

ASIAN AMERICAN JOURNAL

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY



AAJ 08-09

JASMINE



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Above: Main dining area

Middle left: Students enjoying a meal

Middle center: J Club: Wang architect P.H. Tuan & Wang Director Sunita Mukhi

Middle right: Looking into Jasmine from across the pond

Bottom left: Students celebrating at Jasmine's anniversary 'DJ and Dinner'

Bottom right: SBU Alumni Reunion in Wang courtyard catered by Jasmine

Jasmine ~ Wang Center 2nd Floor ~ Stony Brook University
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Cover photo by 'Oliver' Hao Li is Lunar New Year in Fenghuang (Phoenix), Hunan, China. Not as eye-catching though just as interesting is his photo on the right of the same spot in daytime. Cover designed with Alfred Ha, brother of SBU alumna Sherry Ha.

Back. Top L: SBU alumnus Jack Chuanjie Song, Shandong Legislator, Beijing Olympic Torch Relay. Top R: SBU Dhoom Formal by Zhenxiao Lei. Bottom R: SBU APAMSA 2009 by Ngoc Vu. Bottom L: SBU CEAS Motorsports Team by David Yang Chen. Center L: SBU President Sam Stanley and family by Ngoc Vu.



Letter to Our Readers

This AAJ has been a long time coming. Originally meant to be two distinct magazines, AA E-Zine Review and AAJ, a misunderstanding about each organization's differences meant reduced funding for each. After combining funds to produce the *Guide to Asian and Asian American Resources at SBU*, that reduced funding meant either small runs of each or somehow combining them. Since the AA E-Zine, which primarily covers news and events is updated weekly online, the decision was made to do the latter. Thus this AAJ contains AA E-Zine articles chosen because they are more in line with the AAJ. As you will see from the photos, the AAJ could do annual issues of student and alumni photography alone and run out of room. Although getting students to submit creative writing is difficult, it seems that inside every techie and scientist is an artist. Problems aside, we hope you enjoy this joint venture and hopefully next year a better solution will be found.

A short note about the contents. Each year what is included varies depending on the students involved. This year there is a contingent of Chinese international students and this issue portrays that. Coming from wealthy families in China, they have a different take on their country than what most here would expect. Unlike international students hoping to emigrate, they have no desire to stay. They are business majors here to learn about Americans and dealing in a global economy. They have incredible respect for their great/grandparents generation, Mao excluded, party members who were idealistic in their endeavors to help China. They have little respect for the current generation in power and the corruption they see. They have mixed feelings about their own generation. Their pride, however, does not extend to freedom of information in China. One lives on Wikipedia, banned in his country. They have learned about the Cultural Revolution, the Dalai Lama, and the Tiananmen Massacre from less biased sources than their government and their views have changed. One taught us how to take photographs to 'not get caught by authorities'. It is even useful here to capture subjects not posing. But unlike the typical American students portrayed in one article in this issue who know so little of what is going on globally, they follow the world news intently. We all have much to learn from each other.



Top: Love for Sichuan

Bottom: God's Love

Stephanie Long

Reflections of Today

by Ken-Wing Lee, DJ 救護車

As I look into the stars of the clear night sky
I begin to think in my head, I'm wondering why
Were we put on this Earth, when we living to die
I tilt my head, and the moonlight hits my eyes
The crescent shape, hidden behind a mystic haze
Is like the trail of a teardrop running down my face
Trials and tribulations affecting the human race
We all gotta work together to find our way out of this forbidden maze
With all the sadness in this world, you have to have realized
Every day, the news is like another kid robbed, another man died
Another political trick full of lies, another war hero good-bye
Is there any hope in the mothers' newborns' cries?
Every young child wants to be a G so bad, it hurts
It's like a race to see who can rock the latest kicks first
iPods are pick-pocketed at eighty hundred hertz
Hatred, anger, and violence is commercially marketed til the bubble bursts
What we as a people should do is not so confusing
Like Tupac said, "it ain't about black or white, cuz we only human"
I know it's tough with today's institutions
But even at a loss of words, here's the solution
Forget all the hostilities ever possibly dreamed of
Solve all our problems peacefully because
There's something more to life, just listen, cuz
Dreams do come true, and they come through LOVE





China

I took this because seeing it reminded me of what China is. The word China is a duality.

It is porcelain;
it is a country.

One represents the other here. The bowls are like the Chinese people. There are many of them. When you look closely, some are perfect, others are chipped and broken.

The large single layer is like the population, large and poor. The tall stack is the upper class, small and rich but controlling and powerful.

Hao Li

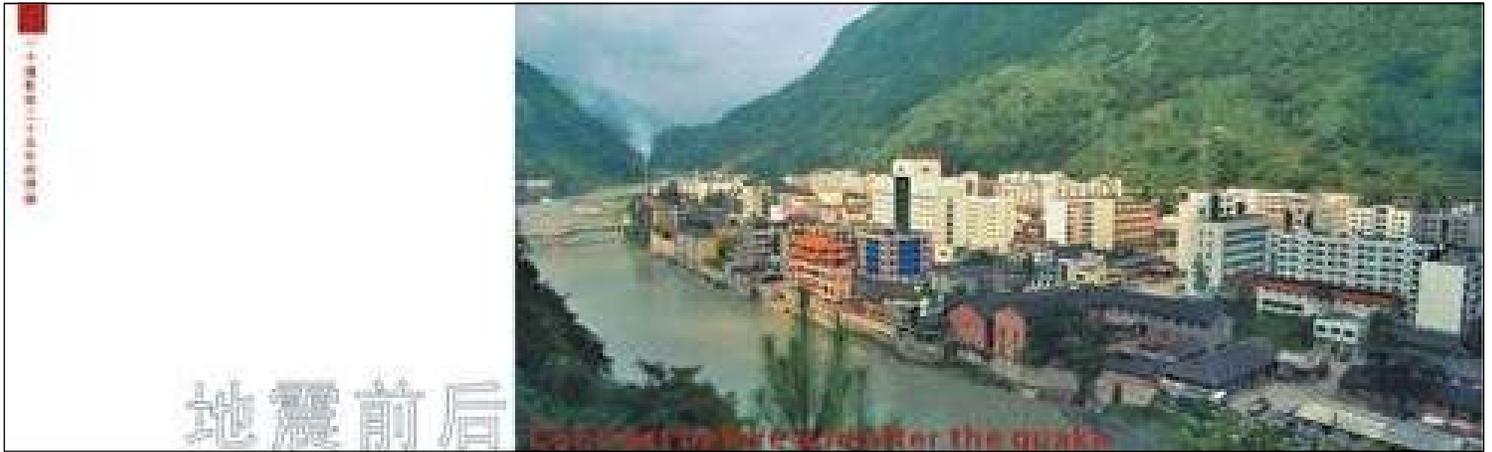
My name is Hao in China, Oliver in the US. My hometown is in Sichuan. I am a sophomore undergraduate at Stony Brook with a major in Business and Management.

Along with taking photos, I enjoy computer gaming, soccer, and the stock market. I have a great interest in photography. I'm basically self-taught from reading.



This is my third year doing it intensely. I love to take shots about humanity and historical things. I think taking photos about the uglier side of life is more meaningful to society than photographing pretty things, though I do both. Taking pictures makes me think about everything. Black and white are my favorite because colors can fool people. I wish I could double major in journalism photography. My blog is <http://331270999.qzone.qq.com>. Hope you enjoy it!

Death City: Beichuan, Sichuan, China



A Photo Essay of an Earthquake's Aftermath by International Student Hao Li

Reprinted from the AA E-Zine

On May 12th, 2008, at 14:38, an 8.0 magnitude earthquake struck near Wenchuan, a city in the province of Sichuan, China. By July 24th, 80,000 people had died. Beichuan, a city 130 kilometers from the epicenter, was the most destroyed. From a population of 20,000, only 4,000 survived.



Beichuan is a city in a river valley surrounded by high hills. Until the earthquake struck they were lush and green. When the buildings began falling the residents could not stay inside and were left with only one choice – to go to the mountain side of the city. But that turned out to be worse. The earthquake caused rock slides which rushed down the mountainside killing people and burying the town.

Parts of the riverbank collapsed. Wherever the people of Beichuan ran, they faced death.

For the rest of this article I will tell the story of my trip to Beichuan in the summer after school ended through my photos. I went into Beichuan with several friends who are also photographers two months after the earthquake.



On the way there were already houses in ruins but their owners were not willing to leave the land that their grandparents had left them. So they set up their tents beside the remains of their homes. Others settled in the nearest public square.



I had a very interesting and ironic story. It was the home of a famous traditional Chinese poet Li Bai or Li Po. Beside his home are two squares of open land so the government settled the survivors there. At the right side of the square survivors were making their lunch when we got there. They were preparing corn taken (fallen) from the ground. The little girl in the picture is having her summer break but she has to spend all of her time searching for food.

The lady in the picture on the right came back from somewhere far away. Her home was all cracked but she was lucky – no one had died.



All her savings in the bank were spent to buy food so her family of three could only eat one potato and a small bunch of green vegetables for lunch. They could only eat meat twice a month.

The tent they lived in was unbearably hot – 120 degrees F. Even if they could have afforded a fan, there was no electricity.



The old man in the photo has lost everyone in his family - his two sons and his wife. What he had now was himself and a disabled leg. He told me that he was supposed to get the equivalent of \$30US per month from the government. This was now the third month and only now was he starting to get anything - \$10US and a half package of rice when he was supposed to get a full one. The reason for the reduced amount, the government told him, was that since there was only him, he did not need that much money or that much rice. So many other people are busy trying to rebuild their homes but for this old man, he has no money and cannot take out a loan because he has no collateral. There was no possibility for him to ever move out from this hot tent.

When people like me with our huge cameras went into his tent, maybe he thought we were journalists and he give us bottled water because he really wanted us to help him and water was all he



could offer. When I looked around I saw that he drank the boiled river water. I asked him and he said he didn't like bottled water. He was lying. When I left his tent I was drinking his water and crying. I was not a real journalist and I could not help him.



When we went to leave and we saw there were many people on the left side of the square. When I got close I could see they were giving out water, rice and oil. I know it is just a show by CCP because they had flags all over the place and so many people stopped me from taking photos. They said that without government papers, you cannot take photos. When they were not paying attention I would take photos by holding the camera on my arm and not bringing it up to my face.

I was thinking that on opposite sides of the square there becomes a heaven and a hell.



Anyway, we can't do anything. We had to continue our journey towards our destination, Beichuan.

Most of the roads towards Beichuan had been destroyed and all the bridges were dangerous. Engineers built bypass roads to go around the bridges.

Beside the road you can see the tombs of workers who died rebuilding the roads. The aftershocks brought more rocks down, crushing the workers. We thank them for guaranteeing the road by losing their lives.

When we got closer and closer to Beichuan the same story happened again. On both sides of the road, one side is tents and one side is houses.



Lunchtime these two old men sitting beside the house were eating huiguorou, a famous Sichuan dish, twice cooked pork. But on the other side of the road they were only eating packaged noodles.

We kept going. There was 4 wheel drive car half buried on the road. As the two mountains slide together it formed a lake and buried everything.

The army bombed the dam to reopen the road. The floodwaters covered the buildings with the bodies inside. This poisoned the water making it unsafe. A temporary water system had just been built.



We were upstream where the dead bodies were and downstream was the capital city of Chengdu. The government said the water in Chengdu was safe but that was a lie.



At last we finally got to Beichuan. The police set up a poison skull sign to warn people that you could be poisoned from the decaying remains of the thousands who had died. We were told not to touch anything, not even to sit on the ground. After we were



out of the policemen's sight we got into the city by climbing the mountain. We were shocked when we first saw the city because what has once been a beautiful city had no signs of life at all. Silence. Like a ghost town in a movie. I felt cold. A broken advertising sign blowing in the wind made a metallic screeching sound that was scary. All these roads had been



flooded by the waters so all the people who had survived the earthquake died from the flood. We were told not to touch the silt because it was contaminated too. Some of the roads were buried when the buildings collapsed and we could not pass through.



Look at this chair. Can you imagine how they worried about their family when the army was trying to dig people out.



This couple had just been married and were having their wedding when the earthquake happened. I don't know if they are alive. It is hard to imagine that the day they married is also the day they separated forever.





The picture on the right represents something that only China has – the birth planning department. I really wanted to ask, in the earthquake time – you guys control birth, but who controls death?

So many buildings were like the one on the left. The first floor could not handle the pressure and collapsed from the upper stories. So many people were in the first floors and when they tried to dig people out, the buildings collapsed even more.

The policeman told me that on the first day there were so many people screaming for help but it was too dangerous so they could do nothing. The yelling became fainter and fainter as people died.



Buildings like this on the right you could no longer recognize except for the gate.

And as on the left, even staying in a car was not safe at all.



For this building on the left, the only thing left you can see is the roof, now at ground level.

On the right, there were three buildings under construction. What is critical is how much corruption was involved in the building process. One collapsed totally, one partially, and one did not collapse at all. How did those bad business men who used shoddy construction get approvals from the government? Bribery?



Here comes our main point – the school. Look at the building on the right. It seems nothing was damaged but you never know how many students were buried on the ground floor.



When you take a close look at this building you will find that they tied all the sheets and clothes together. It brings us back to that moment. Students are screaming. Desperate to live they came up with any means to try to get down from the upper floors. The stairs had collapsed. If students could not get down as soon as possible, who knew if the building would survive the after-shocks?

The Army has already taken out all the bodies it could but there were also many bodies in the ruins so the army disinfected each ruin with chemicals. They would spray paint each building to tell which had been done and which had not. Two months later the air still smelled of rotting flesh.



There are many more photographs and they can be seen fully enlarged in this gallery:
<http://aasquared.org/gallery/SichuanEarthquake2008>

Wen Huang on America, China, Kosovo

by Tommy Yu

Reprinted from the AA E-Zine

In the wake of a NATO bombing that tested the ties between the U.S. and China, a lone female photojournalist meandered through the remains of a ravaged Chinese embassy, photographing the dead and all the while grieving for her loss. Among the mutilated bodies lay the maimed corpse of a close friend and colleague.



Wen Huang

Wen Huang said she could never forget the pictures she snapped that day. Those photos were among the many she showcased as a part of the "My Life As..." series at Stony Brook University. On Oct. 10, Huang reminisced as faculty and students listened attentively. She spoke to the audience with an apparent sense of uneasiness with America, but when the rueful photojournalist began her Kosovo War presentation, the mysteries of her sorrow unraveled.

She displayed pictures of demolished buildings and doleful victims and spoke tactfully about the loss of a very dear friend, seeming to withhold any critical comments about the American pilot who bombed the Chinese embassy.

Huang began her career in Beijing in 1989 and joined the German bureau of China's national Xinhua News Agency in the late 1990s. She worked alone. It was during this time that she was sent to cover the Kosovo War as the first female photojournalist on that battlefield, she said.

At the time of the Serb military occupation of Kosovo, NATO authorized an air strike on Belgrade, where on May 7, 1999, one missile leveled the entire Chinese embassy, according to news reports at the time. Three Chinese journalists died in the explosion. Huang's colleague was among those killed.

NATO officials blamed the "mistaken attack" on an "outdated map" and apologized to the Chinese government, but many in China, including Huang, argue that the United States deliberately chose the Chinese embassy as a target. "America means 'beautiful country'" in Chinese, said Huang, adding that she

failed to see the beauty of the United States in the war's aftermath.

Despite being distraught and confused, Huang managed to capture many powerful images in the 78 days she spent covering the war.

Governments, journalists and citizens of many countries have raised questions about the intentions of those who ordered the bombing following NATO's apology. After the attack, the London Observer reported that the Chinese embassy had acted as a rebroadcast point for the Yugoslav army, a claim that three NATO officers confirmed.

In June 1999, the London Daily Telegraph said that one precision-guided missile hit the embassy's intelligence directorate, which was "the most sensitive section of the embassy complex."

A month later, CIA director George Tenet testified in the U.S. Congress that of the 900 targets bombed by NATO, the Chinese embassy was the only target selected by the CIA. The Associated Press, Reuters and other media outlets followed up on the Observer story, each reaching the same conclusion: There was enough evidence to suggest that the NATO bombing was deliberate. On Oct. 18, 1999, four major headlines emerged: "NATO Bombed Chinese Embassy Deliberately--UK Paper," by Reuters; "NATO Bombed Chinese Embassy Deliberately: Report," by Agence France-Presse; "NATO Bombed Chinese Embassy Deliberately, Observer Claims," by Deutsche Presse-Agentur; and "NATO Denies Deliberate Embassy Hit," by the Associated Press. The AP headline was the only one that carried a different connotation.

FAIR, a national media watch group in the United States, reported that the controversy was prominently covered by many media outlets in Europe but received little mainstream media attention in America.

Andrew Rosenthal, former foreign editor of *The New York Times*, was asked by FAIR why the Times printed no coverage of the Observer finding. "The Observer article was not terribly well-sourced," Rosenthal told FAIR. "I assure you that if we can show that the bombing was deliberate, you will read about it on the front page of our paper."

As time went by, the debate slowly dissipated without resolution, but the two polarized viewpoints lingered. To this day, the issue remains disputed, although not as heatedly as it was before. Some people maintain that

the bombing was indeed a grievous mistake, while others remain unconvinced by NATO's apology and are bitter about the way events unfurled.

Huang is not the only person to harbor feelings of animosity towards America. "My friend in China was shocked that I didn't believe the Americans bombed it on purpose," said Kam-Ling Wong, a professor of Chinese culture at Stony Brook. "A lot of the young people were pro-America before the bombing. It was unimaginable the mighty America could be so ignorant" of its target.

After her assignment in Kosovo, Huang went back to Beijing and worked as a photo editor for two years before The Knight Foundation invited her to study at Stanford University in California on a journalism fellowship. "It was a tough decision," Huang said. The events at Kosovo weighed heavily on her mind. She decided to accept the offer and found that America was different than she imagined, thoroughly enjoying her stay at Stanford.

The controversial topic of China's government censorship came up during her time at Stony Brook University, but Huang refrained from saying too much. She did say, however, that China is lessening its grip on the media day by day but is still far from a complete democracy.



Chinese Embassy Bombed by US, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1999



Victims of Chinese Embassy bombing, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, May 9, 1999. Reuters

Huang works for a media outlet that proudly claims the title "Daughter of the Emperor," which implies close supervision by the authoritarian father nation. "Every photo I take is sent to the government," Huang said.

Despite the government's control of the news media in China, Huang said she still believes Chinese students are much more knowledgeable about world events than American students, who, she said, are ignorant of what happens outside the United States.

Her point was strengthened when she brought up the embassy bombing in a journalism class and only one student knew what she was talking about.

"The western media doesn't give enough credit to the opening up of China's media," Professor Wong said. "You can actually get stuff [that's] not said on American news."

Huang currently holds a position at Xinhua, the larger of the two main news agencies in China, with China News Service as the competition. She is the editor of the photo department and deputy editor-in-chief of Photomall, a Xinhua-affiliated multimedia database. When she joined the news agency in 1989, she was its first female photo editor, out of 220 staff photographers and 3,000 contract photographers. "I entered the business pretty smoothly," Huang responded, when asked whether her gender ever affected her career.

As Huang's "My Life As..." presentation came to an end, the room billowed with the sound of applause. Her story had stirred the audience. "It was very moving," said Richard Hornik, a journalism professor at Stony Brook.



Shao Yunqung, sister of Shao Yunhuan, killed in Chinese Embassy bombing, Yugoslavia. May 10, 1999, AP/Xinhua/Lan Honggua

He agreed that the speech was "very well received."

Huang's book about the war in Kosovo, "Target," was published in 2000. It contains many of the images she showed at her Stony Brook presentation. In recent years, she has been promoting her book throughout her travels in America, the country that—regardless of intent—left her with a deep, emotional scar.

WHY MY STATUE OF LIBERTY IS A WOMAN OF COLOR

BY JENNIFER LI, SMITH '11

Just add salt, baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice and the Statue of Liberty—and there you have it, a bucket full of national controversy. Provided that I can get past all the protests for defacing a national monument and paperwork required for such a project, I would personally cover the Statue of Liberty's exposed skin with the copper-cleaning mixture. Just think of it as a much-deserved facial for our Lady Liberty. The result would be a lemony-fresh smelling Statue of Liberty and a very angry mob outside of my apartment.

Why turn Her into a person of color, you ask? This question can easily be answered with "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus: *"Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"* If we looked at the socio-economic background of people in America, we would find that the burden of poverty and injustice rests overwhelmingly on the shoulders of people of color. Making Her a person of color would acknowledge this problem and show that we are taking a stance on the issue.

What better way to catch the world's attention than to turn the Statue of Liberty into a person of color? It would immediately invoke debate surrounding the subject, putting pressure on both public officials and citizens alike to fix the social problems that plague our nation. There are many things that need to be dealt with: the status of Native Americans in reservations (highest alcoholic and teen suicide rate in the U.S.), the welfare and dire economic condition of Latinos and African Americans, the naturalization of immigrants in the U.S. (particularly from Latin American and Asian countries), the treatment, rights, and equal protection of people of all sexual orientations, the need for more funding and integration of public schools, and so many more to list.

The Statue of Liberty has come to be a symbol of mercy for the underrepresented population in our country, and it's about time we addressed these concerns and did something about them. The Statue of Liberty's brown skin would align her with the masses—with African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Hispanic Americans, Immigrants, the LGBTQ Community, Native Americans, with every person that needs help in our far from perfect society. Until there is justice for everyone, and not just for the privileged few, the Statue of Liberty should retain her copper skin.

When there comes the day that Chinese fourth graders no longer are put in English Second Language class even if they were born here, when I am no longer looked down upon by peers for not knowing the "proper way" to use a knife and fork, when I will no longer be teased out of the pizza shop down the block for being a Chinagirl, when policemen no longer assume that I can't speak English because my skin color is yellow, when my brother no longer will be beaten around by the kids in the neighborhood because they think that Chinese don't fight back, when I no longer have to translate my father's "broken English" so the judges won't kick him out of the court room again, when I no longer have to fight the Housing Office off so they won't evict us, when the injustices of this country are alleviated—that day, the Statue can return to its green color. But until then, we need to signal a cry of help for the underserved people of this country, and until then, our Lady will be brown. Hopefully, with a brown skinned Lady Liberty for inspiration, our nation will be able wake up to its crisis, take a scrubbing brush, and start some housecleaning of its own.



**AMERICAN WOMEN OF COLOR
IN THE CHARLES B. WANG ASIAN AMERICAN CENTER
BY NGOC VU**





Top: Six Strings

Bottom: Sweet

Chaomin Tang



Our Age HBO Building on left, Grace Building on right, each reflected in the other, Bryant Park, Manhattan

Chaomin Tang

Hometown: China

Undergraduate Level: Junior, Stony Brook University

Major/Minor: Mechanical Engineering / Music

Interests: Guitars, Photography, Drawing, Forest of Autumn

About me: I have great interest in arts in general. Right now guitar playing and photography are the two things I do extensively. I'm basically self-taught in photography by browsing photos on Flickr mostly (it's such a great platform for all photo enthusiasts!) The music I listened to, the movies I watched, and the vibrating external world itself have all been my source of inspiration, and photography has become an outlet of these ideas. It's just a great way to express yourself artistically without too much hassle (unlike drawing, which you have to sit there for hours to come up with something, and I am a lazy bastard). My Flickr website: www.flickr.com/photos/29942644@N00/





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Stephanie Long

Year: Junior

Major: Psychology

Interests: Music, photography, good food, five hour phone conversations

"Why don't you take a picture? It'll last longer."

As cliché as it sounds, the main reason I started getting into photography was for the purpose of preserving memories. Ever since I was a child, I was always known to have a camera on me during social gatherings and was eventually dubbed the "photographer of the group." Mind you, digital cameras were not very popular yet, so I was carrying around my mom's simple yet heavy film camera to capture my childhood memories. I took pictures knowing that having them in the long run would be greatly appreciated and priceless to my friends, a principle I still follow when taking pictures today.

Once I switched over to using a digital camera, I was able to be more creative and began taking many abstract and scenic photos with the ease of the delete button when they did not come out the way I hoped. Over time, photography became second nature to me and I would feel bare without my camera in hand.

Most of the photos I shoot are either scenic, to immortalize the beauty in this world, or macro, to bring attention to little things some people may often overlook.

Even with all these years of experience, I still consider myself to be an amateur photographer since there is still so much I need to learn and improve on.

Top: Wu Long - NYC

Bottom: Phantom State - NYC

Stephanie Long



Top: Oregon Outback

Bottom: Victoria Memorial, Kolkata, India

© Joy Dutta

Joy!



by Ja Young
Alumni Editor, AA E-Zine

How does one adequately explain Joy Dutta to the uninitiated? He is one of those rare people who has to be met to be believed. Now an alumnus, at Stony Brook he came to be loved and appreciated by all who took the opportunity to get to know him. Yet he began his life at the University depressed and thinking he would never make friends.

Joy graduated from high school in India after acing his country's exams, similar to perfect SAT scores, and was accepted to IIT, India Institute of Technology, India's elite university that compares to MIT. So of course when he applied to get his Masters at Stony Brook, the Computer Science Department accepted him gladly.

SBU's grad Comp Sci is highly ranked, one of the best at a public university, but it is an unfriendly place where faculty interaction with M.A. grad students is rarely personal. Students can't wait to graduate—one of it's most successful alumni rushed to get his M.A. in one year he loved it so much. (For Ph.D. students it's somewhat better and as with most departments, very dependent on one's thesis advisor.)



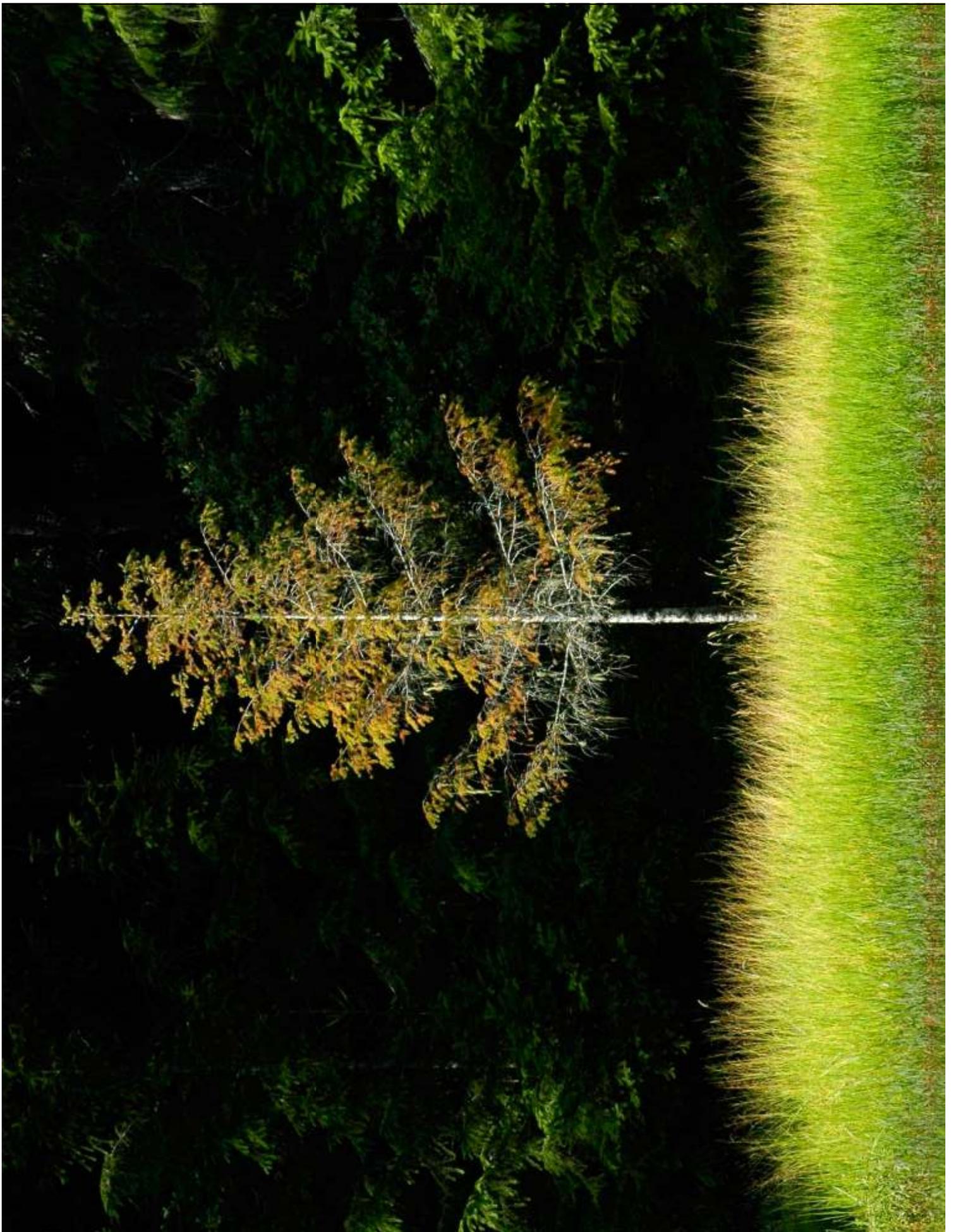
Poor Joy left his idyllic life in India with fellow motorcycle compatriot and girlfriend Priti not knowing any of that. For him, making friends is harder than for most of us. As a young child measles made him deaf. It takes patience to have an in-depth conversation with him. Many in Comp Sci would not try. I don't remember how we met Joy but he became the best photographer the AA E-Zine ever had and a friend I still keep in touch with. The next few pages show some of his incredibly beautiful photos.

Joy got into photography as a way to express himself as well as to record his biking treks. Now working for Yahoo in California, he has become so good at it that he has a sideline career taking family and portrait shots. There are some AA E-Zine photos here but wander over to his website, www.joydutta.com, where you can see his new work—very impressive. And see the other hobby he took up, woodturning, while waiting for Priti to get her Molecular Biophysics Ph.D.

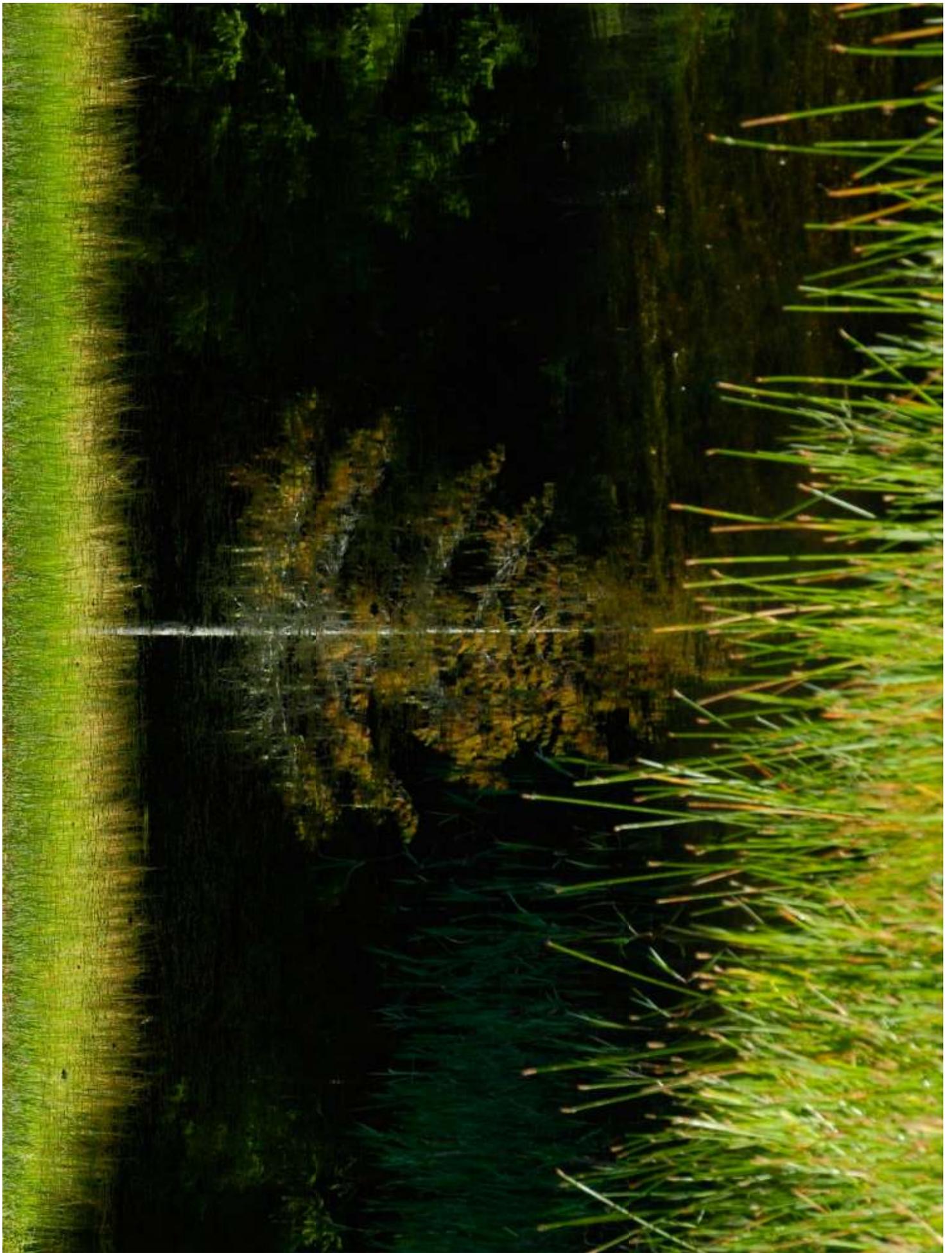


They got married after Joy graduated in 2005 but she was back and forth between India and the U.S. for a few years until she finished.

Here is a story that shows how crazy but amazing Joy is. After accepting the position at Yahoo, he decided he was going to get there via his motorcycle in the middle of winter. On Christmas Day he took off with plans to go through the Deep South before heading West. Deaf, brown, hard to understand with an accent so obviously a foreigner—to say that we were a bit fearful for him is putting it mildly. But as always, Joy proved us wrong. Not only did he have a good bike trip, he met lots of people and had a great time. Where we expected Southern racism, he experienced warm Southern hospitality. Guess it's why Obama could be elected President—our country really has changed!



Life and Death Reflected in a Redwood Forest, California © by Joy Dutta *Asian American Journal* 2008-09



Asian American Journal 2008-09 **Life and Death Reflected in a Redwood Forest, California** © Joy Dutta



Wang Center Top: Aboriginal Art Show Bottom: Jasmine from across pond Huy Huynh



**Chinese
Lion Dancers
at the
Long Island
Asian American
Cultural
Festival
held in the
Charles B.
Wang Center
Celebrating
Asian and
Asian American
Cultures.**

**Photo by
Huy Huynh
came in
1st
in the
2007- 08
SBU Student
Media Awards.**

**Huy, a
Computer
Engineering
major,
graduated
in May 2008.
In his
years as
Editor-in-Chief
of the
SBU
AA E-Zine
he became
the de facto
photographer
of the
Wang Center.
His photos
were chosen
each year for
inclusion in
publications
by the
Wang Center
architect,
P.H. Tuan.**

**They can
be viewed
throughout
the AA E-Zine
Photo Gallery
at [www.
aasquared.org/
gallery](http://www.aasquared.org/gallery)**

My Escape from Vietnam

by Khoan Tran

Attended SBU in the 1980's

I survived for three weeks traveling across 400 miles and faced many hardships and obstacles. I am thankful every day for everyone who risked their lives to let us have a taste of this freedom that can be only found in America.

One of the most difficult and most frightening experiences of my life was my adventure through the forests of Cambodia escaping from Vietnam. It was also the most exciting and showed me the meaning of the struggle for freedom. For freedom many Vietnamese people died in the oceans and forests, or were raped and killed by people who were similar to them. I survived and had a meaningful and unforgettable experience to find freedom. The memory is still very vivid.

Life after the Collapse of South Vietnam

When the Second Republic of South Vietnam collapsed on April 30, 1975, almost all officers who served in the South Army Forces' resistance to the North Communist regime and anyone who collaborated with the South Vietnam government were put in re-education camps for years. A lot of people including my family were also expelled from the cities and kept in the new economic zones. They confiscated properties such as houses, factories, stores, cars, and jewelry from people. Everything changed; life became miserable, and we had no religion and no freedom.

Hundreds of thousands of people took refuge abroad creating a sudden mass exodus from Vietnam. From 1975 to 1990 many people left Vietnam by boat or crossed the border through Cambodia to Thailand or the Philippines. These Vietnamese refugees became known as boat people or walk people. About 60% of the boat people escaped. 40% died at sea or were killed by pirates. Most who escaped from Vietnam were aware that anything could happen to them when they bartered their property and risked their lives.

Family Background

My family and I also wanted to escape immediately but because of my circumstances, I had to wait five years for the opportunity. In 1975, I was 14 years old and living with my family of 12 people; 5 sisters and 4 brothers. My father was a wealthy businessman in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, so we were upper class. Because of this, my father was deprived of all his wealth by the Vietnamese Communist government and more brutally than this, they put him in jail, what they call a "re-education camp," for three years.

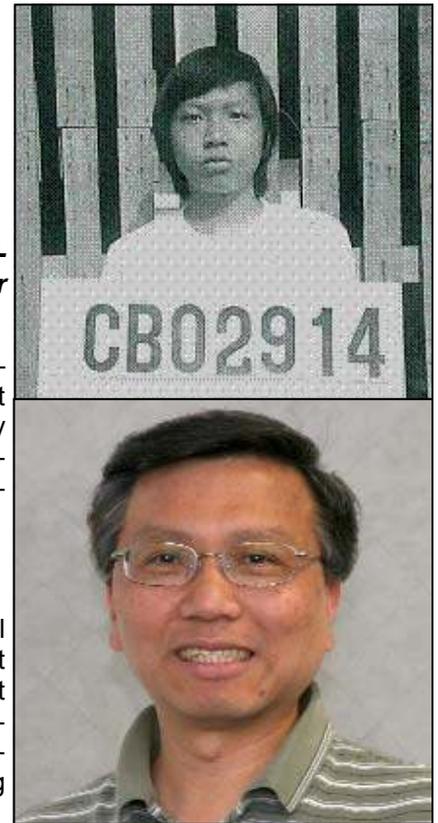
I never forgot the day when ten policemen broke into our house during a birthday party for one of my sisters. They came in, handcuffed my father, then they took him out of the house and put him in the police car and drove him away. They took all my father's ten houses and everything in them. They accused him of being part of the American CIA, collaborating with the "American Empire" and making a fortune on the exploitation of the sweat and blood of hard-laboring civilians. These charges were made up to put him in prison without a trial.

In 1978 my father was released from jail. When he realized that life under Communist rule would be impossible, he began looking for the ways get us out of the country. My eldest brother was a lieutenant in the Vietnamese army, so he had the opportunity to leave for America on an American War ship the day the South Vietnam government collapsed.

First Attempt

My first escape, however, was a failure. A friend of my father who had a fishing boat offered to take my family along with his family to escape by water. My father was to supply gasoline, food, water, and a compass for the trip. The plan was moving forward but suddenly his friend was caught by the police when one of his fellow fishing men betrayed him. After this chance was lost, we knew it would be difficult for the entire family to attempt to escape. If caught by the government, my whole family would be arrested and sent to concentration camps together.

My father decided that we should escape one by one at different times. I was approaching the age for registration into the army and it was very difficult for me to get higher education because my father was considered a "reactionary element." The new regime exacted its revenge by drafting into its army many children of its southern enemies. They gave them very little training and then sent them ahead of the regular soldiers to fight in Cambodia. Vietnam invaded Cambo-



dia after the Khmer Rouge massacred many Vietnamese civilians along with Cambodians in that country in 1978. My father thought it urgent that I should leave first to escape this danger while the rest of the family would find a way out eventually when they had the opportunity and money.

Second Attempt

My second attempt was also to escape by boat. Unfortunately, when we were about to leave the port the Vietcong caught us. They put me in jail for six months. Life in jail was very horrible and disgusting. This jail was located in the rural area far away from Saigon. Prisoners were forced to perform hard labor. We had two meals a day, consisting of one dirty bowl of rice with fine gravel, and a bowl of soup made with water, salt, and some vegetables. I lost weight and got sick. Every night the Vietcong gave us lessons on their political ideology. We had to write self-criticisms which were reports on our improvement and how our ideas were changing toward communism.

After I got out of jail I attempted to escape a few more times but failed. My father kept searching for a way out. Finally an old friend of his knew some Cambodians who knew the way to get from Vietnam to Thailand through Cambodia. These Cambodians lived in Vietnam for ten years and spoke Vietnamese fluently in addition to their native language. By occupation they were border traders between Thailand and Cambodia and knew how to get around within Cambodia and some border villages of Thailand.

They agreed to take me to Thailand but my father had to pay the guides one ounce of gold in advance and four ounces of gold after they returned to Vietnam if I arrived in Thailand safely. A guide came to my house one week before the trip and explained to me and my neighbor Tuan, who would travel with me, everything we must know about the escape routes and what we should expect to go through. The guides also taught us a few Cambodian words and warned us not to speak our language during the trip. We were to keep quiet and follow whatever they told us to do. The only things we were allowed to take were one set of clothes, some medicine, and small towels. I had my bike tuned up ready for the long trip.

The Escape

It was raining heavily when we started off from Saigon on April 15, 1980. We had to keep the escape plan secret so the only one who saw me off was my father. He biked with me to the bus station where we met Tuan and two Cambodian guides. After he bought me a bus ticket, my father gave me a last big hug and told me, "Take care of yourself; we will miss you, and I don't know when we are going to see you again. Remember to write us as soon as you get to Thailand."

My father suddenly took out from his pocket some cigarettes and gave them to me. He said, "Have some cigarettes, and enjoy it during the trip to Tay Ninh." I was quite shocked. My father was very strict with us about smoking cigarettes. I never smoked in front of him and I did not think he knew I smoked. He looked very sad and worried. I saw tears in his eyes.

Crossing into Cambodia

The guides, Tuan, and I put our bikes on top of the bus and traveled to the province of Tay Ninh, which is about 60 miles northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border. We arrived at dusk. It was dark but we biked from the bus station to one of the guide's relative's house to have a break there. We had to wait for the right time to cross the border. After several hours, we got ready to begin our journey. We had to cross the border at night using trails the guides knew well in order to hide from Vietnamese army border guards. It was a very cold and rainy night and totally dark. I could not see far; the only thing that we could see was the flickering light from the flash light that one of the guides held.

When we got to a trail by the Cambodian border, the guides told Tuan and me to hide in the bushes while they biked around to observe the area. They needed to figure out the right time to cross. We hid in the bush for hours anxiously waiting for them; we were nervous, cold, and starving. Our bodies were shivering and we hoped the guides would come back soon. They finally showed up and told us that it was the right time to cross. They told us to ride very fast in order to cross the border as quickly as possible to avoid getting caught. They had crossed many times in the past so it was normal for them, but it was new and very difficult for us. We were extremely exhausted because of the cold of the dark jungle night and the rough trail. We tried to ride as fast as we could to keep up with them or else we would be lost.

It took us a whole night to cross the border but at dawn we came to the first province of Cambodia called Kong Pong Cham. I begged the guides to get us something to eat. We were very tired, hungry, and thirsty. They agreed to stop at a



little market place for us to rest. They ordered some Cambodian food and water to drink. I was so thirsty I drank almost a gallon. After a one-hour rest they took us to a friend's house. Here we met another Vietnamese man who also paid the guides to take him to Thailand. His name was Ysa. He was born in Vietnam of the Champa people, a minority mountaineer group. He spoke Vietnamese and Cambodian fluently.

Secret Words in a Letter

The guides had us wear Cambodian clothes and put turbans around our heads to look like Cambodian villagers. The guide leader forced us to write to our family saying we had arrived in Thailand safely. He explained that we had to write the letter in advance because when we get to Thailand there would be no time to write and they would go to jail if the Vietnamese soldiers caught them with our letters. He also told us that the letters would get lost easily if he carried them with him on the trip back to Vietnam.

My father had prepared for this situation and told me that if the guides forced me to write a letter, I should go ahead write it, however I was not to use secret words which only my family and I would know. If they returned a letter that did not have the secret words, my father would not pay the guides. He would know that I did not get to Thailand safely. They left our letters at this house to pick up on their return trip. Now we knew in our heart that these guides were not honest people but were untrustworthy and dangerous. But we did not have any other choice since we were now in Cambodia and did not know how to get back to Vietnam. Our only choice was to continue.

The next morning the guides told us that we still had about 300 miles to go. At this province more of their friends joined our group. They were all border traders who always went together to protect themselves. We rode for hours under the hot sun; it was about 100°F and it turned out to be my unlucky day.

Broken Bike

We were riding downhill when my bike suddenly hit a rock and got a flat tire. I fell and got scratches and bruises. The front wheel of my bike was bent badly and needed to be fixed. We were in the forest with not even a single house around. The leader of the guides was very upset about my bike. He threatened to send me back to Vietnam. Other guides refused to help me bring my bike to a repair shop. The closest village turned out to be about 10 miles away.

Ysa was my hero and my savior. He volunteered to help take my bike to the repair shop. He begged the guide's leader not to send me back to Vietnam and asked him to send one guide to lead us to the village. He finally agreed after Ysa gave him money and I wrote another letter to my father asking that he pay him extra money to repair the bike. I got on Ysa's bike and carried him as he held my broken bike. We followed the guide to the village.



We took turns carrying my broken bike in the extreme heat. We were very tired and sweaty. Our bodies needed water and my throat was so dry it hurt. There was no way of finding water in the jungle since it was the dry season. I began to see spots before my eyes and felt faint. I started to doubt that I could make it. We went over many hills full of rocks while I carried Ysa. Finally, we got to the village; while we waited for my bike to be fixed, we drank gallons of water. Ysa was my savior so I owe him. He had a big heart; he was willing to help me in this dangerous situation. Even today, I wonder what would have happened to me if Ysa did not take a chance and help me.

We continued our journey the next morning after spending a night sleeping on the market's food tables with no blankets. We rode all day to get to the next province, Kong Pong Thom. We saw so many Vietnamese soldiers on the streets that the guides told us to ride in the middle of their group to avoid getting caught. At small street vendors they ordered food for us to eat. They warned us that not to say anything when Cambodians tried to talk to us and to pretend we were deaf.

Truck Ride

The next day the guides negotiated a ride to the next province with a truck driver. His truck had a closed trunk full of rice bags. We had to stay inside on top of the bags with our bikes. It was dark with just a little window and little air. The road was full of deep holes. I felt so sick that I threw up several times. From time to time the truck had to stop at check points controlled by Vietnamese soldiers. They would open the trunk to check for hidden weapons or escaping Vietnamese. Ysa, The guides bribed the soldiers with cigarettes and money to keep us free.

After 70 miles the truck driver dropped us off and we continued by bike west to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia.

On the way we passed huge rice fields where the guides showed us where Pol Pot's regime killed and buried many Cambodian people. I was terrified to see skulls. We had to walk up to our thighs in water through them. One of my sandals broke so I continued barefoot. My feet were bleeding from tripping over roots. As we walked I wondered why Pol Pot was so brutal that he had millions of his own innocent people killed. At the capital the guides took us to a relative's house to rest. I had a chance to take a shower for the first time in two weeks. We left Phnom Penh the next day with only six guides. The rest stayed to do business in the capital.

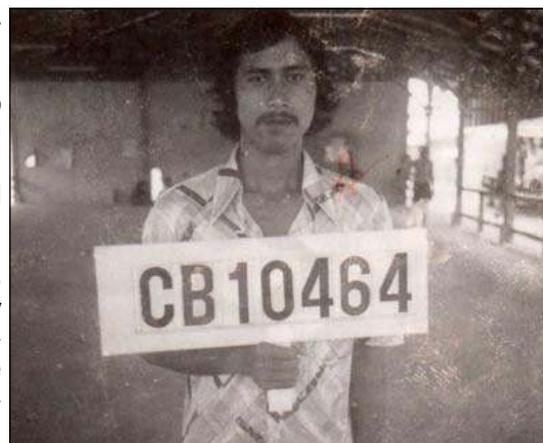
We continued to ride for several more days and went through several more villages. We got another ride on a truck for 50 more miles. After three weeks, we finally got to the Battambang province, which is close to the border of Thailand, and we spent a night there. We were only 15 miles from the border so the guides prepared us for what was going to happen when we crossed. They promised that if we got caught by the Vietnamese soldiers patrolling the Cambodia-Thailand border, they could get us out. Because we did not trust them at all, we prayed and hoped we would not get caught. We arrived at the village named Soisiphon near the border at dusk. The leader asked us to write another letter to say we got to Thailand safely while we stayed at another house that night. I did not use the secret words.

Thailand Border

May 6, 1980 was the big day since it was the day we would cross the border to freedom!

Between the borders the Vietnamese communists built many gates so they could watch the border traders who passed through. They allowed Cambodian civilians to cross to trade with Thai civilians. To catch escaping Vietnamese, the Vietnamese and Cambodian soldiers randomly asked people where they were going as they crossed the border.

When we got to the gates three guides crossed through first. The soldiers did not ask any questions. Tuan was the next one to cross when suddenly a Vietnamese soldier stopped him and spoke to him. Tuan did not understand the question so he answered with broken Cambodian words. The soldier recognized Tuan's Vietnamese accent. He yelled at him in Vietnamese, "Come here boy, try to escape huh?" He took Tuan to custody.



I was next. My heart was beating so hard and my legs started shaking, but it was too late to turn around to go back to Cambodia. I had no choice but to cross this gate. I took a deep breath and walked with my bike toward the gate. One Vietnamese soldier stared hard at me but no one asked me anything. Each second took far too long as I walked through the gate but once through I felt so relieved that they did not realize I was Vietnamese. Ysa crossed last; he spoke Cambodian fluently so he had no problems when they stopped him. He answered the soldiers' questions easily.

We were very worried for Tuan and wondered what would happen to him. He nearly finished the hardest trip of his life only to be caught at this border. Even though they had promised help, the guides told us that they could not do anything. They told us they would find a way to rescue him later and forced us to continue on without him. Although Ysa and I were very upset, the guide's leader threatened to leave us at the gate too if we did not continue on.

Guerilla Territory

After the gate we entered an area called "no-mans land" which is about three miles between the Thailand-Cambodia borders. This "no-mans land" was where the guerrilla military base camps for the Pol Pot, Para, and Thailand guerrillas were. It was a very dangerous war zone and as we continued we heard a lot of gun shots very near to us. The guides told us that there was fighting between Pol Pot guerrillas and the Cambodian government and that this was backed by Vietnamese Communist regime.

After five hours of riding we finally got to the first Thailand village where the international Red Cross was located. The guides did not want go with us to the Red Cross for some reason, so they pointed far ahead of us where the flag of the Red Cross flapped in the wind.

International Red Cross Station

Ysa and I gave the guides our bikes and thanked them for leading us here. Now I wrote my father a new letter saying I was safe and could finally write my secret words. I was so happy that I cannot describe my feelings. It felt like a re-survival after many long, horrible, and scary nightmares. On our way in we stopped at a little house in the market. The lady there warned us that the Red Cross check everything to look for money or valuables. We listened to her. I gave her a little gold which I had hidden inside my sandal. Ysa and I walked to the Red Cross office with bare swollen feet and said, "We are Vietnamese. We would like to take refuge at the Red Cross." I had nothing left except my dirty worn

clothes which I had been wearing the entire trip. The people at the Red Cross welcomed us to the world of freedom.

Near Capture

After I checked in I went back to ask for the gold. I was told the woman had gone back to Cambodia. Very disappointed I slowly walked back to the Red Cross station 5000 feet away. Suddenly a stranger grabbed my wrist from behind and asked me some questions in Cambodian which I did not understand.

I pointed to the Red Cross sign indicating I had come from there. He knew I was Vietnamese so he held my wrist and starting dragging me back to the Cambodia jungle. I was terrified that even after I checked in at the Red Cross and thought I was safe, I was not out danger yet; this was a life or death situation. I had heard stories of how men kidnap Vietnamese people who were trying to escape and try to sell them to Pol Pot or Para guerrillas for money or rice. The guerrillas would keep us in their armies forever.

I had to think quickly about how to fight with this guy. There were many people walking in the market and there was one lady walking toward us. I moved myself to the left a little bit so she would walk between us. The man had no choice but to let go of my wrist so she could pass. Then I turned around and pushed him down with his bike, knocked my sandals off and ran toward the Red Cross station. The man got up on his bike and chased after me. I ran as fast as I could on my swollen bare feet on the hot 100°F dirt road. He yelled in Cambodian for help catching me, saying I had robbed him. He and several people were chasing after me. I almost got to the Red Cross entrance when they grabbed my shirt.

The Red Cross guards did not know what was going on so they pointed their guns up to the sky and shot some rounds, forcing me to stop. I saw my group sitting together behind the fence and they called me to get in quickly. I saw a dog-size hole at the fence and dove through. Several people who had checked in at the same time as I had spoke Cambodian and told the guard that I had checked in earlier and not to listen to the Cambodian guy trying to take me back. I could barely walk on my burning feet. It took almost a week for my feet to heal. I learned a big life lesson from this incident.

Refugee Camp



The next day the Red Cross drove us to NW9, a refugee camp near the border of Cambodia also run by the International Red Cross. My adventure was over. I finally reached my goal and found freedom. As soon as I got to the refugee camp I sent two letters: one to my family and the other to my eldest brother in Long Island, New York. I let them know that I made it to Thailand safely and told my brother that I could not wait to reunite with him.

I'm glad I survived and made it to this free country, and I am thankful everyday for everyone who risked their lives to let us have a taste of this freedom that can be only found in America. I am thankful to the American government, churches, and many charity organizations that helped us adjust at the beginning of our new life in America. I also am very thankful to my parents whose sacrifices gave me the chance to come to America. Their irrepressible spirit and character are enduring inspirations and gave me the strength to face my darkest hour.

Post Note

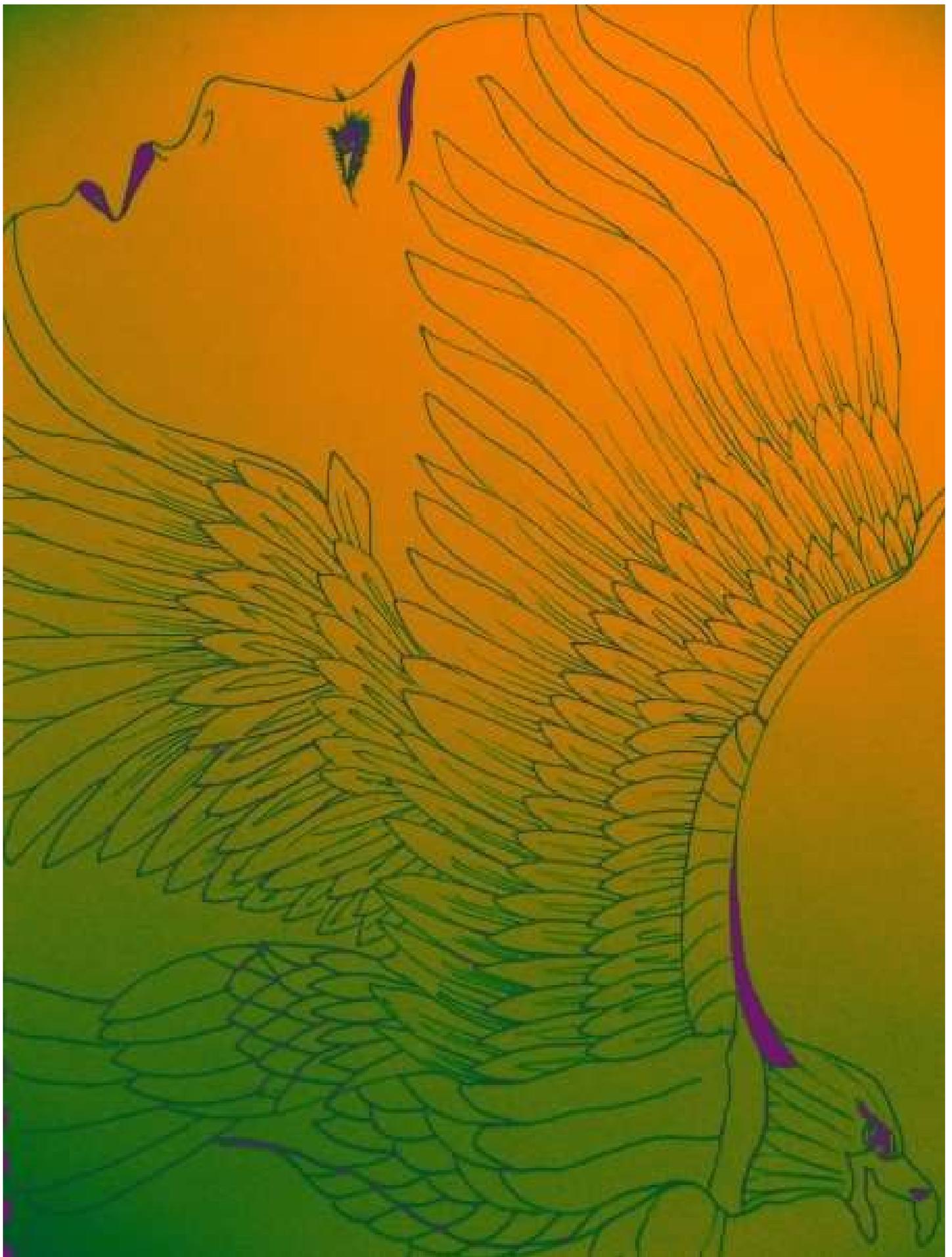
I arrived on Long Island, New York, on December 29, 1980, and was reunited with my eldest brother. I clearly remember knowing that I had made it to my final destination when I took my first bite from a McDonald's hamburger. My family and I are now naturalized citizens and our family was reunited in 1984 when the Vietnamese government finally granted the rest of my family's visas to emigrate to America.

After Tuan got caught at the Thailand border, the Vietcong sent him back to Vietnam. He was in prison for one year but once he got out he made a final attempt to escape and made it to Thailand. He now lives in Westminster, California.

Ysa lives in Virginia. He earned his B.S degree in electrical engineering and works for the Navy in Maryland. We still keep in touch.

Editor's Note

Khoan Tran attended Stony Brook University and then the University of Connecticut. He now works for Cartus Corp. in Danbury. It was for their monthly event to celebrate the diversity of their employees that he finally wrote his story.



Hawk III by **Renfang Hu**, SBU Art Student Hometown: Yokohama, Japan



Poetry by Farzana Ali

Your Eloquent Eyes

When you look into my eyes
and I look back into yours,
My heart finds healing
to all its sores.
Then you look away
and blankly stare at the floor,
Harsh reality starts knocking
on my mind's door.

The Corpse's Wishes

I wish I was alive,
I could walk, touch, and feel;
I wish I was alive,
My wounds did slowly heal!

I wish I was human,
I could run, hold, and sense;
I wish I was human,
My world did not condense!

I wish I was them,
I could fly, clench, and respond;
I wish I was them,
My soul did make a bond!

One Incipient Embrace

The first time your soul
gazed into mine with fervor,
I was blessed with a memory
my mind will always harbor.
This serene heart had never felt
such blissful thrill
'Twas a quiescent day
in the month of April!

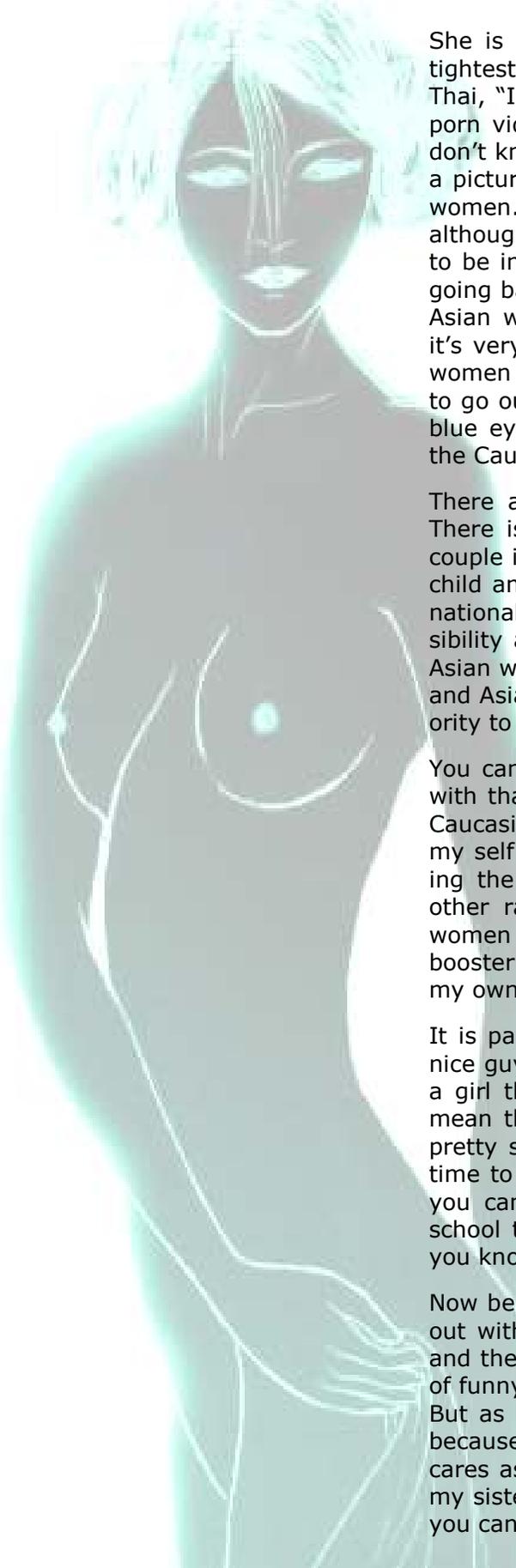
A Tiny Love-note

My lorn entity
is longing for your touch;
My ardent soul
wishes you were hither.
Don't know why
I'm missing you so much,
Don't know why
I'm telling you this either!

Backwashed Drawing
Alpha II
by **Renfang Hu**

The Dragon Lady

The Rantings of Jon Hu



She is the epitome of perfection with a coke bottle body and the tightest va-jay jay that any man will ever have. In the words of Lily Thai, "I am a jungle gym for guys" and ironically in that very same porn video she is having sexual relations with a Caucasian male. I don't know about the rest of you, and I mean Asian males, but I see a picture that is very wrong. I am and have always loved my Asian women. I cannot imagine myself loving someone whom is not Asian although a couple of Spanish and Caucasian girls have been known to be in the mix but that's a different story for a different day. But going back on point, I see something very wrong with the amount of Asian women who have been going out with Caucasian males and it's very discouraging to me. I ask myself, "Since when have Asian women been a prize to be had?" Back in the 80's, everyone wanted to go out with the Caucasian female. She was ideally blonde haired, blue eyed, with long slim legs. Apparently since then the want for the Caucasian woman has been replaced with the Asian woman.

There aren't enough Asian women to go around. Simple as that. There is a pandemic in China right now if you didn't know. Every couple in China wants a male baby and most of them have only one child anyway. After that, they have to orphan their babies or pay a national tax which the average household in China could never possibility afford. I'm just stressing the point how there aren't a lot of Asian women in the world much less in New York as there used to be and Asians being the largest population in the world should have priority to our own race.

You can have our ugly ones that no one wants. I have no problem with that but I see too many beautiful Asian women going out with Caucasian males purely for the extra euphoria they get. That strikes my self confidence as an Asian male. This is exactly what is enforcing the stereotype that Asian males have smaller sticks than any other race and what hurts me more is how it means that Asian women actually believe this stereotype. What bigger confidence booster is there than me not being able to satisfy the opposite sex of my own race?

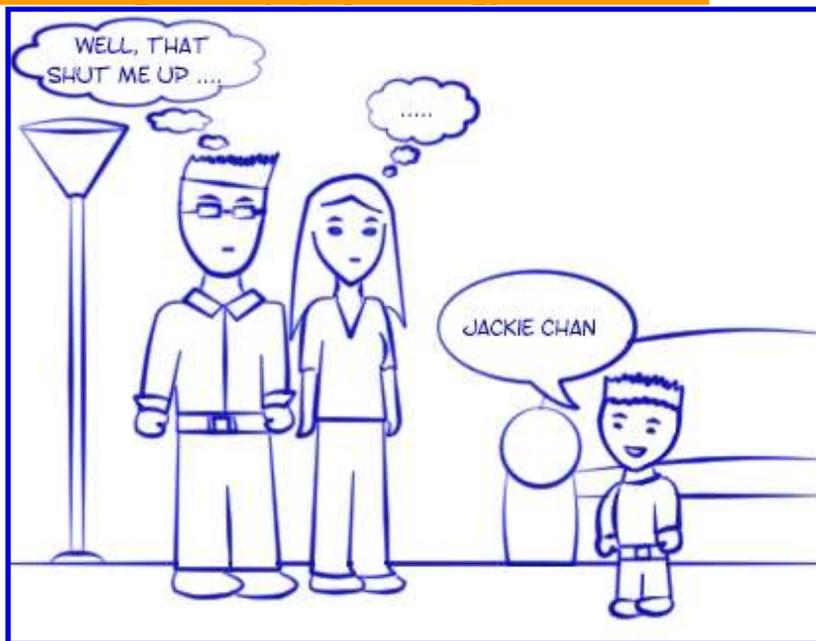
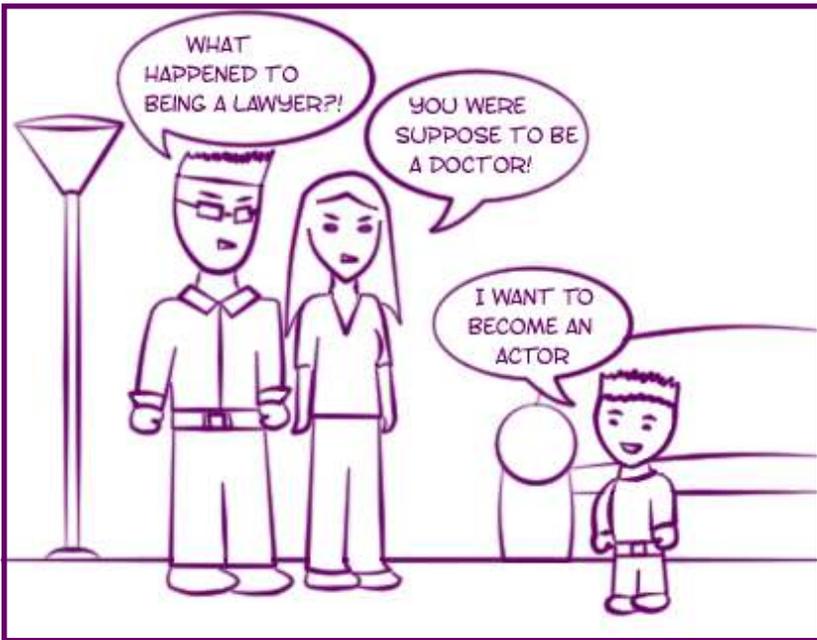
It is partially my own fault too. Sometimes I'm just too much of a nice guy and would rather have things flow nicely than just go up to a girl that I've known for two days and say you wanna go out? I mean the first two weeks of a relationship is good for me and I'm pretty sure it's good for her too but I would rather take that extra time to get to know a girl before I become committed... again... (As you can tell, I'm not particularly fond of breakups.) I'm very old school too. I believe in opening doors for ladies, the singing thing, you know the chivalry thing.

Now believe me when I say I am not hating on anyone who is going out with an Asian woman. My sister is going out a Caucasian male and there are some racial and cultural differences although it is kind of funny watching a Caucasian male eat squid for the very first time. But as long as she has found happiness, then all the power to her because when it really comes down to it; who the hell really f—ken cares as long as it makes you happy? And on closer examination of my sister's boyfriend; Caucasian people are still a little bit Asian and you can't deny it, it's in their name.

Backwashed Drawing **Woman** by **Renfang Hu**



Lady IV by **Renfang Hu**, SBU Art Student Hometown: Yokohama, Japan



STEREOTYPES

CONCEPT BY STEPHANIE LONG

DRAWING BY DENNY MAI

Pantomime

by Grace Pak

Come out, come out,
why hide, pull off that elaborate mask.

no matter how beautiful the mask, I want to see YOU.

Come on, take my hand.
No matter how far it is, I want to take you there
to that secret place.

I want to see that smile appear again.
The warmth to melt that ice away.

When will you embrace spring?
Bitterly, you continue to cling to winter.

Will it be gone before we part ways?
Will I see it again before we say goodbye?
I don't want it to be just a memory.
Smile for me, for yourself once more

touch, it's just a cold hand
do you even recognize yourself?
I hardly can see you.

You've encased yourself within ice.
Don't run, don't leave.

come out, I am holding my hand to you
will you take it?

When we walk you are neither following nor leading.
Where are you exactly? Some place where I cannot reach to.

Are you walking in a path that is not large enough
for a companion?

No matter how long it takes, I'll wait.
I'll be here. And I'll look for you and I will find you.

Backwashed Drawing **View From My Dorm** by **Renfang Hu**

What Is Asian Enough?

by Helen Randazzo

If the idea of being a full time Asian turns you off because it seems too time consuming or you just didn't want to put in the effort, there is hope! If you didn't want the responsibility of being a full time Asian, you don't have to be! You can be Asian in gradients. You can be a little bit Asian, super duper Asian, too Asian, and not Asian enough. But, if you are like me you have been classified as not being Asian enough. My biological parents, both being Korean, still did not actually qualify me as being Asian enough. I was adopted and brought to America by a Korean mother and Italian American father and in order keep unity within the family, no specific culture was expressed. Therefore, I was not immersed in any culture let alone Korean culture and ethics. I did not abandon my Asian heritage nor did I betray it. Even though, I can't order your Korean food for you nor do I know much about Korean dramas, I am still Korean.

Like many other students coming to Stony Brook, it was my first time being around such a diverse population. What I have found is that it was typical for there to be groups of all white students and separately all Asian students. Asian students on campus seem to stick together in a way and it is slightly intimidating and awkward for me to see that because I am Asian too but I don't hang out with other Asian people. I feel as though I don't belong with other Asians, and I feel almost guilty at times for not in a way "sticking" with other Asian people. In grade school and middle school I was teased for being Asian and for being different. Now that I am in college I am still facing prejudice, but it is a different kind of prejudice. I was now being singled out for not being Asian enough. It seems like there is no way to be just the right amount of Asian. Other people from different ethnicities and backgrounds most likely share the same experience of being the same but still different. People with dual cultures do not have to pick one culture over the other. You have to fit in somewhere so why not fit in together?

I am Korean, raised in America.

You have to fit in somewhere.

Not being enough of anything makes me feel rejected. Not being tall enough to ride the roller coaster or not being old enough to drink are things that you can be rejected from since you are under a certain height and age. Not being tall enough is a measurement and in order to ride the roller coaster you would have to wait until you get taller. If you are not of age to drink, you would have to wait until you become older. Then, what would one have to do to be considered Asian? The amount of "Asianness" is hard to calibrate. And if it was possible to gauge how Asian someone was, how could you raise one's "Asian-ness"? Does being told that I don't "act" Asian mean that I am not fulfilling my stereotypes? Would adopting Asian stereotypes give me that right amount of Asian-ness to not be considered not Asian enough?

Being Asian is something you are, whether or not you agree with it, and it is impossible to not have enough of what you are. Regardless of my knowledge of Korean culture or how "white" I may act, I am proud to be Korean. I think being proud of who you are must be considered the main unifying factor. To have subsets of different kinds of Asian-ness creates prejudice within a group that has enough prejudice.

Backwashed Drawing *Tradition* by **Jin Woo Cho**



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HUNGRY FOR FILIPINO

by Luis Salazar, reprinted from the **SBU AA E-Zine**

“It’s cold outside,” I think to myself as I slowly walk down Ludlow Street in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, searching for an ATM. I’m hungry but this restaurant doesn’t accept credit cards, and after my girlfriend and I perused the menu, I realized the cash in my wallet wouldn’t be enough to afford a filling meal. I should have known better. It’s Manhattan, after all, and it’s Valentine’s Day. I don’t really like this holiday but that’s no excuse to not have dinner. I find a deli with an ATM, slip in, and grab a few more twenties. As I walk back into the restaurant our maitre d’ glares at me. I’m pretty sure she knows that I didn’t just come from the bathroom that was only a few feet away.

With more money in my wallet, we look at the menu. The name of the restaurant is Kumainn, which is Tagalog (the Filipino language) for “eat.” I chose a Filipino restaurant for Valentine’s Day because both my girlfriend and I are Filipino and we haven’t been home in awhile to get home-cooked food. For a Filipino that can be torture, especially when eating Stony Brook campus food every day.

We make our choices and signal for our waiter to come over. We select three dishes but she tells us that the portions are small. Apparently, most people here order about three dishes *per person*, so I quickly choose four more dishes. My girlfriend looks at me, almost as if to say, “What the hell is wrong with you?” I’m hungry.

We look at each other and then at our surroundings. The restaurant is low-lit, and there is a couple next to us ordering garlic

bread, but there is one other thing I immediately notice. Everyone in the room is white. I don’t know what to make of this. I’ve been to plenty of Filipino restaurants before and it’s usually the opposite: Everyone and their mother is Filipino. The more I think about it, the more I realize that this could actually be a good thing, since the Americans get to experience my culture and see how good the food is.

Our waiter comes back with our drinks and utensils. I scrutinize our eating tools and start to feel a little uneasy. There is no spoon on my table, and no fork. What do we have instead? Chopsticks. What the hell is that? I have never seen a Filipino person eat with chopsticks before. I have spent enough time examining my relatives devour mounds of Filipino food with spoons and forks, but never with chopsticks. When we go to Chinese or Japanese restaurants and they place the chopsticks in front of us, we still need to ask the waiter for about twenty forks and spoons for everyone. It’s a shame, especially if the restaurant is trying to teach Americans something about Filipino culture, but I reason that perhaps there are Filipinos in the world who use chopsticks; maybe something like ten of them. I try my best to ignore the utensils in front of us, and instead focus my attention on my girlfriend. She’s the only thing that reminds me of the Philippines in this place. We’re both getting really hungry, and after a few more minutes, which can seem like hours when you’re hungry, our food comes.

When I eat Filipino food at home, I can expect a generous portion, with family members encouraging me that I haven’t

eaten enough. So you can imagine my disappointment when I look down at the plate and all I see are three small pieces of meat and a small bowl of noodles. Each dish was extremely small. In order to prevent customers from eating too fast, they wait a few minutes before bringing the next dish. I thought it was stupid.

On the one hand, the food didn’t taste even close to bad; in fact, it was pretty tasty. However, there was something lacking in the food – it didn’t taste Filipino. Authentic Filipino food tastes as if the person in the kitchen cooking it could have been your mom or one of your several aunts. It’s supposed to taste like home. This stuff didn’t. It tasted like trendy American food, only Filipino-flavored. It tasted like they threw out the Filipino in favor of a more chic, yet culturally-bland style of food that could easily be marketed to the American public as “Filipino food.”

I should have seen the warning signs beforehand: The expensive prices, the chopsticks, the small portions, or maybe the fact that everyone there was white except for me and my girlfriend. It was a little sad in a way. It was as if the restaurant was trying so hard to attract a yuppie American crowd that it forgot what it was supposed to offer: Filipino food. I consider food to be a staple of any culture. When you eat the food of a particular group of people you are supposed to get some taste of where that ethnicity is coming from. Food can even bring people together. I’ve spent a lot of time talking to my other Filipino friends about the foods we love, the foods that our moms love to cook, or even the foods we’re too afraid to eat. Food is essential to a culture. When a restaurant sacrifices its culture just to fit in, it’s no longer representing its cultural background; it’s just another American restaurant.

I understand that some people view America as the “melting pot,” and say that when you come to America, your culture blends in with other cultures. Even though our society is a smorgasbord of races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, I always pictured our country to be more like a salad. Yes, a salad. A salad where all of our cultural differences are all intact, and remain unique from the others. A salad mixed with ingredients, but no ingredients being mixed so much they just disappear. We shouldn’t be embarrassed to represent where we come from, just because it doesn’t fit the American norm.

I pay the bill and we grab our jackets to leave. We walk back outside into the cold city night. I’m still hungry. It’s still Valentine’s Day so I ask her what she would like to do next. She says, “I saw a crepe store just down the street.” The suggestion of more food is enough to get me started on a brisk sprint. Right now, anything would taste good. I just hope they don’t sell their crepes with chopsticks.



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A Twist to Greek Mythology...

The Rise of Quan (全)

by Ken-Wing Lee

Many are familiar with Hesiod's *Theogony*, which explains the origins and relations of every spirit or god; however, there was one by the name Quan, who was left out.

The *Theogony* was very thorough in covering the deities that are responsible for the things that we obviously experience, but Quan is the god of balance, a much more subtle aspect of our lives. Yet balance is the most important and the one concept that overlaps all of the other gods. Unlike the origins of Gaia, Ouranus, Eros, and Chaos, who were "just there from the beginning", Quan was born from time itself, and has existed long before them. Quan was responsible for the actions of these original spirits themselves, for the god of balance may influence their every thought, action, and even existence. From the original spirits, to the titans, gods, and humans, the presence and impact of the god of balance has trickled down to every descendant of time.

Balance is the underlying concept that explains everything, whether it is of the past, present, or future. It explains the simple setup of Ouranus coveting and protecting Gaia; one cannot exist without the other, and the balance of the two produce a successful atmosphere for the living mortals in between. Their success, however, drove Ouranus to be greedy and constantly desire to fertilize Gaia. In the only account of Quan's presence, Quan stood aside and watched the two to test his own importance; would they survive if he does not step in? If the balance in life goes unchecked, will two entities be able to control their own situations? As Quan stayed away, Ouranus's excitement of successfully providing for Gaia pushed him to desire more, ultimately resulting in conflict with Gaia's interests. One of their children, Cronus, castrates Ouranus, reinstating the balance between abundance and scarcity. The plethora of gods then come into being and Hesoid's account is consistent with my interpretation of the origin of gods.

Any entity's downfall is caused by imbalance. There is no discrimination among gods and mortals, or powerful and powerless. When Prince Paris considers his rewards for announcing the most beautiful of the three goddesses, his decision lacked a balance between his desires and his state. This situation develops into the major Tro-

jan War, and he is not the only one affected by the consequences of his choice. When Athena refrains from sexual love, she resulted in a love for war and her city, which brought about conflict from Ares. When Narcissa's lack of love for others grew so indefinitely, he came to find love in only himself. Everything comes back to the idea of balance. In the previous examples, the actions of the individual determined their fates. However, balance is inherent to the point that it is not only prevalent in an individual's actions, but even down its role in existence. The balance in an individual's nature determines its fate; one who's nature is angry, is constantly driven by that anger. In many cases, we have no control over the balance in our lives, but there are some crucial times to realize that we do have the power to take hold of the situation and act upon it.

In our human lives, for example, consider a man who is crazily in love with the woman of his dreams, and the two have some kind of contact. His affection can easily take over his entire person mentally and physically. He would work all that he can to get her what she wants and try to make her happy. She would have choices and motives. In this situation, the woman has total power over him; simple words and actions have the ability to completely make him the happiest man in the world, or they may completely destroy him. It is actually not significant whether the woman chooses to make this man into the happiest man in the world, or into a broken down, non-functional being. The significant conclusion from this case is that when a person misplaces balance in their life, their life is actually not their own anymore, because it all depends on something else.

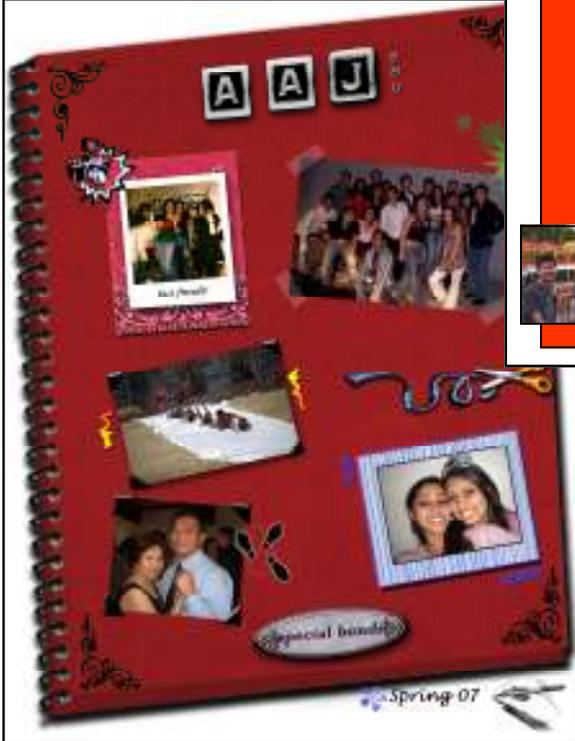
Quan acts mysteriously; there is no evidence or understanding of how this god works, when it works, or why it works. The only thing for the individual to do is to keep Quan in mind and be considerate of its existence. Never mind its powers, but its simple existence is what rules life. It has been told that he left a mark on Mount Olympus; the words "Life is perfect when balance is found" were inscribed onto its base, so as to imply that this fundamental concept is the foundation to all things built on top of it. Never have I heard truer words than these.

- DJ 救護車



Asian American Journal

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**AA E-ZINE / AAJ
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Asian and
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Asian American Journal, funded by USG, the Undergraduate Student Government, is a high quality journal of essays (fiction and non-fiction), poetry, art, and photography, printed annually and online, along with the *AA E-Zine / AAJ Guide to Asian and Asian American Resources at SBU*.

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www.aa2sbu.org/aaezine/clubs/aaaj

An Ending... and a New Beginning



New SBU President
Dr. Samuel Stanley,
wife Dr. Ellen Li,
and children Susan,
James, Katie,
and Sam.

Photo by Ngoc Vu

A delayed printing allowed us to end this issue with an unplanned story... a new beginning for SBU and its Asian American community no one knew was going to happen. On the day it did, alumnus Mike D. wrote on Facebook, "Ding dong the wicked witch is gone." His sentiments were shared by many. Ignorance is its own evil and the creations of ignorant leadership at a university can take a lifetime to undo. When Charles Wang donated an Asian American Center to SBU, he joked about his first meeting with President Kenny when she was at Queens College. She had asked him to lunch at a Korean restaurant. "At least she got the continent right," he would quip. In 1996 Kenny wrote to a professor saying she did not see any difference between Asians and Asian Americans. Taiwan's former President, Lee Teng-hui, had graduated from Cornell. Was he Asian or Asian American she asked? Then President Bill Clinton had been a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Did she really think that had made him British? And if it had, should this 'foreigner' have been our President? She asked more. Would a Chinese American graduate of Stony Brook who was hired by Toys R Us and sent to China be considered Chinese or Chinese American? Her other examples were as ludicrous.

SBU went on to become the only American university with a combined Asian and Asian American Studies Department. To this day it has only four minors: China, India, Japan and Korea. An Asian American minor? Well, you know, Asian Americans are just Asians anyway. Wasn't it just that sort of mindset that led to the Japanese American internment camps in WWII? And that mindset is not ancient history - just ask the turban wearing American Sikhs who were attacked after 9/11 for being Islamic terrorists. But if not America's past, it will be SBU's past. On July 1st a new President, Dr. Samuel Stanley, will take the reins. His children, conceived with his wife Dr. Ellen Li, would surely have a thing or two to tell President Kenny about what being an Asian American is. For those who missed all the hoopla, the following are excerpts from the SBU AA E-Zine:

The Charles B. Wang Center lobby was packed on Tuesday, May 5th, for a momentous occasion - the SUNY Board of Trustees paid a visit to vote on approving SBU's new President, Dr. Sam Stanley. In case you didn't catch the timing - he is our 5th President voted in on the 5th day of the 5th month. Nice touch.

Dr. Stanley's father, a cultural anthropologist and professor, had brought his family with him wherever he was doing his research. As a preschooler, Sam Stanley learned Malay while living in Jakarta. His wife, Dr. Ellen Li, is a renowned gastroenterologist and researcher at Washington U School of Medicine. They met while both were residents at Mass General. To say that the APA community is elated to finally have a President with a worldview is putting it mildly. One AAAS faculty member wrote, "It is exciting."

There are lots of public articles about the event but we'd like to discuss it from another angle, conversations AA E-Zine staff - Jon Hu, Hao Li and Ngoc Vu - had with his family. Although Jon thought Dr. Stanley seemed "incredibly able", he was really impressed with Dr. Li's very open attitude. (Not to mention he thought Katie was really cute.) Ngoc thought Dr. Stanley was a good speaker and the family as a whole was very friendly.

Jon gave Dr. Li the *AAJ/AA E-Zine Guide to AA Resources*. They all discussed an interview when she settles in. She told them of having the APA club at St. Louis come to her house to make wontons and said she would invite them to do that too. And we'll invite them to a monthly Zine dinner of Hao's infamous Sichuan hot pot.

Stanley's four children are James, the eldest, who graduated from Yale and is now in law school; Susan, next in line, is about to graduate from Stanford; Katie is an undergrad but we didn't learn where; and young Sam is still in high school. Young Sam said he aspires to be just like his father.

Ngoc asked Jim about being a hapa and if it affected them growing up. A hapa, for those who don't know the term, has become common in the APA community. It is the Hawaiian word for someone who is of mixed racial heritage of which some portion is Asian. Jim said that once when his Dad picked him up from practice his friends asked if he was adopted, but he never had any problems. They said they felt American and their mixed cultures had melded in seamlessly.

The full article and a hundred 'First Family' photos are at www.aa2sbu.org/aaezine. SB Independent videos of Dr. Stanley's talk by Michael Kelly are at www.sbindependent.org and on YouTube. - Ja Young

Charles B. Wang Center

Celebrating Asian and Asian American Cultures



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The Wang Center, designed by the internationally acclaimed architect P.H. Tuan, provides a dramatic entrance to the campus with its modernistic Tower to Heaven pagoda and red gates. In its exquisite interior are held professional, community and student events from conferences to weddings. The red trellised Chinese scholar's and bamboo garden around the koi and lotus pond is the most beautiful spot on campus and used for receptions, dining, meditation, and just hanging out. The state of the art lecture halls, theatre, chapel and programming areas are filled during the academic year with a wide variety of Asian and Asian American events from modern and traditional performances, films, and cultural festivals to serious talks on world affairs. Virtually every wall is designed for art exhibits. The restaurant provides casual and fine dining. During quiet times students can be found studying at the tables surrounding the indoor pools and fountains.

The Wang Center is a treat not to be missed either for its beauty or its offerings. Whether as a peaceful place to hang out or as a crowd filled venue, the Wang Center has it all. We promise you will never be disappointed!



Ja Young



Huy Huynh



Chetan Prabhudesai



Harbinder Singh



Ja Young

The most frequently asked question...
what is that thing on top of the building?

The Tower to Heaven is a sculptural representation of a pagoda. Its holographic finish creates constant change. It can be any shade of gray, shimmering silver, reflective like a mirror, white, blue, pink, gold, orange, and in lightening, mint green. From inside the Center one looks up through the tower's center to infinity - or Heaven.

The pagoda began as the stupa in India and followed the spread of Buddhism eastward. In every village and city throughout Asia there is at least one pagoda, though over time in each country their shape and style has evolved. In modern times the horizon of every city in the world is filled with modern pagodas. What is the Empire State Building but a pagoda with an elevator? In antiquity the pagoda united the East and in modernity it is the pagoda in skyscraper form that unites the world.

Thus the pagoda is the perfect architectural form to represent what the Wang Center hopes to foster - a uniting of East and West.

www.stonybrook.edu/wang

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Ngoc Vu

SBU President Sam Stanley, wife Ellen Li, & kids



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