

*the dialogue issue*

# PACIFIC TIES

*UCLA's Asian American Pacific Islander Newsmagazine // Vol. 31 Issue 2 // Winter 2009*



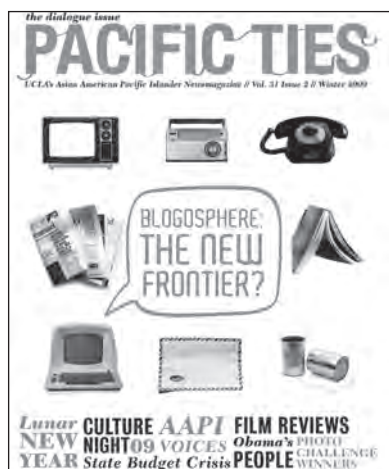
BLOGOSPHERE:  
THE NEW  
FRONTIER?



**Lunar** CULTURE **AAPI** FILM REVIEWS  
**NEW** NIGHT **09 VOICES** Obama's PHOTO  
**YEAR** State Budget Crisis **PEOPLE** CHALLENGE  
WINNERS



# CONTENTS



This issue's cover is by Maria Iu, a fourth-year Communication Studies major. Check out her work at mariaiu.com.

The cover is a metaphor for the theme of our issue "Dialogue." At Pacific Ties, we believe that creating dialogue amongst our peers, in our communities, and across diverse worlds is the way to bridge today's societal and geographic divides.

## 3 | EDITOR'S LETTER

### NEWSPRINT

## 4 | NEWSBRIEFS

## 5 | OBAMA & CO.

Profiles of seven extraordinary individuals who hold top positions in Obama's administration.

By Elizabeth Park

## PUTTING THORNS IN SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

GABNet battles human trafficking and domestic violence of women and children.

By Derrick Oliver

## 6 | Mighty Mic Benefits Burma

3rd annual Mighty Mic concert focuses on bringing aid to a troubled Burma.

By Linda Reyes

## 7 | Karma Headlines 11th Thai Culture Night

This year's CN shows the universality of Thai culture in today's society.

By Shirley Mak

## CULTURE NIGHT IN REVIEW

Highlights from the 2009 shows and what's to come on the culture night calendar.

By Malina Tran

## MONOLOGUE/DIALOGUE

## 8 | IS INDONESIA READY FOR DEMOCRACY?

By Athalia Nakula

## CHINA CHALLENGE PERCEPTIONS

By Marla Goodman

## Kollaboration pg. 13



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW KIM

## photochallenge winners pg. 20



PHOTO COURTESY OF EPHRAIM HUI



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNY KIM

Kim's contribution to her family's Thanksgiving meal. Front to back, left to right: maple-roasted butternut squash, garlic and herb tomatoes, cranberry-tangerine sauce, green beans with red onions.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNY KIM

"Being vegetarian pushes you to be really creative with your food. Substituting meat with other sources of protein is easy, because there are so many recipes and food options out there!" said Jenny Kim, a third-year environmental science student

## UCLA vegetarians find balance between food and family, pg. 16

## FEATURE

## 10 | BLOGOSPHERE: THE NEW FRONTPAGE?

AAPI individuals frontier the wild, wild web arena.

6 sites that are creating dialogue through blogging.

By Evelina Giang

## 9 | SOUTHEAST ASIAN ADMIT WEEKEND

By Layhannara Tep

## STATE BUDGET CRISIS

By Susan Li

## A&E

## 13 | EMPOWERMENT THROUGH KOLLABORATION

A look at the artists of Kollaboration. Empowerment through entertainment!

By Ray Luo

## JANE LUI

Spotlight on the Kollaboration performer.

By Ray Luo

## 14 | SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE REVIEW

By Shirley Mak

## CHANDNI CHOWK TO CHINA REVIEW

By Evelina Giang

## 15 | GRAN TORINO - A RETROSPECT

How one movie inspires conversation about the status of Hmong people in America.

By Shirley Chau & Derrick Oliver

## LIFE

## 16 | YEAR OF THE OX KICKS OFF WITH A WIDE RANGE OF TRADITIONS

How do different cultures celebrate the Lunar New Year?

By Huong Pham

## BALANCING CULTURE AND CONVICTION

The joys and pitfalls of being an AAPI vegetarian.

By Debbie Chong

## 17 | A TALK WITH EMI MEYER

The L.A. based singer/songwriter shares her thoughts about balancing touring and life.

By Stephanie Aguilar

## MEET TUY SOBIL A.K.A. K.K.

An former Crips member and deportee teaches kids to dance in Cambodia.

By Malina Tran

## 19 | AGENDA

## BACKPAGE

## WINTER 2009 PACITIES PHOTO CHALLENGE WINNERS

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## Letter from the Editor

One of my favorite classes at UCLA is Professor William Kelly's "Promoting Dialogue Across Diverse Words" otherwise known as Communication Studies 122. We read the works great philosophers and theorists like Kwame Appiah, Samuel P. Huntington, and Jürgen Habermas. We studied the conflicts of Rwanda, Iraq, the Middle East, Sudan...and after all the reading that we did, we got the sense that the world was falling apart and coming together at the same time. It was Phikhu Parekh, a political theorist from India who made a case for dialogue, which, in his words, would help us "arrive at a more just and balanced view of both the contentious issues and the world in general."

Broadcast television, the radio, the telephone, newspapers, books, the postal system, computers, the internet, and even a two tin cans connected by a piece of string had the ability to bring neighbors and strangers closer together. But the fundamental thing behind these technological phenomena is the concept of dialogue. Not that we didn't talk before we were able to call someone - it's just that we didn't talk as much. These days, we have a million ways to express our ideas, to converse about our lives, about current events, our feelings. Through dialogue, people initiate a conversation, forge a connection, and build mutual understanding and awareness.

Which is why this is the dialogue issue. Pacific Ties is not just a collection of words and images. It's a conversation between friends. Us and the reader. It's a space where the AAPI community can feel free to submit their writing, to give a voice to their opinions. It's where staff members can demonstrate their passions, highlight issues that demand attention, tell their side of the story, and contribute to the ongoing global dialogue of news, art, race, politics and culture. And on our blog, which you can access at [pacificties.com](http://pacificties.com), we encourage people to comment on our posts, to be opinionated without fear and without censorship.

In this issue, you'll find our feature article about AAPIs blogging (pg. 10), voices from different parts of the campus in the Monologue/Dialogue section (pg. 8) on page , the winners of our photochallenge (pg. 20), where we encourage readers to participate by sharing their stories through photographs, and so much more. So let's keep this conversation going and read on! And when you're done, come to our website to share your own thoughts on what's wrong (or right) in the world.

**Maria Iu**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

### PACIFIC TIES IS ONLINE!

While we have our loyalties to the printing press, we are kicking up dust in the blogosphere. Be sure to check us out our online blog ([pacificties.wordpress.com](http://pacificties.wordpress.com)) and our website:

[www.pacificties.org](http://www.pacificties.org)

Here you'll find everything you see in this newsmagazine and more. Find exclusive calendar listings, updates on local, national and international news about the API community and opinionated blogs by our staff. You can comment on an article, enter a photograph to our quarterly PHOTO CHALLENGE or drop by to see photos of happenings around the campus and in Los Angeles submitted by readers like you ... and so much more. You won't regret it.

Also join our FACEBOOK GROUP and FAN PAGE.  
Make Pacific Ties a part of your life.

### JOIN PACIFIC TIES

We've been around since 1977, and we want talented people like you to join our staff. If you would like to express your opinions, voice community issues or hone your writing skills and gain experience, then join Pacific Ties! No experience necessary!

Positions available in writing, editing, photography, design and illustration.

Apply the beginning of Spring Quarter 2009 at

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Questions? Comments?  
Contact: [pacificties@media.ucla.edu](mailto:pacificties@media.ucla.edu)

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The UCLA Communications Board has a media grievance procedure for resolving grievances against any of its publications. For a copy of the complete procedure, contact Student Media UCLA at 118 Kerckhoff Hall, 310.825.2787, or [director@media.ucla.edu](mailto:director@media.ucla.edu).

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### YOUR VERY OWN GLOSSARY

We cover so many topics and issues here at PacTies that language often gets technical. Here's a handy little glossary to help you out while reading through the issue.

You should know that whenever we talk about APAs, APIs, AAPIs, etc., we are often referring to - Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans who are living in the U.S., unless otherwise noted.

**AA:** Asian American  
**APA:** Asian Pacific American  
**API:** Asian Pacific Islander  
**APIA:** Asian Pacific Islander American  
**AAPI:** Asian American Pacific Islander

**AHS:** Association of Hmong Students  
**APC:** Asian Pacific Coalition  
**CAPSA:** Critical Asian & Pacific Students for Action  
**CN:** Culture Night  
**LAO:** Laotian American Organization  
**NSU:** Nikkei Student Union  
**SEA:** Southeast Asian  
**SEA CLEAR:** Southeast Asian Campus Learning Education and Retention  
**TS:** Thai Smakom  
**UKS:** United Khmer Students  
**VSU:** Vietnamese Student Union

*These speech bubbles mean that we want you to join in the conversation - whether online or by finding more information about the topic!*



# NEWSPRINT

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

## Hard Times For Ethnic Press

BY ELIZABETH PARK

As the economy toughens, ethnic media are feeling the need to significantly downsize because of increasing losses of revenue and readers. Several prominent ethnic news-centered papers have already been forced to shut down their print media and move to online editions.

Well-known papers making this transition include the San Francisco Bay View, an African American political biweekly; Hoy New York, a Spanish-language daily; and AsianWeek, an Asian American news weekly.

The drop in local advertisements from real estate and small businesses have taken a toll on such papers as the Viet Tribune and Filipinas Magazine, where local ads serve as primary source of revenue. Smaller staffs, slimming salaries, and the move to the internet are the most visible effects for these newsmagazines.

On the upside, the move to the Internet may mean greater outreach, especially in terms of access by the younger population. Yet the loss of print media signifies the further loss of coverage on ethnic communities, specifically towards communities on the margins of mainstream media.

For these publications, service to the community has always been a key point. Print media has been viewed as an important medium to reflect the changing needs and concerns of these often-overlooked communities.

## English-Only Proposal Rejected in Nashville, Tenn.

BY STEPFANIE AGUILAR

With the increase of the immigrant population in Nashville, Tenn., there was a proposal that would have made English the only language used for government business, thus prohibiting translations.



This proposal was defeated with 41,752 residents against and 32,144 residents in favor. The policy needed at least 50 percent to pass, but many protested against it. If it was accepted, Nashville would have been one of the largest cities to adopt an English-only policy.

The policy was proposed by Councilman Eric Crafton, who believed that this policy would motivate non-English speakers to learn the language. It was introduced to ensure health and safety issues in the metropolitan area. Raul Gonzalez, legislative director for the National Council of La Raza, argues that the proposal contains discrimination.

U.S. Census data from the year 2000 records that 45 percent of the population in Nashville are immigrants.

## Some Indians Not Fans of "Slumdog Millionaire"

BY THIENVINH NGUYEN

Despite 10 Oscar nominations and box office success worldwide, including in India, "Slumdog Millionaire," which depicts the poverty in Mumbai, has faced criticism from Indians.

For them, the film represents the West's stereotypical view of destitution in India, which natives found offensive. Moreover, the rags-to-riches story is anything but new to Bollywood (the country's equivalent to our Hollywood), which has been producing such films decades earlier, but without worldwide acclaim.

In addition, some feel such a story provides a false sense of hope for those living in the very slums depicted in the film. To appease those who are unhappy about the film's portrayal of Mumbai, producers have promised to donate a portion of the film's earnings to improving the city's slums.

Regardless of the ambivalent attitudes people have about the film, Slumdog Millionaire has proved that it has staying power; whether that is good or bad is entirely up to how you look at it.

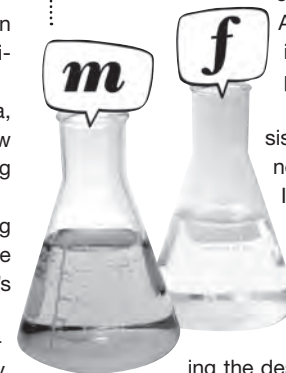
## Technology Used to Select Male Children

BY DERRICK OLIVER

The use of technology to predetermine a child's gender has been observed in Southeast Asian immigrant families in the U.S. The San Jose Mercury News recently released information from a Columbia University study showing that Chinese, Indian and Korean families are using U.S. technology to increase their chances of having a male child.

Bias towards the male sex is culturally rooted and has led to high numbers of boys as opposed to girls in countries like India and China. University of Texas economist Jason Abrevaya found that during the 1990s, Indian families in Santa Clara County had, after having two girls, a 58 percent chance of having a boy instead of the natural 51 percent.

Both studies done did not find any similar gender ratio bias in white, African American and Japanese American families having girls initially. Abortion of the undesired gender is one method that affects gender proportions.



Preimplantation genetic diagnosis, originally used to check for genetic diseases, is also being used.

In this process, an embryo's gender is determined after a few cellular divisions and then implanted. Another alternative method is choosing specific sperm that have higher chances of producing the desired gender. These technologies have spurred social and ethical controversy.



## Study Says Racism Still Ingrained, Albeit Unconscious

BY LINDA REYES

In a study published in the Jan. 9 issue of the journal Science, researchers at Yale University and York University found that even people who consider themselves tolerant have unconscious racist attitudes.

Titled "Mispredicting Affective and Behavioral Responses to Racism," the study involved a scenario where a black man bumped the white man upon leaving a room. There were three variations in the scenario: the white man said, "I hate when black people do that," "Clumsy n----," or nothing. One hundred twenty non-black participants were asked who they would choose as a partner for an assignment, whereas over 75 percent of people who watched a video or read about the incident chose the black man, 71 percent of eyewitnesses chose the white man.

Authors of the study found that, although people predict they would respond in an offended way to such an incident, when they see it firsthand, they rationalize and downplay the racist behavior.

Kery Kawami, lead author and associate professor of psychology at York University, said these findings reflect people's negative associations with blacks. Experts say this association may be the result of the media's negative portrayal of blacks or parents' racial attitudes.

## AAPJ Employees Affected by "Bamboo Ceiling"

BY HUONG PHAM

There has long been the controversy of discrimination against Asian and Pacific Islanders in the workforce. According to a Jan. 9 report by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, this community in particular faces a glass-ceiling type of phenomenon that is referred to as a "bamboo ceiling."

The discrimination is suspected to have initially stemmed from various stereotypes of the AAPJ community. Though a number of the stereotypes hold a positive connotation, some hold negative ones (such as AAPJs being passive or antisocial). "They have become the framework of barriers establishing glass or bamboo ceilings, which prevent AAPJs from moving into the upper tiers of an organization," says the report.

The report states that the common knowledge of these misconceptions may make managers oblivious to the workers' leadership potential, therefore creating a "sticky floor." In 2006, only two out of 24 agencies with the largest amount of Asians had higher proportions of Asian executives or senior managers than rank-and-file Asian employees.

With a combination of the concepts of "sticky floor" and "bamboo ceiling," it is easy to see why any prospective of AAPJ workers moving up to senior leadership ranks is obstructed.

Another condition of discrimination that surfaced concern is that of the actual amount of discrimination against AAPJs. The EEOC reports that 3.26 percent of the complaints were filed; however, 31 percent of respondents to a 2005 Gallup report said that they faced some sort of discrimination in the federal workplace.

The report also says that agency diversity programs did not offer resources for the AAPJ groups, and issues faced by the members of this community were not addressed. Hence, it is more likely for employees to think that sending in complaints would not help the status quo of their discrimination.

The report makes a point that "AAPJs have been called the 'model minority,' but this community seems to be the 'forgotten minority.'"

## Asian American Role in U.S. Politics Expanding

BY HYUN CHEOL OH

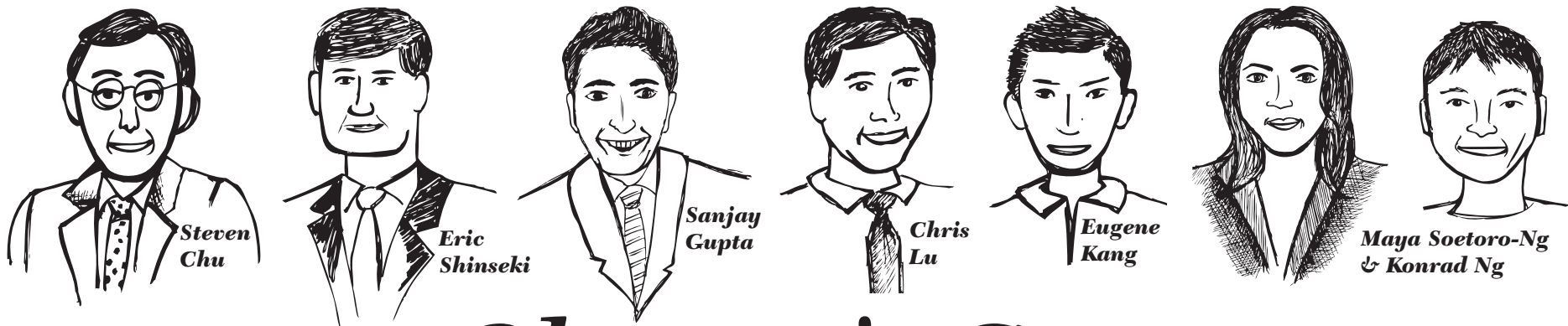
Asian American political profile in the United States has been rising in recent years, a state that may have been influenced by the election of Barack Obama as president and his consideration of Asian Americans in high profile positions.

A source from the Associated Press indicates that this is mainly due to many immigrants earning citizenship, along with developments of community organizations and ethnic media endorsing Asian American candidates.

Asian Americans currently in the political field include California state Sen. Leland Yee, U.S. Rep. Joseph Cao, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal and John Liu, who is currently running for New York City's next public advocate.

Don Nakanishi, director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center said in a recent interview with the Associated Press, "After Obama, it's not unthinkable that a guy like Jindal could become president some day. There is still a lot pioneering going on, but Asian Americans are really becoming an even more viable and visible actor in American politics."

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**pacificties.org**



# Obama & Co.

by Elizabeth Park // Staff Writer // epark@media.ucla.edu

President Obama's new administration promises to be one of the most diverse in U.S. history. Below are some of the highest-ranked Asian Americans in the new Obama administration. Some aren't quite what you expect as traditional holders of government posts—among them, a distinguished scientist, veteran, doctor and T.V. personality. Unconventional, maybe, but these people have well-respected credentials and experience that further highlight President Obama's determination to recruit some of the best in their respective fields for his team.

**STEVEN CHU, 60**  
Secretary of Energy

Steven Chu was a professor of physics and molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley. He was also the leader of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize for physics.

**THE FACTS** Unlike previous holders of the position who were politicians, Chu is a scientist. In accordance with the Obama-Biden New Energy for America plan, Chu is stressing the importance of allocating more governmental funds for alternative energy.

**ERIC SHINSEKI, 66**  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Eric Shinseki is the first four-star Asian American general in the U.S. military. He served in Vietnam in two combat tours and was wounded, losing part of his foot.

**THE FACTS** He served as army chief of staff during the Bush administration and resigned shortly after in 2003 after his stand against Donald Rumsfeld's estimate of needed soldiers in Iraq, asserting that the numbers needed to be much higher. Nevertheless, Shinseki's estimate proved to be correct when troop numbers turned out to be insufficient.

**DR. SANJAY GUPTA, 39**  
Surgeon General (designate)

Dr. Sanjay Gupta practices neurosurgery at Emory University Hospital and Atlanta's Grady Memorial Hospital, and he is a faculty member at Emory University. In 2001, Gupta joined CNN as the network's chief medical correspondent. He earned a 2006 Emmy award for "Outstanding Feature Story."

**THE FACTS** Gupta's celebrity status could help the Obama administration's aim to stress preventive care. The surgeon general's role is to educate the public on health issues, something that Gupta has plenty of experience doing.

**CHRIS LU, 42**  
White House Cabinet Secretary

Chris Lu is a Harvard Law School grad who worked in Obama's Senate staff, as legislative director and acting chief of staff. He also served as the executive director of the Obama-Biden Transition Project. For a short time, Lu worked on Senator John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign.

**THE FACTS** Lu went to Harvard Law School where he and Obama were classmates and acquaintances. Lu is also known to be a marathon runner. He has participated in 18 marathons in six years.

**EUGENE KANG, 24**  
Special Assistant to the President

As a 21-year-old student at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Eugene Kang ran for city council but lost by a small margin. During the Obama campaign, Kang worked on outreach programs aimed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

**THE FACTS** Kang was seen playing golf in Hawaii with then president-elect on his vacation, less than a month away from the inauguration. Kang's nickname is reported to be "Reggie Jr." after the president's personal aide, Reggie Love.

**MAYA SOETORO-NG, 38, & KONRAD NG, 42**  
The First Family

Maya Soetoro-Ng is President Obama's maternal half-sister. She teaches high school history in Hawaii. Her husband is Konrad Ng, an assistant professor at the University of Hawaii's Academy of Creative Media. They have one three-year-old daughter, Suhaila Ng.

**THE FACTS** Maya Soetoro-Ng spoke at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, bringing an Asian American presence to the stage. She was named honorary co-chair at the 2009 presidential inauguration.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIA IUI

## Putting a Thorn in Sexual Abuse

DERRICK OLIVER  
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losing arguments were beginning in a Seattle courtroom for a Mar. 5, 1995 divorce trial between 25-year-old Susana Remerata Blackwell and her husband Timothy C. Blackwell when Mr. Blackwell opened fire on Mrs. Blackwell and two of her female friends. Mr. Blackwell was charged with first-degree murder for each of the women and manslaughter for Mrs. Blackwell's unborn child, with whom she was eight months pregnant.

This marriage that ended in tragedy began not only as an exchange of vows between husband and wife, but also as an exchange of money between American Mr. Blackwell and a now nonexistent mail-order bride company called Asian Encounters.

Mrs. Blackwell was an educated young lady from the Philippines who longed for marriage and America. The marriage quickly turned bitter when Mr. Blackwell demonstrated abusive behavior. Mrs. Blackwell eventually filed

for divorce. However, before she could receive formal separation, her husband took her life.

The death of Mrs. Blackwell and other occurrences of violence against Filipina mail-order brides brought the issue to the American public's attention, including that of the U.S.-Philippine-based women's solidarity organization called General Assembly Binding Women for Reform, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action, which is commonly known as GABNet or Gabriella Network.

GABNet began the Purple Rose Campaign on Feb. 14, 1999, joining the global effort to stop violence against women and children. The purple rose was chosen as a symbol because it was artificially made to look alluring and glamorous to gratify desire.

From reports gathered from the International Regional Information Networks, a part of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 300,000 to 400,000

women in the Philippines are trafficked each year.

The Visayan Forum Foundation, a non-governmental organization, reports that people between the ages of 12 and 22, mostly females, are promised domestic work but eventually become involved in sex work.

"[Many] women are forced into the sex trade and forced to be put on the Internet," says Jollene Levid, Secretary General of GABNet. "We consider mail-order brides a part of the sex trade because women who are poor use this [option] as an alternative; [they] think it's their only way out."

The Purple Rose Campaign has dealt with a variety of cases in its 10-year span.

"A lot of people who come over [from the Philippines] do domestic work and find themselves in isolating situations [such as] working in the home, which is a vulnerable place to be working," says Rebecca Dean, the campaign's Los Angeles chapter co-coordinator and a UCLA doctoral student. "[In these situations], any number of abuses are possible."

Many women leave their homes in hopes



GABNet started the Purple Rose Campaign in Feb. 1999 in response to a number of violent incidences involving mail-order brides in the U.S.



# Mighty Mic Benefits Burma

LINDA REYES // STAFF WRITER // lreyes@media.ucla.edu

Through a series of educational programs leading up to a highly anticipated “Free Burma” concert this spring, Mighty Mic aims to give a voice back to the Burmese people.

In its third year at UCLA, Mighty Mic, an organization that raises awareness about human rights issues occurring around the world, continues its cause with the Benefit Concert for Burma.

“We take a human rights issue that doesn’t get a lot of press and try to educate people,” said Flavia de la Fuente, co-director and third-year political science and Latin American studies student.

After a successful fundraising concert last year, the organization decided to take on the conflict in Burma, a Southeast Asian country bordering Thailand and China, as its project for 2009. Its citizens are victims of oppression by the military regime, which has created problems ranging from poverty to religious persecution.

“It’s a country where there are countless humanitarian issues, but it gets no press,” said de la Fuente. “Nothing gets in, nothing gets out.”

Censorship laws in Burma control the spread of information about domestic issues. Laws also consider any activity that opposes the government a criminal offense. The ruling military junta that imposes such laws has oppressed the Burmese people since 1962.

“In mid-century, post-World War II, Burma had a war of independence. Hero Su-Chi, a top general, became president but was assassinated, starting a civil war. The military declared a coup, which was the start of the junta,” explained de la Fuente.

Problems in Burma have since worsened, most recently with the crash of the economy in 2007 followed by the Saffron Revolution, a series of anti-government protests. These protests were led by Burmese monks, who rose up in opposition to the government. De la Fuente said this was interesting because although

Burma is an intensely religious country where monks are highly revered, they joined forces with the common people in a revolution. She noted that normally, the monks receive food in bowls, but during the protests, they held their bowls up in the air to show that they did not support the government. Despite the high status monks have in Burma, monks make up a large part of the political prisoner population.

The government has a tight grasp on its citizens by limiting their freedom of speech and on its people’s communication with their families in other countries. Its censorship transcends geographical boundaries in an attempt to keep the country’s deteriorating conditions away from the press. For this reason, Mighty Mic has not been able to work with the Burmese community. De la Fuente explained that they cannot collaborate with the Burmese Student Association, as it would put their families in danger if the government were to find out.

“We have to work for them without working with them,” said Laila Fahimuddin, a third-year international development studies student and co-director of Mighty Mic’s Educational Events Committee.

This barrier between the Burmese and those who would like to help presents another problem: how to transfer the money to



ILLUSTRATED BY DEBBIE CHONG

Burma, which is Mighty Mic’s main concern. Groups can travel to Burma to provide aid directly, but Fahimuddin says that the money spent to travel there goes to the government’s treasury. Because they do not want to support the government, the aid organizations for which Mighty Mic raises funds must find other means to get money into Burma.

“There are aid workers who go to Thailand and travel illegally into Burma,” said Fahimuddin. “Some backpack into the jungle and help whoever they see along the way.”

Mighty Mic puts on programs in order to educate students and faculty about the problems in Burma. Last quarter, they hosted a film screening of the movie *Burma: Land of Fear* at Kerckhoff Art Gallery. They will also host a monologue show on Feb. 18 in Northwest Campus Auditorium. The show will feature students performing stories written by Burmese refugees. There will also be a Burmese prisoner display to give students an idea of how many people are imprisoned every day. During the week of the concert, an art gallery of painter and refugee Maung Maung Tinn’s work will be on display in Kerckhoff. His watercolor paintings illustrate the day-to-day struggles of his people.

Currently, Mighty Mic members are still working on getting speakers and artists to come out and perform at the concert, and

who’s headlining the show is still unknown. The concert is to be held during spring quarter. Admission is free, but Mighty Mic encourages donations that will go to aid organizations to help Burma.

“Between acts there will be educational videos and representatives from various non-profit organizations to get students involved with Burma and non-profits in general,” said Fahimuddin. “Our whole goal is to get students involved in something bigger.”

The first concert, held in the spring of 2007, was a fundraiser for the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, a group that supports Afghan women’s rights and freedom. Last year’s concert, headlined by the band OK Go, focused on issues of genocide around the world: the Americas, the Holocaust, the Great Lakes (Darfur and Rwanda), as well as Indian and Cambodian genocides. Mighty Mic raised \$25,000 last year to go to Doctors Without Borders and U.S. Doctors for Africa.

For more information about Mighty Mic and how to get involved, visit [mightymic.org](http://mightymic.org). To learn about the issues in Burma, visit [voicesforburma.org](http://voicesforburma.org).

“Sheroes” was a March 24, 2007 event honoring women from around the world as well as in the local communities for making significant contributions to promote women’s liberation.



Macy Cheung, GabNet Los Angeles.

## GABNet, from Page 5

of finding work to support their families, but they become part of the sex trade either in desperation for money or fall prey to the lies of sex predators and/or false contracts.

Dean explained that rape and debt bondage, in which employers charge a fee for the woman to pay off, is common. Many of the traffickers promise legal papers and freedom once the fee is paid. However, employers often add unknown fees for unknown reasons or demand outrageously high fees that can never be paid off.

“This is a form of slavery,” says Dean. “They cannot leave because of [their alleged] debts; [this system] is used as a tool of control.”

The Purple Rose Campaign provides a hotline where women can call in for help, options, and necessary resources to help them

out of their situation.

“[The procedure] would depend on what she wants,” says Levid. “Does she want to prosecute [or] go back home? We can link women up to social service programs. We protect their identity and make sure they have the resources.”

GABNet and the Purple Rose Campaign have tried to fight trafficking on a global scale by being a leading advocate for the International Marriage Brokers Regulation Act of 2005 (IMBRA), which requires background checks for all marriage visa sponsors and helps prevent past criminals from bringing foreign women into the U.S. through marriage brokers, such as online mail-order bride services.

“Right now we believe IMBRA still needs to be strengthened because [it] is very limited in terms of how they can protect women,” says Olivia Quinto, GABNet’s National Education Director. “GABNet wants to analyze how IMBRA is being implemented and find out where the holes are and make sure we fill

those holes.”

Although GABNet and the Purple Rose Campaign have accomplished much, there is still more to be done. The L.A. chapter hopes to raise funds to provide housing for women in the U.S. and Philippines where there are none.

They also plan a widespread advertisement campaign of their services that involves passing out information pamphlets in different areas of L.A. to make sure women know where to get help. In the past, they have offered an internship program and will continue the program this year. GABNet and their campaign have also begun college committees where groups of three or more people are trained and provided materials to present the issue to the student body.

However, many believe the fight against human sex trafficking is an ongoing struggle.

“As long as [sex trafficking] is in our culture, women can never [really be] liberated,” says Quinto.



# Karma Headlines 11th Thai Culture Night

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MISHA TSUKERMAN

From left to right: Angel Kongsomboonvech, Thai Culture Night co-director, Andrew Chomchuensawat, President of Thai Smakom, and Peter Asapahuhe, Thai Culture Night co-director stand on the Freud Playhouse stage during the 11th Annual Thai Culture Night.

Though widely regarded as a universal concept, the thought of karma holds negative implications for many. The warning that an individual's immoral actions will follow him throughout the rest of his life, much like an ill-gotten curse, is often what comes to mind when discussing a notion that is both simple yet fear-inducing.

But karma is not as elusive, nor as antagonistic, as is perhaps portrayed in the dark recesses of one's overactive imagination. At least not this year.

For the audience sitting in Freud Playhouse for this year's 11th Annual Thai Culture Night on Jan. 25, karma is the story of love and destiny that spans two different periods and is intertwined with one man's gradual realization that past and present actions will always result in accompanying consequences, both good and bad.

This Buddhist theory of karma is expressed in the popular Thai proverb that headlined the show: "Tham Dee, Dai Dee, Tham Chua, Dai Chua." Translated literally, it means: good actions bring good results; bad actions bring bad results. From this perspective, karma seems more straightforward than daunting.

"When some people hear the word 'karma,' they get scared," said one of two culture night directors, Angel Kongsomboonvech, a fourth-year biochemistry student. "The way we presented it made it not seem so stressful."

Like in past years, this year's show, aptly titled "Destined," centered on a drama representative of Thai culture, mixed with different performing aspects such as traditional dance, hip hop, a fashion show and Muay Thai, a form of martial arts that originated in Thailand and utilizes the head, fists, elbows, knees and feet to allow a wide range of moves.

Much like the twofold quality of karma, in which good and bad actions each have their role, culture nights at UCLA have consistently served a dual purpose as well: to showcase a culture's unique traditions through the performing arts, and to bring awareness to current community issues within that cultural sphere.

This year, however, Thai Smakom at UCLA wanted to keep the focus primarily on the universality inherent in Thai culture, such as the strong role that karma plays in the lives of people living in Thailand, as opposed to dwelling on political happenings that may have been more exclusive towards non-Thai audience members.

"It's not as politically charged this year," said club president Andrew Chomchuensawat, a third-year physical sciences student. "My first year, we talked about Thai American identity. My second year, we talked about human trafficking. Both had political undertones to it."

According to Kongsomboonvech, they wanted a theme that was more approachable and applicable to students' everyday lives. This also meant eliminating much of the language barrier that is sometimes present in culture nights. Throughout the drama there were hardly any Thai phrases to be heard, except for several Thai proverbs uttered at the very end.

"Although I wanted some things to be said in Thai, I also feel like having too much of the language excludes people who don't understand it. By just doing most of it in English, it's more inclusive and we're able to include more of Thai culture," Chomchuensawat explained.

This year also featured a great deal more performances, some of which appeared in culture night for the first time. Along with a lip sync performance from Look Thoong, a form of Thai country music, other aspects such as the fashion show were also new to the scene. Over the years, performances have evolved to incorporate various changes that blend the distinction between the drama aspect of the show and the performing aspect.

"We started hip hop five years ago, which was something new to Thai Culture Night but has become a strong point of the show," says Peter Asapahu, the other culture night director, a second-year graduate student in aerospace engineering. "We've always done Muay Thai, but the first years I've been involved, it was more of an exhibition and has evolved into being incorporated into the show as fight scenes. This was the first year we've shown a traditional version of Muay Thai."

First time or not, it made for an engaging show the 11th time around. Maybe it's karma.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISHA TSUKERMAN



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISHA TSUKERMAN

What were some of your favorite culture night moments? Tell us at [pacificties.wordpress.com](http://pacificties.wordpress.com).

## UPCOMING CULTURE NIGHT SHOWS

Hanoolim Cultural Awareness Group CN | APRIL 15

United Khmer Students CN | APRIL 18

Samahang Pilipino Culture Night | MAY 9

## CREATIVITY & CONSCIOUSNESS CULTURE NIGHT in review

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Your knowledge of acronyms may correspond with your in-the-know at UCLA. For instance, "CN" stands for "Culture Night," a long-standing tradition and the biggest event in terms of people-power and cost for cultural student organizations at UCLA.

In the past, Pacific Ties have highlighted CNs throughout the year. We are bringing back the dialogue on CNs. To recognize the sweat and blood that goes into this, to congratulate AAPI students' creativity and devotion to the production, here is to you all.

### Vietnamese Student Union

"Chân Trời Mới: A New Tomorrow"

Jan. 19, 2009 | Royce Hall

This year's 29th annual production was a modern, progressive spin on the state of the Vietnamese community. The story of a working-class Vietnamese-American family struggling in the labor force are plagued by hot-button issues of immigration and deportation. Meanwhile, interracial dating, gang activity and political mobilization among the youth population are prominent cross-community themes.

The seriousness of such topics was balanced by the harmonious, lighthearted sounds of Nhip Am and the comic relief of the "MadTV guy." Along with a novel breakdancing troupe, martial arts combat and the traditional and modern dance groups, VCN resonated strongly among its audience.

The production was a tearjerker at the montage and remains suspenseful at the end. We are forced to ask: do the surrounding issues in the play persist today? The production forced its viewers to reevaluate community issues and the relevancy of artistic depictions in a sociopolitical context.

### Nikkei Student Union

"Always Welcome, Never for Sale"

Feb. 16, 2009 | Royce Hall

NSU explored the real-life issues of redevelopment and gentrification in its 23rd annual production by evaluating ethnic enclaves. How do communities of color cope with the tides of change as developers displace AAPIs and their heritage?

Developers are currently infringing on Little Tokyo of Los Angeles and NSU called attention to injustice throughout drama. The play dealt with redevelopment and the economic benefits it reaps for power-hungry agencies. Nevertheless, we see a community that refuses to let their Japantowns be disintegrated. The juxtaposition of gritty, societal changes and cultural preservation (through Kyodo Taiko and Odori) served as the thought provoking elements of this year's production.

With their eye-catching moves and quick gestures, NSU Modern stepped it up by showcasing their tropical jungle and playboy themes. The loud rhythmic thumps of Kyodo Taiko reverberated through Royce Hall (see photo on the left). Full of booming shouts and vibrant energy, Taiko remains a distinctive quality of Japanese culture passed onto the Yonseis, Niseis, Isseis and the Nikkeis. The diversity of student efforts of both Japanese and non-Japanese heritages are a reflection of the production's greatest asset: its repertoire-like variety.

# Is Indonesia Ready for Democracy?

*"I used to try following politics in Indonesia. But then I got bored. They all say the same thing, promise the same thing. Their advertisements on television look alike. I can't even differentiate them."*

*-Harrison Hassanudin, fourth-year, Psychobiology*

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OPINION columns, cartoons and letters represent the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board.

# China Challenges Preconceptions



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARLA GOODMAN

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**W**ith Indonesia's presidential election for the 2009-2014 period fast approaching, many people are questioning the country's readiness to make such a big decision.

In the face of a global economic crisis that severely hits Indonesia's export-based economy, Indonesian citizens have to be especially critical in choosing the right president to lead the country out of its economic black hole. However, the haphazard election process might result in the government, the competing parties and the voters making a grave mistake during the elections on July 2009.

One concerned politician, former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, recently released a controversial statement saying that he believes the election should be postponed to 2010. Wahid thinks the election-planning is still premature and defective. He pointed out that in East Java, the voting registration invitation has been made accessible to only 15 million out of 42 million eligible voters. He stresses that since the government is not effectively doing its job, they should consider his suggestion.

Besides the disorganized governmental planning progress, another urgent issue that has not been sufficiently addressed is the under-preparation of campaign strategies from various competing parties.

Reform Institute's Executive Director Yudi Latif asserts that the competing parties are not creative in their attempts to gain voters' support. Latif observed that by imitating each other's strategies and failing to educate the public on their respective parties' uniqueness, they are unable to fully gain the public's interest.

Harrison Hassanudin, a fourth-year psychobiology student, said, "I used to try following politics in Indonesia, but then I got bored. They all say the same thing, promise the same thing. Their advertisements on television look alike. I can't even differentiate them."

The parties' strategic failures are disturbing. However, what is particularly alarming in the coming election is the voters' lack of interest in fa-

miliarizing themselves with the various competing parties. The dormant stances adopted by both the parties and the voters may result in real and grave consequences.

"I don't know who are the candidates for the upcoming election," said Silvie Suriyani, a third-year neuroscience student. "I only know the current president Yudhoyono is running for presidency again, so I think I'm going to vote for him."

Devine Hamdani, a third-year chemistry major, agreed. Hamdani said, "I don't really follow Indonesian politics. There are too many candidates anyway, so it's hard to follow. And it takes a lot of time to get the information."

"I'm just going to vote for someone I know: [the former President] Megawati or [the incumbent President] Yudhoyono," Hamdani said.

The National Survey Committee of Indonesia recently released their 2009 presidential election survey findings involving 2,500 people. The survey indicates that 42.18 percent will vote for the incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, despite their views that Yudhoyono has failed in improving the country's welfare. On vital issues such as the nation's safety, economic development and social integration, Yudhoyono received poor satisfaction levels of 2.05, 3.25 and 2.37 percent, respectively.

While the skeptics' concern regarding the country's preparation for the coming election may be justified, the government, the political parties and the public should not be discouraged and start working hand-in-hand to devise and implement effective solutions. The government should adopt a more efficient way to incorporate public opinion, such as holding periodic public suggestion sessions with government representatives.

Additionally, the competing parties should be more proactive in presenting their causes and differentiating themselves from each other. The voters should also give constant feedback on the government's planning progress, in addition to independently seeking out information on various competing parties. These measures may help people choose a president who will guide the country to economic and social prosperity.

**B**rilliant brocade tapestries hung next to scrolls written on with the distinct swirls of Tibetan script in a small, incense-perfumed shop. Just a few windows down stood a Spartan stationary store touting a line of clean, white notebooks. It seemed like a clash of two opposing ideas, a war between traditional and modern China. How could these two shops stand adjacent to each other?

Last summer I spent six weeks studying Mandarin at Peking University in Beijing, colloquially known as Bei Da. My preconceptions about Chinese culture were tested, torn apart, and reassembled with a new consciousness. I had never been to a country with such a stark contrast between different peoples and religions. Buddhist temples were situated next to large Christian churches and tiny *halal* (food that is permissible to eat under muslim law) restaurants. I was in awe of the rich cultural background that Chinese people held. I wondered how such a society could thrive after suffering under Mao Ze Dong before the *gaigekai fang* (reform and opening up of China) that marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.

I remember visiting the stationary store one time and browsing through the books on shelves. "Is she Russian?" I heard one saleslady ask the other in Chinese. "No, I'm from the U.S." I replied back in Chinese. She looked slightly surprised, but impressed that a *bairén* (white person) could

speak with her. I was surprised that the simple act of speaking in Mandarin could create such a connection between two people from two countries that were so different.

When I used to think about China, I imagined a collective group of people with a common history and culture spanning thousands of years. However, after visiting China and seeing the people who lived there, my perception of what a "Chinese" person was completely altered. Was it my Han language partner at Bei Da who studied science and loved kung fu? The girl from Xi'an who wanted to explore Christianity? Or the Hui woman I met who was a non-observant Muslim?

When I walked down the streets of Beijing with my blue umbrella shading me from the sun, I forgot that I was a *waiguo ren* (foreigner). I spoke Chinese, I ate Chinese food, and I soaked in the rich, vibrant, multi-faceted culture of China and became a *zhongguo ren* (Chinese person). Only when someone spoke to me in English did I remember who I was and where I came from.

When people ask me if it was difficult to get acclimated to living in China, I always think back to the day at the stationery store. If you speak to someone courteously and show that you respect their culture and language, they will in turn respect you. Even if your own background is radically different from the other person's, isn't that hard to get along.

*"It seemed like a clash of two opposing ideas, a war between traditional and modern China."*

*-Marla Goodman, fourth-year, History*



## READER SUBMISSION

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN ADMIT WEEKEND

When I first got accepted to UCLA, I had never set foot on a UC campus before. I actually hesitated to send in my Statement of Intent to Register to UCLA because I had the preconceived notion that UCLA was overrated. Next to all the glitz and glamour of Westwood, Hollywood and Beverly Hills, UCLA seemed gilded, almost unreal. And to UCLA, I was no one special. I wasn't a star athlete awaiting perks. I wasn't a genius with a full ride. Sure, I got in, but I felt like just another face in the sea of incoming freshmen.

In the moments before deciding which school to attend, I thought a lot about my life and how I grew up. As a Cambodian American female from Long Beach, I was a first generation attendant of a four-year university. At the time, I didn't understand how this mattered at all. My story was personal to me, and college felt like a separate matter altogether—an opportunity to escape, to do something, to be somebody. Why was who I was or where I came from important? Nothing about my acceptance letter even encouraged me to think about how those things related to my choice.

Due to proximity, I begrudgingly chose UCLA over other universities. I soon found out that I was among one of the few Cambodian American students attending UCLA. In fact, there were few people who even knew where Cambodia was located. The scarcity of Cambodians and Southeast Asians actually led me to search for my community at UCLA. And since then, I have been pleasantly surprised. What I found at UCLA was something organic and real. I found a group of students who related to my struggles and who reminded me that there was no escaping home. Through my involvements with groups like the Southeast Asian Campus Learning Education and Retention Project (SEA CLEAR), the Vietnamese Student Union (VSU), and United Khmer Students (UKS), I have grown

to connect my college experience back to my community. I am finding relevancy in my education, and I look forward to returning to my community.

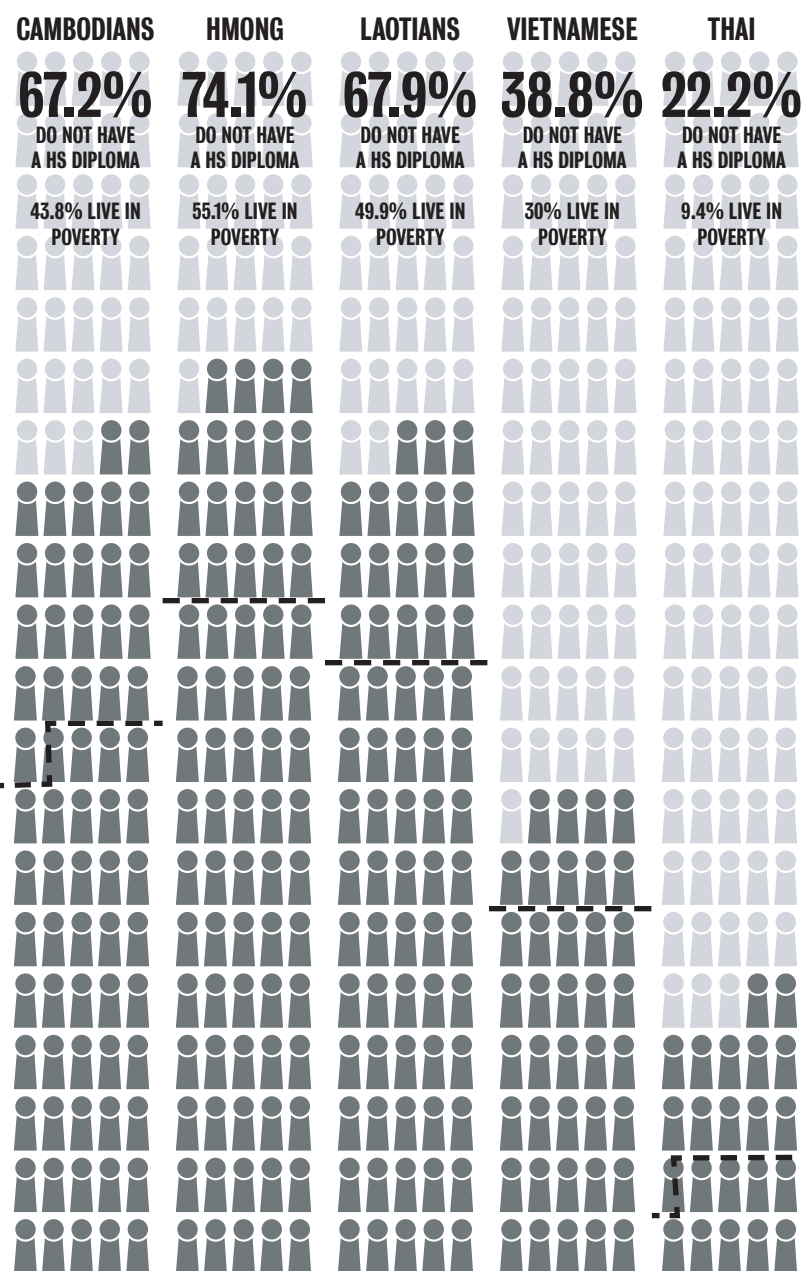
Nowhere in the UCLA brochure would I have understood just how much UCLA had to offer me as a Southeast Asian student. I did not understand the significance of my presence nor what it meant to be underrepresented; I did have the student body's sense of social responsibility and community progress screaming at me through through brochure. I also did not fully grasp the idea that students like me were inspired to tackle the problem of underrepresentation headfirst by creating support projects like SEA CLEAR to retain Southeast Asian students during their undergraduate career through services like peer counseling, mentorship, and internship. I did not know that there were Southeast Asian organizations, like VSU, UKS, the Association of Hmong Students (AHS), Thai Smakom, and the Laotian American Organization. Nor was I aware of their purpose to preserve and promote the progress of their communities on campus; I was not aware that there was such a strong student movement on campus. If I had known these things, my choice would have been an easy one.

This year, various Southeast Asian organizations are coming together to address this missing link. The Southeast Asian (SEA) Admit Weekend welcomes newly admitted students of Southeast Asian background to UCLA, and presents the university beyond its gilded exterior. The first of its kind, the SEA Admit Weekend recognizes the university's low level of outreach to Southeast Asian communities and aims to provide a space where admits can debunk the myths about college and learn what UCLA has to offer. SEA Admit Weekend reaches out to admitted students early, spreading the message that college is not about escaping home but about finding a home away from home.

—Layhannara Tep, third-year English, Asian American Studies

*SEA Admit Weekend will be taking place April 16 to 19. If you're interested in helping out, please contact Chair Bich Pham at bich.pham.n@gmail.com.*

## DIPLOMA STATUS + POVERTY NUMBERS FOR SOUTHEAST ASIANS LIVING IN THE U.S.



Source: 2000 U.S. Census and SEARAC (Southeast Asian Resource Action Center). Illustration by Maria lu. →

■ = NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA - - - - - POVERTY LINE

## READER SUBMISSION

# STATE BUDGET CRISIS

Susan Li, a third year history major and the State and University Affairs Director at the USAC (Undergraduate Students Association Council) External Vice President's (EVP) office, answers our questions about the effects of the state budget crisis on UCLA.

**How will the current financial crisis affect students in the 2008-2009 school year? What are the some of the threats in terms of student services, rise in tuition costs, and increased enrollment in international students?**

The current state of the UCs in 2009:

- Many of the current cuts come from the '08-'09 budget (the state cut \$48 million to the UCs and proposed an additional \$65 million mid-year cut).
- The average student is graduating with \$20,000 in debt.

- One in four full-time students work more than 20 hours.

• Undocumented students continue to face great financial burden. Although they pay into the return-to-aid financial program, they are not eligible to receive any of its benefits.

This year, the governor proposed the following:

- 9.3% tuition increase (bringing the total cost of a UC undergraduate education to \$26,104).
- \$209.9 million cut to the UCs.
- Elimination of funding for enrollment growth
- \$87.5 million cuts to CalGrants.
- Elimination of competitive CalGrant program awards.
- Decoupling of CalGrants: although fee increases are normally covered under the program, CalGrants are proposed to not expand to the same degree as the proposed fee increase.

**What is the EVP office doing about this? What are the UCs' response? What are the goals of campaigning and lobbying?**

The EVP office is working in conjunction with the University of California Student As-

sociation, which is a student-run, student-led organization. UCSA is a system-wide coalition of undergraduate and graduate UC student governments, and the official voice for the UC students to the State Legislature, UC Regents, and University of California Office of the President.

To combat the budget crisis, the EVP office has been doing the following:

- College Affordability Act, which will freeze fees for 5 years for resident UC and CSU students, prevents any future fee increases from surpassing inflation index, and raise revenue by a 1% tax on millionaire's income.
- Educational Week of Action, a week to raise awareness of the CAA 2009, the EVP office ran an educational week of action along with the other UCs last week. We held educational teach-ins/forums, the postcard campaign, and a speak-out on Thursday. While the educational week of action is over, the EVP office is hoping to not just stop there and continue having teach-ins to get students more aware about not only what is going on with the state budget but how that is going to affect them.
- Student Lobby Conference, where the UCLA EVP office will be bringing a delegation of 57 UCLA students to UCSA's annual Student Lobby Conference held in Sacra-

mento (Feb. 28 to March 2). There we will be further educating students about ongoing with the state budget and meeting face-to-face with state legislators to voice our opinions. All the UCs will be bringing other delegations as well, so it should be really exciting!

**How is this personally relevant to you? What is your role as a student activist, and how necessary is politicizing and mobilizing other students to you?**

As a student solely here on financial aid, the effects of this budget crisis have hit home. There are students far off worse than me, including my own little brother who has entered his first year of college. I find it incredibly hard to stand by and not take action as the upcoming year approaches. In order to be united statewide, we are going to need to have a mobilized student body that is educated and aware.

If we continue to let these budget cuts affect fee increases, cuts to enrollment and diversity, cuts to academic preparation and financial aid—what does that mean for access and affordability in this public institution? Really, what does it mean for higher education?



# BLOGOSPHERE the new frontpage?

*AAPI individuals frontier the  
burgeoning wild, wild web arena*

By Evelina Giang



QUICK KICK action figure greets visitors when they visit Phil Yu's blog, [angryasianman.com](http://angryasianman.com).

The journalism industry is hurting these days. The Los Angeles Times announced last month that it will be cutting 300 jobs, and many newspapers and magazines are following suit. With the recent cessation of print publication for AsianWeek, the longest-running English-language newspaper for Asian Americans, and with "America's newspapers narrowing their reach and their ambitions" (according to the Project for Excellence in Journalism), extensive mainstream media coverage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is dwindling.

In a time when relevant news coverage is scarce, AAPIs have turned to another outlet.

Weblogs, more commonly known as blogs, have opened an avenue for people to create their own voice. Blogs are more than free online personal journals where writers or "bloggers" can write about their day and give the Internet their two cents. Blogs have become a forum where the voices of AAPIs can be heard, where their talents as singers, artists, film makers and actors can be showcased, and where they can raise awareness of AAPI issues. With a potential audience of over 1.5 billion Internet users, according to Internet World Stats in February, "blogs build awareness of [AAPI issues] that isn't just limited by geography," said Professor David K. Song, who teaches the class New Asian American Media at UCLA.

However, blogs are not replacing journalism, added Song. Instead, bloggers "eschew traditional media gatekeepers to fill in the gaps that major outlets overlook, either because these outlets might consider something a non-issue or believe that there isn't a big enough demographic to warrant coverage," said Song.

**"I ... get excited when I see Asian American and Asian faces breaking new ground, pushing new boundaries or just simply being comfortable in who they are and saying to everyone around them, 'This is who I am.'"**

—SLANTY, SLANTYEYEFORTHEROUNDEYE.COM

Unfortunately, mainstream media does not have the room to give due credit to the wide range of achievements in the AAPI community, but blogs are compensating for that.

Take Phil Yu's blog [AngryAsianMan.com](http://AngryAsianMan.com). Yu jokes that editors wouldn't know what to do with him if he wanted to publish [AngryAsianMan](http://AngryAsianMan.com) posts in a mainstream print newspaper, but his blog has actually become the go-to for Asian American-related news and events. Attracting thousands of readers, his blog picks up on where mainstream media falls short. Yu draws attention to racism, documents anti-Asian incidents and remarks in the media, and promotes Asian American musicians, movies, actors and comic book artists.

"I'm writing for the sake of my own expression. I'm writing for people coming from the similar same place as I am— young Asian Americans who are interested in what's going on in the world and who try to engage in that," said Yu, whose blog comes up whenever "Asian" or "Asian man" is Googled.

## LAUNCHING AAPIs IN THE SPOTLIGHT

And blogs aren't just talking about the issues. There are numerous artists trying to hit the radio airwaves or make it in Hollywood; just check out [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com). But, how many AAPI pop stars, musicians and actors have you seen break into mainstream media? Come into the online community of blogs, known as the blogosphere, and see talents get their deserved exposure.

Take [Disgrasian.com](http://Disgrasian.com), for example, a pop culture blog started by friends Jennifer Wang and Diana Nguyen. A marriage between the words 'disgrace' and 'Asian,' [Disgrasian](http://Disgrasian.com) started as "hit list of disgraceful behavior," said Wang, who co-founded the blog with her friend Nguyen in 2007. The blog grew and the blog-

gers realized that in order to talk about Disgrasians, they also needed to talk about "Amazians," or amazing Asians. Among these weekly "Amazians" posts are "Rock on Asians" for noteworthy Asian music artists and "Babewatch" for good-looking Asians in pop culture. And so, a "Disgrasian Dictionary" was compiled, with their blog reports satirizing almost every person and event from pop culture to politics to sports.

"We wanted to take the air out of [disgrace] a little bit so that we can talk about it in a sort of like light-hearted pop way. Most Asian and Asian Americans can agree that Asians can be really harsh and judgmental. We expect perfection, and we expect to be the best. Say if we're looking at Bai Ling having a 'nipple slippo' as we call it on the red carpet, we're going to be rough on her because that's what we do," said Wang.

[SlantEYefortheRoundEye.com](http://SlantEYefortheRoundEye.com), a blog written by "Slanty," also highlights AAPI achievements and the community's influence on pop culture. In his yearly reviews of "Bests," Slanty devotes a few blog entries that spotlight Asian Americans who should be remembered for their specific achievements. There's the band Morning Benders, who was the "Best Indie Band with an Asian American Front Man (Who's Also Got a Foot Fetish)," and comedian Esther Ku, who was the "Most Viewed Asian American Comic of the Year Who Everyone Seemed to Hate But I Still Didn't Mind." Blogs highlight artists who don't receive enough exposure in mainstream media, and whose talents would otherwise be unknown if it wasn't for the Internet.

Slanty wanted to get his perspective out there with his blog, and when asked what keeps him blogging, he said that the "big part of the reason I blog is sim-

ply because I love seeing all the great people from our community who do their thing—no matter what it is. I just can't help not talking about the people in [the Asian American community] because I do get excited when I see Asian American and Asian faces breaking new ground, pushing new boundaries or just simply being comfortable in who they are and saying to everyone around them, 'This is who I am.'"

## KEEPING AAPI LENS ON EVERYDAY SUBJECTS

Some AAPI bloggers have also used blogs as journals, except they're online and accessible to millions of readers. Harvard University student Lena Chen's blog, [SexandtheIvy.com](http://SexandtheIvy.com), chronicles her sexual and romantic experiences at the Ivy League during her sophomore to junior year (2006-2007). Chen's blog has become very popular among AAPI female college students, from whom she receives the most reader responses, though she doesn't know if it's because she's Asian or from an Ivy League. The reader responses are mostly positive, but Chen says whenever she does receives criticism, it's usually racist.

"The criticism directed toward me is definitely more racist. If I were white, they'll probably call me a 'slut' half the time, but instead they call me a 'chink' half the time and a 'slut' the other half. It's definitely unexpected that I'm Asian," said Chen, who now regularly blogs at [Chicktionary.com](http://Chicktionary.com).

Then there's [8Asians.com](http://8Asians.com), which asks the question, "If you put 8 Asians in a room, how much diversity would you get?" Breaking the often homogenous stereotype AAPIs receive in mainstream media, [8Asians's](http://8Asians.com)

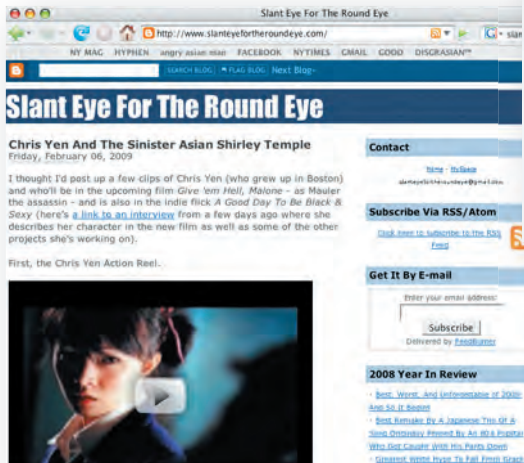
CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



## SLANTEYEFORTHEROUNDEYE.COM

POSTED BY **Slanty**

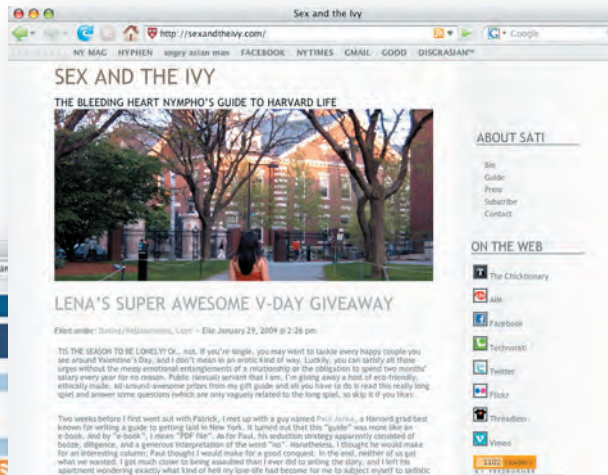
Both daring and sarcastic, "Slanty" blogs about news in the entertainment industry--filling his page with music videos, interviews, and movie trailers. But no fear; the Serious Slanty exists in the Blogosphere. He also addresses current events, recounts personal anecdotes and brings attention to relevant events.



## ANGRYASIANMAN.COM

POSTED BY **Phil Yu**

Chinatowns. JabbawoogieZ. Legislation. Korean BBQ tacos. Jollibee. Angry Asian Man writes about everything and anything under the sun, declaring his cause a yellow struggle against The Man. Very informative and real, he bids readers to "keep it real with the rice fields."



## SEXANDTHEIVY.COM

POSTED BY **Lena Chen**

This Harvard girl will tell it all (and we do mean all!) in a blunt and bold fashion. Lena Chen is a reputed blogger and writer who will detail the woes of undergraduate life dictated by depression, dating, sex, (insert more post-teenage angst, social-based issues).



## 8ASIANS.COM

POSTED BY **John, Tim, Ernie, Efren, Ben, Jeff, JozJozJoz, and Xxxtine**

Self-explanatory, almost. 8 Asians dwelling in L.A., the Bay Area, and everywhere in-between means 8 lives reporting on the enormous scope of the world: Social and medical research, entertainment, technology, discrimination, and politics in America and beyond.



## DISGRASIAN.BLOGSPOT.COM

POSTED BY **Jennifer Wang and Diana Nguyen**

Two witty, uncensored females with a load to say about the nation's current affairs--saying it via Blogspot. From political figures and legislation to overt dislike for Miley Cyrus, Jen and Diana are in-the-know with celebrities, injustice, fashion, and perhaps, a combination of all the above. They are stereotype-breaking and laughter-invoking. Plus, they can have a knack of Asianizing words; to describe them, we can use "Amazians" (Amazing Asians).

# When Bruins Blog...



## CAPSA4CHANGE.BLOGSPOT.COM

POSTED BY **CAPSA - UCLA**

Critical Asian & Pacific Islander Students for Action (CAPSA) is rockin' the digital world with a different blog post on the daily! CAPSA blog is really an extension of our mission and activism as a student organization to expand consciousness and critical thought among young leaders. We believe in the power of the blog to generate dialogue, promote critical thinking and serve as a platform for progressive, political voice. Blog on!  
-Sahra Nguyen, fourth-year, Asian American Studies, WAC



## APCLA.ORG

POSTED BY **APC - UCLA**

As a coalition of 22 API student organizations, Asian Pacific Coalition's blog serves to publicize the masses on events and programs across the board, on and off-campus. Continue to check out what's happening in the API community--blogosphere status--whether it be Jeff Chang's speech transcript or community tour announcements. Be active, be social, be political. Their mission? Solidarity through consciousness and identity. Est. 1975 (the coalition, not the blog!).



## blog.susiechhuor.com

POSTED BY **Susie**

Student by day professional hair and make-up artist by night. UCLA student and entrepreneur Susie Chhuor expands her business clientele through the internet. Her work has been featured on MTV, Gwen Stefani's Harajuku girls, models from agencies like Tyra Bank's Elite Model Management, and up and coming designer lines such as Ruche (www.shopruche.com). Follow her wherever she goes and whatever she does by visiting her blog.

bloggers range from liberal to conservative, activists to pop culture junkies, gay rights activists to conservative Christians. Don't expect the same response when you ask the bloggers the same question.

"Hopefully [when readers come to 8Asians.com, they get] something to the point of, 'why was that really angry political post sandwiched between a blog post about Tila Tequila and a discussion about boobies?'" said Ernie Hsiung, founder of 8Asians.com.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST BLOGGERS

Whether the focus is on community issues, pop culture or everyday life, all bloggers agree that it is essential that AAPIs blog. According to a Pew Internet and American Life study of Asian Americans and the Internet, 75 percent of English-speaking Asian American adults use the Internet, which makes AAPIs the "new generation of Internet savvy users," says Hsiung. This presence means that the AAPI voice can be heard in masses. Blogs can be used to create a dialogue that disseminates the stereotypes in the mainstream media and promote AAPI presence in entertainment and pop culture.

"I'm not really an angry guy," says Yu, "[but] what bothers me the most is the apathy and silence from the Asian American community. It's extremely important Asian Americans blog just because we have such little mainstream influence. We don't have our voices there. Blogs are definitely a way for us to get our voices out."





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## EAST WEST PLAYERS

**TIM DANG**, PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE  
**S. MARK TAPER FOUNDATION  
ENDOWMENT FOR  
EAST WEST PLAYERS**

PRESENTS

## IXNAY

BY **PAUL KIKUCHI**

DIRECTED BY **JEFF LIU**

Raymond Kobayashi is in the prime of his sansei life when he is pulled up to the Reincarnation Station. But when he finds out he's being sent back as a Japanese American he refuses, which rudely prevents anyone else from returning to earth as scheduled. A comedy about a unusually polite Asian causing major havoc when he ixnays his next life.

WORLD PREMIERE

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Wed-Sat at 8pm, Sun at 2pm;  
\$35 Orchestra, \$30 Balcony
- **Pay-What-You-Can-Performance**  
Thur, Feb 19 at 8pm
- **Next Generation Community Night**  
Wed, Feb 25 at 7pm. Free Pizza, Soda  
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Tickets. Prizes include autographed  
memorabilia from the actors.
- **American Sign Language-interpreted  
Performance** Sun, Mar 8 at 2pm.  
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MEET THE CHARACTERS OF IXNAY AT [Myspace.com/eastwestplayers](http://Myspace.com/eastwestplayers)

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**EWP**



# A&E Empowerment through Kollaboration

RAY LUO // A&E EDITOR // rluo@media.ucla.edu



David Choi and Kina Grannis perform a press conference for Kollaboration 9. Both will compete for cash prizes at the Shrine Auditorium on February 21.

CHRISTOPHER WU // CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Being Asian has nothing to do with being talented. That's the message that Kollaboration 9, a talent show that celebrates Asian American empowerment through the arts, wants to leave us.

"I just want to be as good a musician I can possibly be, whether it's an Asian American person watching me or any other person watching," said Paul Dateh, a hip-hop violinist who will compete at the Kollaboration stage along with other musicians for some of the \$10,000 in prize money.

Dateh was trained classically in the violin for 15 years before enrolling in a jazz improvisation class at USC. Soon, he began playing with a band in clubs, blending his unique style of virtuosic violin-playing with hip-hop. He soon worked with a disc jockey named Inka One on a YouTube video that has been viewed by more than 2.7 million people.

"I have no idea" was Dateh's response when asked how his video's popularity has surprisingly taken off so quickly. His recent success has allayed fears that he might not make it in such a tough industry.

Although his parents were initially concerned that he switched majors from classical music to jazz, Dateh's current success and the launching of his first album, "Be More," has persuaded them to accept his way of pursuing

***"I just want to be as good a musician as I can possibly be, whether it's an Asian American person watching me or any other person watching."***

**-Paul Dateh**

musical identity, Asian or otherwise.

Dateh has also been writing and singing songs that cross the boundaries between musical styles like R&B and jazz, which reflects how Dateh's own life has been a fusion of Japanese and Caucasian heritage.

"I don't know what to call anything [I do]," noted Dateh on his current mix of musical styles. Dateh refuses to label his music as one particular genre, but instead relies on his current experience and musical influences to direct him where to go.

"I'm still searching for where I am musically," said Dateh. "This album ["Be More"], is the way I am, but in the next album, I may be completely different."

This mixture of musical influences can also be seen in the work of another competitor in Kollaboration, Lilybeth Evardome.

Evardome has been singing in churches and choirs since the age of four. While at-

right avenue yet.

Yet for her, the lack of popular success is not a problem.

"I think I'll always teach," said Evardome, who performs mostly independent gigs on the weekends.

One independent folk artist who is getting a lot of publicity around the Internet is Jane Lui, who will also be performing in Kollaboration 9.

"I have never sought [sic] out an Asian following," said Lui, who, like other competitors such as singer-songwriter David Choi and singer Kinna Grannis, thinks Kollaboration is a platform for advancing their budding careers.

"It's not like I have this huge Asian pride in me," said Lui, who sees herself as just "a girl who's trying to do music."

All this may sound contradictory to the basic premise of Kollaboration 9: to empower Asian Americans by introducing AAPI talent to a broader audience. But if we look closer, this kind of attitude is the only way to debunk racial stereotypes in the media.

To empower and entertain, it doesn't matter if you're Asian. Your identity may be personal, but your work is universal.

Visit [pacificties.org](http://pacificties.org) for more info about Kollaboration 9.

**jane lui**



RAY LUO  
A&E EDITOR  
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It is as if she refuses to do anything but sing out the ideas in her head. Jane Lui, a San Diego based independent singer and songwriter, plays music that she claims "doesn't belong on the radio." One is often wary that such music would not be worth listening to, but Lui's suave, whispery, yet strong and sultry voice at once disarms the guards that protect one's listening taste. Her quirky personality and creative ideas about music then ransacks the castle, capturing one's undivided attention.

In one YouTube video, Lui refuses to talk, and instead puts up a placard that reads, "I'm not too much of a talker, so I thought I'd write," before wishing everyone a "happy hibernation" in a work simply titled "30 second Animal Migration song." Tapping her chest for rhythm, Lui chants a blues-like melody, giving advice with the phrase "run, Shiny run run rhythm, no one's keeping your soul." The song is Lui's way of telling a friend of hers how to "keep warm" in spite of an unfortunate event in his life.

Lui moved from Hong Kong to the Bay Area before studying music at San Diego State. She is classically trained on the piano, and began writing songs five years ago. Lui plays some twenty different instruments, including the glockenspiel, marimba, harmonium, and Indian drum, many of which appear in her first album "Teargirl."

"I had a sound in my head that I wanted," says Lui about her first project. "My [first] songs were attention-getters, not songs that I would write right now because I'm not at that place anymore... but they are still a part of my journey as a songwriter."

Lui wrote those emotional songs based on her own troubles during that difficult year. She says she needed songs desperately to sing, almost like crying out loud.

Lui | Page 18



# REVIEWS



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOX  
Dev Patel and Freida Pinto star in "Slumdog Millionaire," a movie about a kid from the slums of Mumbai who ends up on an Indian version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire."

## SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE: A predictable affair

SHIRLEY MAK // STAFF WRITER // smak@media.ucla.edu

What does it take to make a good movie? Is it:  
A) Money  
B) Luck  
C) Smarts  
D) Destiny

This is just one of the many million-dollar questions associated with this year's main attraction, "Slumdog Millionaire." Though there may be no definitive answer, one has to wonder how a movie chronicling an underdog achieving success in Mumbai has managed to impress both critics and audiences alike, in spite of Indian critics who denounce the stereotypical portrayal of a browbeaten India. The film swept four Golden Globes and is nominated for 10 Academy Awards.

Aside from Anil Kapoor, a prominent Indian actor and producer who plays the game show host, the other major actors are relatively unknown. And though directed by a well-known British director, both "Slumdog's" setting and subject matter are both predominantly foreign. So what pushed it to the forefront when movies like "City of God" (an Academy Award-nominated 2002 Brazilian film that also takes place in the slums of a remote country) are recognizable at best?

One might argue that both luck and smarts have played a role in Slumdog's almost unnatural success. Danny Boyle, director of "Trainspotting" and "28 Days Later," was fortunate enough to cast Dev Patel as resilient protagonist Jamal Malik, whose naïve face and gangly grace have captured the hearts of audiences worldwide. Boyle's decision to cast Patel was made after his daughter told him she liked his performance on a British television show called "Skins." A smart decision? I'd say. Likewise, Freida Pinto, the actress who plays Jamal's true love, Latika, is an Indian model with no prior acting experience. Fortunately, her beau-

ty on the screen contributed to, rather than distracted from, the wholesome love story that unfolds between the two of them.

But I'd like to argue that the appeal of "Slumdog Millionaire" comes from a fifth factor, which in turn could be seen as one of its biggest flaws as well as one of its biggest strengths, and that would be:

E) clichés.

Let's be honest. Even though Boyle's film is beautifully shot and coupled with a uniquely mixed soundtrack (A. R. Rahman's original song "Jal Ho" is a catchy upbeat melody well suited for depicting a frenzied life in the slums), the plot has its shortcomings. After all, the story is riddled with clichés taken from nearly every love story in existence.

You have the beautiful damsel in distress and the lovelorn boy who will stop at nothing to get her back. Then there are the bloodthirsty villains (who, aside from Jamal's brother, all appear rather one-dimensional) who want to tear them apart; a plot development that's essentially topped off by notions of betrayal and redemption; and perhaps most cliché of all, a journey that culminates in the type of fairy-tale ending that everyone knows and loves. Complete with a kiss, a smile, and a dance, it's every moviegoer's dream come true, right?

Though I'm probably one of the few people out there who found "Slumdog's" ending to be thoroughly unsettling in its predictability, I also can't deny that I was moved by it. It wasn't as provoking a film as I wanted, definitely palling in comparison to the nitty gritty technique that "City of God" employs, but it was enjoyable to watch. Like waiting for Christmas – you know what to expect but you end up being excited anyway. And in return for the wait, you get a pretty package delivered most promisingly.

Who can ask for more?

## CHANDNI CHOWK TO CHINA: A taste of the Bollywood leftovers

EVELINA GIANG // ONLINE EDITOR // egiang@media.ucla.edu

Hoping to cash in on the aftertaste left over from "Slumdog Millionaire," Bollywood decided to cook with bold flavors with "Chandni Chowk to China," the largest theatrical release of a Bollywood film in America.

America has yet to be enticed.

"Chandni Chowk to China" is Bollywood's first-ever fusion dish, serving up the traditional Bollywood musical numbers with a kung fu kicker.

The movie is about the unsatisfied Sidhu, played by one of India's biggest stars, Akshay Kumar, whom two Chinese villagers claim to be the reincarnation of a war hero.

With his Chinese translator in tow, the devious Chopstick (Ranvir Shorey), Sidhu goes from Chandni Chowk to China to fight the terrorizing Hojo, played by martial arts master Gordon Liu. On the way to China, they are met by Deepika Padulone's character, Ms. TSM, who sweeps the screen with her beauty.

"Chandni Chowk to China" is a fun movie filled with dazzling, though sometimes misplaced, musical numbers and dance sequences that make the two hour and 35 min-

ute movie more bearable. The kung fu action scenes are excellent and the best part of the movie. Apart, the two genres, Bollywood and kung fu action, are wonderful, but fused together, it tasted like director Nikhil Advani's first dish--unperfected and even amateurish.

Advani may have had too many flavors mixed into his dish. There's a plethora of plots and subplots in "Chandni," from the mission to kill Hojo, to Ms. TSM trying to learn about her family history, to Sidhu's quest to become a kung fu master; the list goes on.

Mixed in with the spectacular musical sequences and intense kung fu scenes, these flavors can only be slightly tasted under the infinite details from the plots and subplots. You may have come for Bollywood and kung fu action, but when you're done with the dish, none of these flavors resonate.

While Bollywood's biggest release in the American box office is noteworthy, America is still waiting to be impressed, with critics giving it only lukewarm reviews and low box office numbers. Next time, let's serve up something spicier, Bollywood.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES  
Akshay Kumar's character, SidhuLiu Sheyn is a master vegetable slicer in "Chandni Chowk to China."

## Movies to watch in 2009

This year, we watched everything from "Gran Torino" to Wanye Wang's free YouTube Screening Room flick, "Princess of Nebraska," the choices are endless. Here are some films to see in 2009:

| Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun-Li (Feb. 27)   | Tokyo Sonata (March 13)  | Dragonball Evolution (April 8)  | Taking Woodstock (Aug. 14)   | Ninja Assassin (2009)  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Chun-Li kicks ass on her quest for justice. <b>Starring Kristin Kreuk and Charles Klein</b> | An ordinary family in modern Japan falls apart after the father loses his job. <b>Starring Teruyuki Kagawa</b> | Son Goku sets out on a quest in search of the seven magical orbs that will grant any wish. <b>Starring Yun-Fat Chow</b> | <b>Ang Lee</b> directs in this summer film about the infamous Woodstock concert of 1986. | The Wachowski brothers are back in this action flick about a young ninja, played by Korean star, <b>Rain</b> . |



## GRAN TORINO: A look into Eastwood's film + reactions from students

SHIRLEY CHAU // BUSINESS MANAGER // schau@media.ucla.edu

**A** Korean War veteran and members of the Hmong community are forced to come to terms with their established stereotypes and hate in director Clint Eastwood's new movie "Gran Torino." The racist Walt Kowalski (Eastwood) inadvertently becomes a mentor to a Hmong teenager Thao "Tom" Lor (Bee Vang) when Thao works for Kowalski in reparation for attempting to steal the man's prized 1972 Gran Torino.

Initially, Kowalski demonstrates his resistance toward Thao and the changing demographics, most notably the growing presence of the Hmong, through various racial slurs and culturally insensitive remarks. However, he eventually warms up to with both Thao and his sister Sue (Ahney Her).

While Thao and Sue both gain a father-figure, Kowalski, who is distant from any significant relationship, ironically discovers affection amongst an unfamiliar culture. When violence threatens both Thao's family and the neighborhood, Kowalski, must face his own ethnic, racial, religious and generational prejudices to protect his new unlikely friends.

"Gran Torino" is one of the first to portray the Hmong American community, and has drawn reactions from the UCLA community.

"Because I am Hmong, [the movie] drew interest in me," said Pao Xiong, a fourth-year physics student. "I wanted to see the different cultural aspects they show."

Chou Khang, a first-year Hmong American microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics student, felt something similar.

"I was excited when I heard there was going to be an American movie starring an all-Hmong cast," said Khang.

An accurate portrayal of the Hmong in this film is a cru-

cial point that should not be overlooked. Although Khang liked "Gran Torino" overall, he did not think the movie accurately portrayed Hmong culture.

"The scene where everyone is in the house, and the shaman is performing the ritual and chanting in front of a table. That ritual is called, *hu plig*, meaning, 'calling the spirit.' In this scene, this ritual was performed for the baby's sake. It is believed that when there is a newborn baby in the house, the family must ask a shaman to call the baby's spirit to come home and join the family for it to live a healthy life," Khang described.

"This is all true, but for this specific ritual, the shaman is supposed to perform the ritual by the door because he is supposed to be calling the baby's spirit and welcoming it to come home."

Xiong had similar reactions. He thought some of the scenes were more exaggerated. "The scene where families were dropping off gifts at the doorstep of their neighbors; I've never seen that happen before," he said. Xiong also commented on educational conditions of his community in response to the scene where Sue addresses education.

Xiong said, "Something interesting that I felt a connection with between being a college student at UCLA and the film [is] how they portrayed the Hmong women and men in the film. Hmong men are the gangster type, and women go into higher education."

The film's attempt to portray Hmong Americans through mainstream media is commendable. However, in order for us to begin understanding Hmong culture firsthand, we should educate ourselves, and we can start by meeting our Hmong peers at UCLA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Pictured above: Vu (BROOKE CHIA THAO), Thao (BEE VANG), Sue (AHNEY HER) and Walt Kowalski (CLINT EASTWOOD) establish an unlikely friendship in Eastwood's newest movie, "Gran Torino."

## GRAN TORINO: A look at Hmong studies at UCLA

DERRICK OLIVER // CONTRIBUTOR // doliver@media.ucla.edu

**C**lint Eastwood's "Gran Torino" has recently served as a catalyst for discussion concerning Hmong cultural and gender stereotypes. While Eastwood's film provides hints of the Hmong culture to the global audience, UCLA students here have the opportunity to study and discuss the Hmong culture more in depth through a new course: The Hmong in Laos, Thailand and the United States: Culture, Kin and Making a Living.

The class will be offered Spring 2009 and will be taught by Professor Sharon Bays, who is an expert on the subject, having done her doctoral research on the Laotian Hmong refugee families and communities in Visalia, Calif. She is also the current advisor for UCLA's Association of Hmong Students (AHS).

The class will address the Laotian Hmong's historical and political background, their secret involvement with America during the Vietnam War, migration to Thai refugee camps, and socio-economical adjustment to immigration to the U.S.

"The students themselves got the course started. [They] created a petition with hundreds of signatures and

~~~~~  
**"When we start getting Hmong doctors, lawyers, civil rights leaders, that's when we'll see change."**  
 ~~~~~

*-Professor Sharon Bays, UCLA Anthropology*

~~~~~  
 sent in a letter of intent to the Asian American Studies Department," said Bays.

Pao Xiong, a fourth-year physics student and signatory for the AHS, agreed.

"Ever since [AHS] was established in 1996, one of their main goals was to have a course here to get the word [out about] who the Hmong people are," says Xiong.

AHS is a support network for Hmong students whom Xiong feels are underrepresented at UCLA.

"It's intimidating here at UCLA because being a Hmong student, I feel I am put at a disadvantage because not only [are] my people not known to others, but I [also] have to adjust to a very competitive atmosphere," said Chou Khang, a first-year microbiology, immunology

and molecular genetics student.

This is not the first Hmong course offered at UCLA. For the 2006-2007 school year, 2007 graduate Eric Yang facilitated and organized a seminar as an undergraduate called Emergence from the Secret War: The Hmong-American Experience.

The seminar was offered through the Undergraduate Student Initiated Education program in which students, with the help of faculty advisors, create and teach their own seminars. Bays was Yang's advisor during the development of this course.

Although this course is a huge step in enlightening UCLA students about an often unfamiliar and unseen culture, Bays said that more is needed to bring the Hmong to the forefront of America's consciousness.

"When we start getting Hmong doctors, lawyers, civil rights leaders, that's when we'll see change. This is a civil rights country, but we have a long way to go. It's a fight and always a struggle," Bays said.

# HISTORY OF HMONG IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S.

### 1975

#### END OF THE SECRET WAR

The United States withdraws from Vietnam and the Kingdom of Laos is overthrown by communists. Hmong people in Laos are targets of persecution. Mass exodus of Hmong from Laos to Thailand, United Nation refugee camps and to the U.S.

### 1976

#### 11,000 HMONGS ENTER THE UNITED STATES

By 1978, 30,000 Hmong have entered the U.S. These are mostly men from General Vang Pao's Secret Army.

### 1980

#### REFUGEE ACT OF 1980

Second wave of Hmong immigration. Families of previous immigrants are allowed to enter the U.S.

### 1997

#### U.S. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SECRET WAR

With the help of donations from Hmong veterans, the U.S. government dedicates the Laos Memorial in the Arlington National Cemetery in honor of the Hmong and other combat veterans from the Secret War.

### 2000

#### HMONGS CONTINUE TO RISE IN NUMBERS

The 2000 U.S. Census counts 186,310 individuals of Hmong ancestry in the country. However, 68.6 percent of all foreign-born Hmong are not yet naturalized citizens.

### 2002

#### HMONG LEADERSHIP IN THE U.S.

United States' first Hmong politician, a 32-year-old female lawyer named Mee Moua, is elected to the Minnesota State Senate.



## CULTURE

# YEAR OF THE OX KICKS OFF WITH A WIDE RANGE OF TRADITIONS

HUONG PHAM // STAFF WRITER  
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**A**cross many Asian households, wispy trails of smoke curled from the incense by their front door. If you followed the acute aroma from these altars, you were likely to find an extravagant arrangement of fruits, an offering to the gods. Flowers decorated living rooms and kitchens. Red envelopes, bulky with allowance, were happily stuffed into pockets. And in some homes, calendars with cartoon illustrations of an ox hung on the walls. With such festive decorations, it was a sure sign that it was Lunar New Year again.

Lunar New Year is a traditional holiday celebrated by certain Asians worldwide. The celebratory spirit seen around this time can be likened to that seen during the more familiar Christmas season. The holiday is based on the lunar calendar and grouped by a 60-year cycle, with each year under one of the 12 animal designations. These animals are the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep/goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. For the Vietnamese, the year of the rabbit is instead the year of the cat.

According to Chinese customs, preparations con-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARINA LI

sist of cleaning the house and buying new clothes, which denote a fresh start for the new year. Seven days before the big day, an important prayer ceremony is made for the ascent of the Kitchen God back to the heavens. As Grace Young states on leitesculinaria.com, the Kitchen God's job is to "present his annual report on the state of each household's affairs to the supreme spiritual being, known as the Jade Emperor." Sweet offerings such as fruits are left to persuade the god to give a favorable report, which should bring fortuity.

Other customs include abstaining from cleaning anything, not even one's hair, on the day of the new year because doing so would mean ridding oneself of good fortune. However, the celebrators also want to

receive good fortune, not just retain it.

In order to do so, the tradition of red envelopes is in place. These money-filled envelopes are called hong bao in Mandarin and are usually given to children or unmarried adults without jobs.

"The highlight of New Year's Day for me is actually watching the five-hour television special on the Chinese channel with my family," shared Jennifer Cheng, a Chinese second-year biology and history major. Cheng's family also visits a local Buddhist pagoda, where they ring a bell that is situated in the center. The louder one sounds the bell, the more good fortune one will receive for "ringing" in the new year.

The Vietnamese New Year, *Tết*, has traditions much like the Chinese one, such as the red envelopes and the ascent of the Kitchen God. Nonetheless, there are a few differences that make the Vietnamese customs unique.

Jacqueline Nguyen, a second-year global studies and art history major, decorates her house with *hoa mai*, branches from a tree with flower blossoms and cleans her house to prepare. How lucky the new year will be depends on the mood and stature of the first visitor to the home. The happier and richer he is, it is believed the same will pertain to the year. Everything done and prepared for the new year has a symbol of luck associated with it, and the food is no exception.

"*Bánh chưng*, which represents the earth, is one of my favorite New Year's dishes that is required at every family altar," shared Nguyen. This dish is glutinous rice, usually filled with mung beans, pork and peppers, all wrapped in banana leaves.

For the Tibetan version, Losar, one of the more distinct customs for the new year is the passing out of dough balls that have assorted ingredients hidden inside. According to Venerable Salden on phayul.com, "the ingredients one finds hidden in one's dough ball are supposed to be a lighthearted comment on one's character." The ingredients can be chilies, salt, wool or even coal. If a person finds coal inside, it represents his or her black heart.

Other Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia celebrate with Chinese customs because a good portion of the countries consists of Chinese ethnic groups. On the 15th day after the new year, the Festival of the Moon takes place and is celebrated with lanterns and mooncakes. Perhaps the one country that celebrates the new year in the most distinct way is South Korea.

"The new year is usually just spent at home with family. We don't have any elaborate decorations," said Jennifer Soh, a fourth-year physiological science major, emphasizing the reserved manner in which the celebration is conducted in her home. Her family eats *ttok kuk*, which are thinly sliced white rice cakes in a thick beef broth, topped with green onions and bright garnishes.

Soh described games that are played, such as *yoot*, a chance game. Then, much like the red envelopes tradition, they engage in *sebae*, a bowing ritual to their elders and ancestors. Money, gifts and wishful words of prosperity are exchanged as well. Though the Koreans' traditions are distinct from other Asian cultures, they all have one definite similarity: it is an opportunity for family and friends to reunite.

The holiday is a time for individuals to come home, put negativity behind them and greet the new year with a fresh attitude. Oftentimes people see Lunar New Year as a celebration that is limited to one tradition, when in fact it is a mass festivity celebrated in a variety of interesting ways. So this new year, make it a goal to learn about new cultures. Try new foods

and engage in different traditions. Then, spread the knowledge by bringing friends along on this new adventure.

Here's wishing you good fortune and a happy new year!

## FOOD

# BALANCING CULTURE AND CONVICTION

DEBBIE CHONG // ONLINE EDITOR  
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**I** don't know any other Asian American vegetarians," mused Teresa Reyes (name changed for confidentiality), a fourth-year English major of Filipino, Chinese and European descent. Most of the vegetarians she knows are white. "You're almost a novelty when it comes to this thing."

Fortunately Reyes is not alone, but Asian American vegetarians are indeed a double minority, and they face the challenge of balancing culture and conviction.

## WHY VEGETARIAN?

Kinnery Shah, a first-year international development studies major, has been vegetarian since birth. Her family's Hindu beliefs of reincarnation, karma and nonviolence are reflected in their vegetarian diet. "We believe that each human individual has been every kind of animal in past lives," said Shah, who is Indian American. The karma, or sum of one's actions, in the present life determines the life form one will take on in the next life. "We continue evolving until we reach heaven or a higher state of being." To avoid the violence that results in negative karma, Hindus abstain from consuming meat.

For other Asian Americans, compassion for animals and concern for the environment compelled them to go vegetarian. "When I was 14, I came across the PETA video 'Meet Your Meat' online," said Korean American Jenny Kim, a third-year environmental science student. "I was appalled at the abuse of the animals and the terrible living conditions."

She decided to forgo meat and became active in animal rights campaigns in high school.

Like Kim, Eric Vallone, upon learning about the dark side of the meat industry, put his knowledge into action. "Our fisheries are crashing; we're destroying the rainforest for cattle ranching; and the amount of energy, water, grain and pesticides used to raise animals is wasteful," said Vallone, a third-year international development studies major of Chinese, Irish and Italian descent. "I realized the fastest way I could make a significant impact was go vegan."

Even though choosing a meatless diet is a personal decision, Asian American vegetarians must also consider the impact of their choice on family and culture.

## THROWING CULTURE INTO THE MIX

"With my culture, vegetarianism is a lot easier for others to accept," said Shah. "There are quite a few Indians who are vegetarian. I don't get as many questions as my white vegetarian friends because it's not necessarily the norm for them."

Reyes was not as lucky. "A lot of Filipino dishes have meat. When I decided to go vegetarian, my family wasn't happy about it at all. They said, 'Food is how we show love. If you reject our food, it's like you're

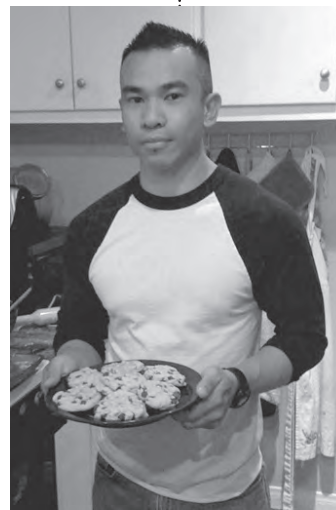


PHOTO COURTESY OF GABE VILLANUEVA  
Gabe Villanueva spreads his vegetarian beliefs by cooking and baking for his friends.



you're rejecting us and our values.' When you go to a family dinner and can't eat the food, it's like you're not part of the group," she said.

Gabe Villanueva, a third-year environmental science student of Filipino, Spanish, Cuban and Irish descent, has encountered similar problems.

"Coming from a Filipino and Cuban family, where meat is a big part of the diet, it's hard for them to understand. I have to cook my own meals when I go home. Food is a major component of cultural identity and I won't be able to pass on this cultural aspect to my kids because it interferes with my beliefs. My belief of respecting all forms of life is more important to me than my ethnicity because the world can try and take away my values to better fit a mold, but at the end of the day I will always be Filipino, and no one can ever take that away from me."

It may be a difficult choice, but many Asian American vegetarians feel that the sacrifices are worth it. Being vegetarian demonstrates their commitment to nonviolence, compassion, and environmental protection.

## MAKING THE LEAP

"Hopefully being an atypical vegetarian will encourage others to go vegetarian too," said Kim. "Anyone can be vegetarian. It's not limited to a certain demographic or ethnicity or religion."

"It's okay to make exceptions once in a while if you need to, especially during the transition period," said Vallone. "You also don't have to fit into preconceived categories. If you don't eat red meat or you only choose sustainably harvested fish, it still helps. Whatever you do makes a difference."

## PEOPLE

### A TALK WITH EMI MEYER

STEPHANIE AGUILAR // STAFF WRITER  
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It took a few tries to get a hold of her, but the 21-year-old music artist was the one who called me back, agreeing to an interview. With a voice pleasant and cool, Emi Meyer apologized; she was busy preparing to leave the next day for a tour in Japan.

Her first album "Curious Creature" was released in 2007, and two new albums are coming out this summer—one in English and the other in Japanese. While Meyer is no stranger to playing the piano, she started singing and writing songs in a serious manner when she entered college three years ago. She is currently attending Pomona College as a fourth-year ethnomusicology student. This major has stretched her knowledge of worldwide music.

"You don't get trapped in playing one certain type of music. I have to play it like this or like that," said Meyer.

Meyer is of Japanese, Irish and German descent and can fluently speak Japanese. "Being able to sing both in English and Japanese is rewarding," said Meyer, "because I get to communicate to audiences in two different cultures." Growing up in both worlds helped shape her perspective on life.

When she was six years old, she received her first piano lesson and expanded to jazz music in middle school. Upon entering college, she earned extra money by singing and performing at Christmas dinners and high school dances.

Music started as a discipline for Meyer but evolved into a creative expression. After returning home to visit her parents during winter break, they were surprised when she told them she had started performing in public.

"They said to me, 'Whoa! You sing now?' " explained Meyer. "Then my dad added, 'Just make sure you can support yourself.'" She laughed as she looked back at the memory. Her parents would remain supportive as long as she continues to love what she does.

Meyer mainly manages her own music - both creatively and financially - but has also received assistance from friends, mentors, and other musicians. Whether or not she's looking for a deal with a major record label, Meyer prefers to be the one in control of her music.

Her first song "Sunrise" was originally written as a poem for a friend. When it comes to writing lyrics, she said, "I try to let the words flow, not getting too structured about it."

Music was not the only career option that she considered. "During high school, I wanted to be in international relations diplomacy or something related to culture. I could still see myself involved in working with cultural exchange."

She says there is no set vision of where she will be at in five years, but she sees herself continuing music, traveling around the world and maybe studying music at a graduate school. "It's more of where my music takes me in five years and not vice versa," said Meyer.

Meyer has already toured in Brazil and travels to Japan to sing. Her upcoming Japanese album will be released in the summer, keeping it at a jazzy style with a "lyrically-focused, pared-down arrangement that has not been really done in the Japanese music scene ... I'm trying to keep it as organic as possible," said Meyer.

Even though she publicly performs on a regular basis, Meyer is still a college student. She spends her weekends playing the piano, visiting Los Angeles or going to a show.

She said, "Sometimes I catch up on schoolwork. I like to hang out with friends and eat some good food too." The young singer has some experience in dirt biking and goes out for a ride whenever she has a chance.

"When I feel inspired, I just go," said Meyer. She also enjoys watching films, watercolor painting and drawing. She has a spontaneous character by "always changing" her mind. "I don't want to go here or there. I just want to go with the flow," explained Meyer. She describes herself as an open-minded individual.

Her advice to aspiring artists is one simple motto: "Stay positive, and if you really believe in what you're doing, be proud of it. Just stick to it."



PHOTO COURTESY OF EMI MEYER

For more information about Emi Meyer's music, visit [myspace.com/emimeyer](http://myspace.com/emimeyer) or [emimeyer.com](http://emimeyer.com)

## PEOPLE

### MEET TUY SOBIL a.k.a. K.K.

MALINA TRAN // MANAGING EDITOR  
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**K**hmer\* refugee. Former Crips gang member from Long Beach. Deportee. Breakdancing champ. Or b-boy/gang member-deported-and-turned-breakdancing phenomenon?

No matter how you characterize him, Tuy Sobil (also known as K.K.) has overcome obstacles in both Cambodia and America. After the Khmer Rouge genocide, which took place from 1975 to 1979, K.K.'s family fled to refugee camps in Thailand and then the United States. K.K. slipped to the streets and became involved with the Crips gang while pursuing breakdancing.

After clashes with the law, K.K. discovered that he did not have citizenship status at the age of 18. He became one of 189 non-citizen Cambodians banned from the United States in the past six years who have been deported for felonies. Hundreds are still awaiting deportation.

Upon arrival to Cambodia, deportees have a multitude of experiences. Some have utilized their English fluency to find work, reunited with families or resorted to unemployment, drug abuse and depression. K.K. became a drug counselor prior to establishing his breakdancing club: Tiny Toones Cambodia.

In January 2004, nine children from the slums of Bo Ding in Phnom Penh asked K.K. to be their dance teacher. And so he taught them for three hours every evening in his own home. After learning that his students lacked positive role models (their siblings and parents were school dropouts, drug users, sex workers, etc.), K.K. began spreading awareness of HIV/AIDS, physical and mental health, drugs and gangs.

Over time, Tiny Toones has increased to 50 kids and begun gaining momentum through its reputation and invitation to events by the community. The program received a private donation, which allowed K.K.'s troupe to relocate to its current location, a two-story apartment between Wat Sai Poi Pei and the International School of Phnom Penh. Additionally, Bridges Across Borders, an international aid group in Florida, has financially helped the expansion of the center into a school with English and Khmer lessons and computers.

Tiny Toones' focal point is its hip-hop breakdancing, which develops self-esteem, discipline and passion—all factors for success. At three at-risk communities, including Bo Ding, Tiny Toones has expanded its outreach services, which provide free general language lessons, health education and peer support. Ultimately, the program's services of education, training and role models seek to provide impoverished students with the experience and skill to survive and achieve their dreams.

\*Khmer [kuh-MAI] refers to the people, language, culture and traditions of Cambodia.



"The songs were a collection of stories," says Lui. "Teargirl is the name of the story-book."

To Lui, the life of the artist matches her craft. And when one changes, so does the other. Her own ideas evolve constantly over time.

"We change constantly," says Lui. "Not so much the foundation of our character, but things around us, who we have around us, our outlook on life, what inspires us, ... and the way we interpret the world become different."

That difference can be heard on Lui's next album, Barkentine, a moodier opus that came about from a dream that Lui had. In that dream, she recalled being on a ship asking a future-telling spirit what will happen to her dad. The spirit told her that the coming year will be the hardest year of all, and indeed this is reflected in her own life.

"Firefly," a song from Barkentine, is a mellow, start-and-stop work that best characterizes Lui's album. In it, she invokes fireflies to "light the way," because "it takes time to become the one you never knew." The song is punctuated by repeatedly moody chords as well as well-timed phrases like "it's no more than cold, dear." Lui sings it with a breathless yet sonorous voice, like it's the last song she'll ever sing.

Barkentine contains songs recorded in natural environments like churches, classrooms, and of course, onboard a ship. Lui loves having the mike in front of her in an environment where she can operate naturally.

"The problem with doing a studio album is that it sounds like it's done in a studio," says Lui. "I love space and hearing space."

Always seeking the antimainstream/road less traveled route, Lui has been turning her ideas towards circus music, the type of music that most people "can't help but smile" at. Lui notes that modern circus music like that of Cirque du Soleil contains fusion elements.

"[The circus] has an amazing way of keeping the globe together," says Lui. "They have their own language, ... and I want to know why."

For her listeners, we hope she never stops exploring around music, but continue to sing out her ideas. In her "30 second Animal Migration song" video, Lui shows us a placard that says "Didn't actually think anyone would watch."

We're watching alright. And listening too.

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# AGENDA

YOU HAVE AN AGENDA. SO DO WE.

| WHEN                    | WHAT                                                                                                                                                                                               | DETAILS                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FEB 19 -<br>MAR 15      | <b>"Ixnay"</b><br>\$35 Orchestra, \$30 Balcony<br>Wed. - Sat. at 8 p.m., Sun. at 2 p.m.<br>120 N. Judge John Aiso St., L.A., 90012                                                                 | East West Players present a comedic play by Paul Kikuchi (directed by Jeff Lui) about a sansei who is reincarnated as a Japanese-American.                                        |
| FEB 28                  | <b>Film Premier: "A Song for Ourselves"</b><br>Aratani/Japan America Theatre<br>244 South San Pedro St., LA, 90012                                                                                 | Directed by Tad Nakamura, the film is about Chris Iijima, Asian American movement troubadour. Performances by Blue Scholars, Bambu, Kiwi, Nobuko Miyamoto and Charlie Chin.       |
| MAR 14                  | <b>Asian American Artists in California: A Symposium</b><br>9 a.m. - 1 p.m.<br>Hammer Museum                                                                                                       | This symposium will celebrate the publication of the landmark "Asian American Art, A History, 1850-1970," as well as reflect on historical and contemporary art.                  |
| APR 2 - 5<br>APR 9 - 12 | <b>Vietnamese International Film Festival: "Into View"</b><br>UCI, UCLA and Westminster                                                                                                            | The biennial festival showcases films made by Vietnamese and Vietnamese diasporic filmmakers.                                                                                     |
| APR 5                   | <b>2nd Annual LA Curry Festival</b><br>FREE   10 a.m. - 7 p.m.<br>Hollywood Blvd. (between Western & Vermont), Thai Town in East Hollywood                                                         | Combined with the 6th Annual Thai New Year's Day Songkran Festival, this joint-festival event provides the opportunity to enjoy Thai curry, curry-related products and much more! |
| APR 15                  | <b>KCN: Beloved Upon a Time</b><br>7 p.m. Royce Hall<br>Tickets Free at Central Ticket Office (CTO)                                                                                                | Presented by Hanoolim, the Korean Cultural Awareness group at UCLA, Korean Culture Night is the biggest creative showcase by Korean American students.                            |
| APR 19                  | <b>Fusion Hip Hop Dance Competition</b><br>\$22 for non-UCSD students, \$23 at Door<br>Tickets available at <a href="http://ticketmaster.com">ticketmaster.com</a><br>6 p.m. Rimatec Arena at UCSD | Hosted by UCSD's Multi-Asian Student Association (MASA), the event seeks to raise consciousness about Asian-Americans in hip hop through dance and cultural exhibitions.          |
| APR 30 -<br>MAR 7       | <b>Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival</b><br>Directors Guild of America and the Aratani/Japan America Theatre                                                                                 | The festival is celebrating its 25th anniversary and continuing its mission of showcasing APA and Asian International cinema.                                                     |

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### WINTER QUARTER

- March 7, 2009 - Explore LA the APC Way: Little Tokyo!
- CONTACT** [apc.internal@gmail.com](mailto:apc.internal@gmail.com) if you are interested.

### SPRING QUARTER

- April 16, 2009 - Breakin' it Downe, the annual LGBTQIA awareness event.  
**CONTACT** Wayne at [wtyt217@gmail.com](mailto:wtyt217@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping out.
- April 25, 2009 - APC Alumni Luncheon.  
**CONTACT** [apc.internal@gmail.com](mailto:apc.internal@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending.
- May 6, 2009 - Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Food Fest.  
**CONTACT** [apc.internal@gmail.com](mailto:apc.internal@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending or helping out!
- May 21, 2009 - Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Community Festival.  
**CONTACT** [apc.internal@gmail.com](mailto:apc.internal@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending or helping out!
- May 30, 2009 - APC Banquet.  
**CONTACT** [misha.tsukerman@gmail.com](mailto:misha.tsukerman@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending.
- June 14, 2009 - Asian Pacific Islander Graduation, APIG Committee  
**CONTACT** Wayne at [wtyt217@gmail.com](mailto:wtyt217@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping out.



# STORIES & ART PACIFIC TIES PHOTO CHALLENGE YOUR VOICE YOUR VIEW

CLAUDIA LI // PHOTOGRAPHER  
cli@media.ucla.edu

**MISSION** For the Winter Photo Challenge, PT asked for students to dig deep into their hearts to share their passions. Busy lives and endless responsibilities may hinder us from fully living out our passions but it's the story and effort that counts. By asking students to share their stories, we hope to inspire everyone around us to stand up for their dreams.

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THIRD-YEAR  
BIOCHEMISTRY**

"My passion for photography started off with a Canon SLR gift from my father, along with an inspirational Beatles photo that seemed to capture not just an image, but an emotion within a split second in life. I believed and felt that photography was a universal language that could bring about changes in society and the world, telling a story of a million words without a single sentence. Most people think I should stop pursuing my ambition and passion because they think it is a waste of time, that I won't make any difference in the world. To me, it doesn't matter-as long as there is a story to be told it warrants and image, one that should speak to the hearts and minds of everyone."



## FINALISTS: READ THEIR STORIES AT PACIFICTIES.ORG

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**KEVIN UNG, THIRD-YEAR, ENGLISH**



"There is something magical, warm, and indescribable about being around my family..."

### PASSION: STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

**ERIC KIM, THIRD-YEAR, SOCIOLOGY**



"Just take a second and look around. You will be surprised by what you see."



### PASSION: FLIGHT

**EPHRAIM HUI, SECOND-YEAR  
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**SPRING PHOTO CHALLENGE: "PERSONALITY"** – There are certain people that just stand out because of their animated character. Or maybe because of their inspiring nature or because they're just so cute. For the next challenge, submit a picture which highlights PERSONALITY – it could be you the comedian and your best face, your cute niece that laughs and dance in circles, or a hero in your life that inspires you. Look out for the next Facebook event for more details!