WORKING IN ITALY

RIABIANCA GARCIA ‘05

Dear Nina,

Can I ask you?

Where do you find the strength,
the strength to smile even though you’re dying inside?

Longing to hold the baby that you bore nine months ago,
the baby that you left behind in a country so far away,
you’ve transferred all the maternal love that you would’ve given to your own
child to the Italian infant that you now hold in your arms.

Showering that child with the affection that his own parents can’t provide,
I see how you smile and hug him in a way that only a mother can-

Do you close your eyes and envision that it’s your baby in your arms?

When he coos, do you hear your baby’s voice?

When you hold him tight, do you imagine that it’s your baby’s heart beating against yours?

I know it’s difficult and I would never truly understand, but if you could -

Could you tell me...
where do you find the strength?

Engaged in conversation with local Italian artists and their families,
Sipping Chianti wine,
basking in the warm glow of the Tuscan sun,

taking in the rolling lush green hills full of cypress trees and vineyards,
I never expected to run into you
A fellow Filipina
But I did and I’m glad.

Thank you for reminding me how fortunate I am

to never have had experienced
the pain of separation and
the longing, the yearning for an absent mother

and

I so dearly hope that
One day
Someday
you’ll be reunited with your son.

Sincerely,

Riabianca Garcia, a Filipina-American art student you met in Chianti, Italy this past spring

---

RIABIANCA GARCIA ’05 has great love for the womyn of Archipelaga and strong, independent womyn of all races and ethnicities.

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Flying, Peru, Delphine Huang '05