

A A J S B U



best friends!



special bonds

Spring 07





Letter From the Editor

The nature of external stimuli is to provoke an effect on another system. Thus all of our interactions with other people affect us in some way that may be negative or positive, short-lived or long lasting. It is the special relationships that we forge and develop throughout our lives that help us to become stronger individuals in a time of increasing adversity. These people are our source of wisdom, inspiration, courage, love and understanding. Without them, life may not seem as rich or as easy. For college students who will soon face the challenges that maturing into young adulthood brings, having a person to confide in or simply share life's joys with is a comfort and security beyond anything that material wealth and status can offer. As young Asian Americans, we struggle not only to make our voices and views heard in the global community, but to find a balance between staying true to our heritage and embracing American ideas. The open communication which sustains our special relationships is the key to bridging the gap that different cultures may form within families and peoples, in the hope that the next generation may thrive in an environment of mutual understanding and acceptance.

-Mai Luong

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Family Ties

Sister, Sister

by Vanessa Gopez

My older sister and I are very different people. Maybe it's just our genetics or it may be related to the fact that at a very influential time, we were raised by completely different people. When we were younger, our parents were attempting to get financially stable by working three jobs, so naturally, they didn't really have time to raise very small children. At that time, we stayed with very different relatives. In the end, my sister ended up being talkative, social, and opinionated while I am quiet, conservative, and generally try to stay out of people's way. Despite our vast differences, we are pretty close to each other.

We have been through some tough times together. There was one point where our parents were seriously considering getting a divorce. I remember that the saddest thing to us was that we wouldn't be together anymore. When we were sitting on my bed late at night talking about it, she also told me that she would go with whatever parent I didn't want to be with. During our childhood, we generally got along with few conflicts. This may not seem like any great accomplishment, but there were tons of reasons why we shouldn't get along. One of the main reasons was the way we were both treated. I was seen as the general favorite in the household. I was given few responsibilities and was completely spoiled. I literally wasn't allowed to do housework. Truthfully, I was pretty lazy and selfish, and I didn't do anything to deserve anything I received. My sister, on the other hand, was often forced to take responsibility for things I did wrong. To this day, my sister still gets blamed for some of the things I do. When I was a freshman, I decided to take a trip to Boston to see my sister because I missed her and figured my parents wouldn't let me go. When my parents found out, they got incredibly angry and yelled at my sister, but I heard almost nothing about it. Psychologically, this treatment took quite a toll on my sister, but she never took it out on me. She never resented me for it or treated me differently. She still loved me and enjoyed my company just the same.

Nowadays, even though she is now married and has a new life, she is still my big sister. She tries to look out for my well-being, even if she's miles away. I can always count on her to make the effort to visit me or contact me even though I am not as reliable when it comes to doing that for her. I was blessed with a wonderful and caring sibling who I know I don't deserve.

Miscommunication

by Helen Randazzo

Clash! We collide.

The differences in cultures between us stand tall leaving little room for understanding. Mothers and daughters already bear the daunting reality of incessant bickering, and coming from seemingly different planets makes things worse.

I am the Americanized daughter of a very thick-accented and strict Korean mother. To my mother, I will never truly understand what it is to feel real pain and in her eyes I will always be too spoiled because I have more than she ever had. To my mother, I am unappreciative and will never be smart enough. I cannot help but be outspoken sometimes, occasionally express emotion, or make a mistake here or there.

Communicating with my mother can sometimes feel like we are speaking in different languages, and the few words that we do share seem to be misunderstood. Adolescence can be a nightmare – at least the beginning was when I started to date. Wanting to date translated into a misinterpreted unhealthy promiscuity.



Growing up, my mind was constantly jostling between what I thought was right for me and what was "right" according to my mother. Always wanting to please someone becomes very tiring and confusing. It can be hard sometimes to make a decision because what satisfies me may not satisfy her, leaving me in the middle trying to decide who is more important.

I often feel like I disappoint her when making my own choices. I often seek the support and encouragement that I lack from my mother from my close friends. I blame her culture for making her so stoic, even to her own daughter. For my mother, her guard will always stand tall and that is why she is so strong.

Family Ties

My Father, My Hero by Shelley Robeniol

I will be the first to tell you that my Dad isn't perfect. But I will also be the first to tell you that my Dad is a good man, a good husband to my mother, and a good father to his children. There is bond between us that has been two decades in the making, and though at times I firmly believe that it can never be described in words, I will attempt to do so now. Samuel Reyes Robeniol is a man of forty-seven years of hard work, lessons learned, and a good life lived. Samuel Reyes Robeniol is my Dad. I remember being in fear of my father as a little girl mostly because I would often get reprimanded and disciplined for mischievous behavior. Those memories are mixed with those of me jumping off the living room table and landing safe in his arms. Now, as a young woman, I have come to admire, respect, and love my father. I like that I can be myself and that my Dad loves me as I am. He made it possible for me to feel comfortable enough to admit my mistakes. He is never too quick to judge but I know that I can take him at his word, no matter how painful it might be, because he has said it in wisdom and in love. And there are times when I simply make my Dad laugh genuinely because he has no qualms about being silly with his children. He has taught me the value of setting priorities, keeping one's word, and having complete trust in Christ. The latter I still struggle with, but his life is a consistent example. I see it in the way he loves my mother and how she is comfortable in trusting him because he is committed to following Christ. I see it on my siblings' faces when they talk about Dad. I hear it in his voice as he greets me when I come home from college, reminding me of why I'm glad I made the trip. I see it in the support his co-workers and friends from church give him in our times of struggle. And I know they do it with a grateful heart, because Dad was there for them. I see it when my Dad realizes he has made a mistake and asks for forgiveness. And when I ask my Dad how he does it, he humbly acknowledges that God changed his heart: "It's what happens when you realize that you're loved by Him."

So, thanks, Dad. Thank you for loving me the way you do, for your support, and your devotion to Christ and to your family. Thank you for our late night chats, your friendship, your wisdom, and your laughter. They may be intangible, but they are real. They have made life worthwhile and full of joy. I know you're reading this, Dad. And I want you to know that *you are loved*.

Inspiration

by Yina Chun

If a person's courage can inspire another to act, then I would like to tell you about the relationship between my grandmother and I. Being of small stature, the smallest of nine siblings, my grandmother has been through thick and thin. She has seen the ugliness of war, hunger, fear, and hate. But nonetheless, she retained her sensitivity towards others and an unrelenting will to overcome anything, even though it may seem harder or farther than her two feet can take her.

As her granddaughter, I could not have asked for someone stronger and more persistent in childrearing than her. She started her post-retirement job of raising grandchildren with me, an eleven month old infant. She loved her factory job and still misses it. Illiterate but quick with her hands and ideas, she was able to get promoted to manager. As such, she was able to assert her ideas and she had coworkers who were like family members, comforting each other during working hours. My grandmother gained professionalism and respect in a place where her capabilities were virtues. Her position was the only way for her to escape being a housewife, yet she opened her arms wide and decided to take care of a responsibility that no one else wanted. And so she went from nominal grandmother to full time caretaker.

When I was nine, my parents dragged me by my hair and we moved to the United States. I spent nine years without my grandmother. We spoke occasionally on the phone, but it seemed that we didn't retain the closeness of our former relationship. She finally moved in with us last November and surprisingly, it feels like nothing has changed since I came to the U.S. She tells me all her stories and experiences, reminding me of what hardships she has been through and how much she has gained from her mistakes. There's something special about the way she didn't allow anything to deteriorate so that one can clearly see how young her soul is. Today she is learning English with the handicap of old age, but quite amazingly she has already earned a certificate to be a certified nurse assistant. She got her dream of earning "The Benjamins" and going on vacations, which will allow her to feel the full force of her abilities and absolute freedom even in a foreign land.

This is an ugly world where men are conquered by war, death and fear, but there is no reason why one should allow it to win. My grandmother proves it true.

Living Life, One Day at a Time

by Angeline Seah

I am Filipina/Singaporean and my boyfriend is American with a Czechoslovakian/Ukrainian/Irish heritage. We have been dating for more than a year and although we are "racially different," we haven't had any troubles stemming from this issue. In fact, I think the most awkward moments come when dealing with my family members who come to visit me from the Philippines.

For example just recently, my boyfriend met my 13 and 24 year old cousins. The conversation was brief. They all exchanged hellos and "nice to meet you" and that was the end. Being pretty Americanized (I came to New York when I was 6 years old), I too found myself uneasy because of my inability to communicate smoothly with them. My 24 year old cousin comes from a different part of the Philippines and speaks a different dialect from the 13 year old, but they understand each other. As for me, I feel foolish when I try to speak the language, embarrassed by the rustiness in my tongue. For my boyfriend, who stands almost a foot taller than all my family members, it must have been very uncomfortable. So we left in order to avoid the increasingly uneasy feeling we were all experiencing, each of us standing in the kitchen, shifting on our feet and looking at everything but each other.

So, back to us... we don't really see the cultural differences as much as others. I've heard others express difficulty when it comes to differences in religion, values, etc... but we're pretty much the same in those respects. However, food is one thing that comes up on occasion. My mother always asks me if I think my boyfriend will eat a certain dish or if he will try a special dessert. The standard answer is that I believe that he will at least try it. Whether or not he likes it is a whole different story. But I can totally understand if he feels queasy about certain dishes because honestly, sometimes I do too. However, I find that it is easier for me to eat whatever gets thrown at me because I've been exposed to American foods for such a long time. The good thing is that we're both willing to try new things.

We find that one of the best things we have in common is our sense of humor. We have the ability to laugh at each other and ourselves without any embarrassment. It easily diffuses any situation and helps the other during stressful times. We laugh at a lot of the same jokes. It is

kind of uncanny how he knows exactly what I'm thinking when I burst out laughing without external provocation (and nobody else knows what it is). No matter what culture or language, a good sense of humor always brings good things.

We both had different upbringings. He comes from an intact nuclear family very reminiscent of the black and white "Leave it to Beaver" household, and I was raised amongst extended family, with both related and unrelated individuals, far from the sitcom norm. Despite these differences, we both ended up with very similar values. Adding to this, as we find ourselves sharing more time together, our experiences have led us to develop mutual goals and ambitions.

However, sometimes I get a little scared that I will completely leave behind my own culture because of the way the whole relationship is leaning toward a more "American" lifestyle. I'm sure that part of this divergence from the Filipino culture is due to living away from home in a culturally diverse atmosphere. Hell, I live in New York! Anyway, maybe the reason why my mother once asked me to date a Filipino guy was in order to keep the traditions alive. And maybe that is why I sometimes find myself trying to teach my boyfriend the language.

If this relationship progresses through the next steps, I know the wedding will be a circus. All the possible misunderstandings, food complications, differences in traditions pertaining to dance and music will make for a very interesting one. I can't even imagine the looks on his parents' faces when the elders start doing their "gong dance" as I call it (or the "patong" as they do). We might just have to do two separate ones to be safe.

I guess this is what happens in a cross cultural relationship in a true melting pot. You leave things behind and you gain some too. I know that in the future I won't be taking my children to the Filipino gatherings that I am 'forced' to go to now. And it is a little sad but what will still survive are the core values instilled in me to be passed on. At the very least, my mother will be their "Lola" (grandmother) and they'll still be able to sample chichacorn, puto (rice cake), and kare kare (traditional foods).

But that is way in the future. For now, I am enjoying the present and dealing with the interethnic hiccups one day at a time.

The Family Legacy

by Jin Woo Cho

When I hear the term "special relationship," I cannot really relate it to my immediate family because I am not sure if my relationship with my family members can be labeled as so. It is not that my family is dysfunctional, I talk to both of my parents on a regular basis, and I believe that our bond is actually quite stronger than a normal family. However, I am not sure if that relationship can be called special by any means.

Then I thought about the bond that I have with my grandfather through the history of the Cho family. Now that can be considered quite special.

Rooted in the philosophy of Confucianism, China and Korea consider filial piety to be one of the core moral values that supports the structure of society. In this sense, creating a family tree describing one's family male lineage was essential for so-called "established" families because this was one of the ways to remember the ancestors.

Many families still maintain this tradition, and some families with many members have created an organization that regulates family memorial services and publishes family tree books. These books grow huge as centuries and generations pass by. Even though the organization consists of all people who share the same last name (people who may not even be closely related as branches are divided over time) it still functions as a bond among those people, helping them to remember their ancestry and to be conscious of their origin.

My grandfather has been involved in the publication of the family tree book for years. And he has been passionate about this project even though he did not get paid for his effort, being that he has the traditional viewpoint of keeping track of the lineage. I became familiar with the stories of my ancestors on those days when he would go on talking for hours about how the Chos helped to build the old kingdom and contributed to the country.

I still remember when he first showed me the condensed version of the family tree book. I was amazed by the sheer volume of that book and I was amazed even more by the historical documentation the book contained. It was possible to trace all the birth dates and the time of death of my male ancestors and even basic information about their distinct family members, not to mention their full names.

It was amazing again because the book contained the pictures and locations of each of their graves. This is important for future generations to pay respect to their ancestors by visiting their final resting place.

I remember my entire family used to visit the ancestors' graves during the fall. We would drive about a couple of hours to get there because it's in the countryside and I used to live in Seoul, the capital. During a short memorial service we would set up the food that we brought to commemorate the ancestors, bow to their graves, and pour soju (mild Korean vodka) around the tomb.

The rest of the day would be spent hanging out in the countryside, picking chestnuts and enjoying the serenity of the scene; the whole day was more like a family picnic rather than a somber memorial service. Even so, I felt that this event was an opportunity for my family to bond with each other. I am sure my ancestors are happy that my family knows the importance of family bonding.

Since my father was not into the family history all that much, my grandfather always talked to me about the past generations. Usually when he returned from memorial services at the temple, which could be a couple of hours away, he would show me the traditional hats and the garments that he wears during the service.

I think I will continue this tradition when I become his age someday. Even though I only know my old "great-grandfathers" from the stories, I could feel the weight of tradition, something that has been part of my culture for centuries.

I also felt the weight of duty, what my grandfather is expecting and hoping from me as the eldest son of the family, since the eldest son is supposed to be the pillar of this household.

Long ago, a strange emotion passed through me as I was watching my grandfather bow solemnly to the grave of the 18th great-grandfather and read the tombstone listing his achievements, pointing out each phrase with his finger. Sometimes, I imagine myself in my grandfather's shoes, wearing his gown and hat, going to the temple and bowing to the wooden planks bearing the names of my ancestors.

Although I have never met any of my ancestors, my grandfather's homage brought them somewhat closer to me. I felt like I was tied to the tradition and duty being passed on from generation to generation, from my grandfather to me.

I guess that is what I call a "special relationship;" that intrinsic value that you share with someone. Even though it has been almost six years since I left Korea, my relationship between my grandfather and I is one of the few things that still ties me to my home country.

Widening Ripples

by Ja Young

Mai, current editor of the AAJ, came up with the theme for this issue while talking about how many Filipino children are raised by their grandparents. She was for a year when her Mom emigrated here for work to give her children a better life. Special bonds often form in the lives of immigrant and 1.5 children beyond the traditional parental or sibling ones. There is also the realization that not all traditional bonds are good ones. The clash of cultures divides families as much as it unites them. And then there are the typical of all cultures bonds - why "Daddy's Little Girl" is sung at so many weddings.

As the alumni advisor of the AA E-Zine I try not to write articles, difficult as that is because forty years ago I was a journalism major. It is in my blood. My role as 'the old white lady', as I am known to students in the Asian clubs on campus, is to mentor, to be 'Mom' for the things they cannot confide in to their own parents.

I am often asked by whites why I volunteer with Asian and Asian American students and my response is that they see an Asian face while I simply see a student's face. I tell of the same week when I had two young women in my arms, consoling them. First was my daughter after a relationship ended crying, "But Mommy, I thought I was going to marry him." Then the President of one of the Asian interest clubs after a relationship ended crying, "But JoAnne, I thought I was going to marry him."

The pain they were each going through was no different, the counseling I gave each was no different. Most student issues do not have racial boundaries, though often they have cultural ones. My daughter was telling me. The student was telling me because she could not tell her own mother. At graduation her Mom thought the young man attending was interested in her daughter. She did not know they had been in an intimate relationship for two years.

One night as Mai was doing layout, moaning about stories that had come in that were too short and she needed more, I thought about my special relationship. He is connected to Mai though she does not realize that. When Karina Kim, AAJ's advisor, asked Zine students for help when the previous Editor graduated without someone willing to put in the long hours, he is the person who had made it possible for Mai to relinquish her role at the Zine to be AAJ Editor.

So I decided to write about him... my mentor, my shoulder to cry on, the first one I tell good news to and the first one I tell bad news to... the person I can trust so much he knows more about

my life than anyone else. But more importantly, though his name is barely known to most of them, because he is one of the three most important people for Asian and Asian American students in Stony Brook's history.

At a particularly turbulent time in my life he is the man who told me I could not walk away, and he is the man who made it possible for me to stay. Though he helped in many ways, most of all for me he restored my faith in myself, and that was but one of his smallest acts. He is also why the Zine exists and thus why Mai was able to go from Zine to AAJ.

And no, it is not what you are thinking. He is just a mentor and a friend. His wife is wonderful. That I can trust him unconditionally is why I can love him unconditionally. Although not quite old enough to be my father he often acts like it when he is nagging me! When Asian students talk about the pressure from their parents, I know exactly how they feel.

We often argue because as an elderly Chinese grandfather we do not see eye to eye on many things - but in the personal chaos of my life since I met him twelve years ago and the project we were involved in caught in the cross hairs of competing egos of the heads of two major institutions - our friendship grew.

Though his name is known in the Zine as the password on the office computers, given that the competing egos still play a part in both our lives, this will not be on *who* he is. Far more than just giving Mai something to fill her empty space, honoring *what* he is - a person of integrity, faith, warmth, and caring - is to show a perfect example of why special relationships know no boundaries of gender, race, age, or blood connection. They are possible when any two people can trust each other. Because it is trust - that same kind of unconditional trust of the small hand of child in a parent's - that is the single most important bond in a good relationship.

And then the strength of those relationships flows beyond them. There is an old poem my Nannie taught me. "Drop a pebble in the water and its ripples reach out far, and the sunbeams dancing on them may reflect them to a star. Do a deed of simple kindness, though its end you may not see. It may reach like widening ripples, down along eternity."

His was a deed of simple kindness that created a ripple that allowed Mai and I to know each other. Widening ripples... Hopefully one day from this ripple Mai will create her own... and then...

Family Ties

The Perfect Sister

by Denny Mai

There can be no better example of the ideal oldest sister than Jenny Mai. With all seriousness, her balance of devotion to her family and her dedication to her work transformed a little girl into a mature, respected, young lady. Of course, not all I write should be flattery. We are siblings after all. It's not like we don't have our occasional quarrels. Her incessant need to shop and her perfectionism can be a bit annoying at times, and as a result, arguments ensue. However, our petty fights are outnumbered by our more meaningful moments.

At school, I look at her and see the President of the Chinese Association at Stony Brook, otherwise known as CASB. At home, I look at her and see the sister that I have been living with all my life. Ever since I first came to Stony Brook, I saw these two characters merge at different instances both in school and out. Not only does she act like my sister in Stony Brook, she acts like a sister to all the younger members of our club, a unique characteristic that I feel is inherent only in her.

Jenny is conscious of the fact that she's the oldest of three kids and as such, she takes on the responsibilities of protecting her siblings, being the mediator of arguments, and caring for our parents. Her actions have given her the image of a positive role model who many want to follow. I'm excited that her graduation is approaching because it will be the day when her accomplishments will be recognized, the day when her years in Stony Brook end, and the day when her life as a successful woman begins.

CASB unfortunately will lose a president, but I'm still glad I get to keep her as a sister. Without her in SBU, it won't be the same. She will truly be missed by all, but her words of wisdom will always resonate in the back of my mind. She taught me to be responsible, mature, and independent. She's more than my sister. She's also my mentor. My other sister, Winnie, and I can agree that we are lucky enough to find comfort in the fact that she will always be there for us no matter what.

My Bestest Friend

by Winnie Mai

People say sisters are tied by birth and friends are tied by choice. Well as for me, Jenny Mai is not only my sister, but also my friend. Some siblings are unable to get along with each other, which is quite unfortunate. But that is not the case for us. I am the middle child in my family, my brother Denny is the youngest child, and my sister is the oldest child. As the oldest child, Jenny had to carry the burdens of my parents as well. She had to make sure my brother and I don't stray from the paths that my parents want us to follow. I am quite stubborn and my brother is short-tempered, yet in the end my sister manages to handle both of us with grace and simplicity.

The relationship I have with Jenny is not only tied by blood, but also by our strong bond of friendship. Over the years as I grew up, she guided me along the way with her words of experience. As a sister, she would make sure I made the right choices for my future, and as a friend, she was always there for me in my times of need and comfort. No relationships are perfect. It's a given that we've had quite a share of arguments between us, but they're overshadowed with the special moments shared. Not only did she watch me grow, but I watched her mature from a young teenager to an independent, intelligent, and responsible young woman. Along the way she taught me

how I should think and live my life, how my years in college matters, and how I should work hard for my future.

Witnessing what my sister has become and seeing a bright future in the years ahead of her, makes me feel happy for her. She has become a role model in my life and will always be a huge influence on me, which is why I hope I will never disappoint her.

I owe so much of what I am now and so much of what I will be in the future to my sister. Her advice will always be instilled in how I will live my life. I can say I am forever grateful to have her as my sister. To me, the name Jenny Mai will always mean the best sister and friend that I can ever have.



My Rebirth in Your Regard

When I was weeping all alone
lying in my grave,
Life's felicity was buried
under pile of sorrow;
Searching for my inner self
that was once so brave
And lost faith in joy might
be brought by tomorrow.

No soul heard what my mind
wanted to speak
Or saw the tears bursting
out of my lorn heart.
Standing up was hard
with that spirit so weak;
Those rose-colored dreams
were all torn apart.

My heart found rhythm when you came near
And gave me the love that I always desired.
You held me in your arms with ardent care
And revived the spirit that was wholly expired.

My soul descried happiness, for which you'd to strife;
I gave you my heart 'cause you brought me back to life.

Photo by Jeff Ng

by Farzana Ali

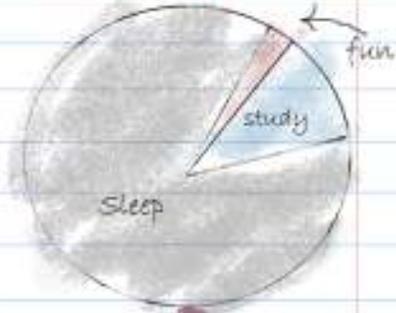
Not **US** Anymore

You deserted me brutally in
The land full of pain,
And halted me shrewdly with
Fake conscience chain.
But I broke all the ties,
Set my soul free;
Don't blame now if you can't
Find your half in me!

Photo by Joy Dutta

by Farzana Ali

Stony Brook Fun
SBF 101
4/07/07

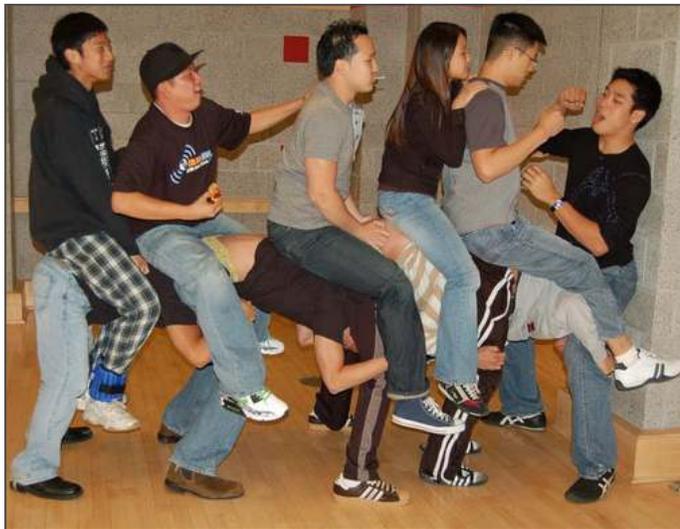


Good times, great friends
 $(67 \times 56.75) - 55.23y = 10.45x$

Suite 223
(Toscanini)



SDF 101



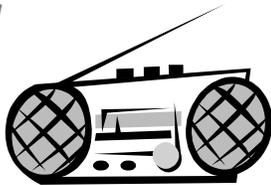
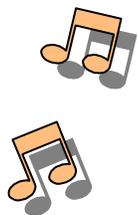
I should've taken the blue pill.



Did anyone bring a pillow?



Fire in the Hole!



SBF 101



Asian American Identity

Year of the Dragon

"LOLAAAAAAA, GET YOUR BUTT OVER HERE RIGHT NOW!!!"

Those words pierced my ears as I tried to pry myself away from the television set. My mother and father were screaming at me to get on my knees and pay some well-deserved respect to a roasted, but in actuality, burnt pig. Well, not exactly. The door was left wide open to let the smoke of the incense rise to the sky. I thought it was just an attempt to prevent the smoke detectors from going off, but customs were customs as odd as they were. Dropping to my knees and bowing my head at the same time, I vividly remember thinking to myself, "What the heck am I doing? This is stupid. I'm praying to the open air." It seemed to be a useless and dim-witted process for me because there was no figure of Buddha, there were no monks, and we weren't even at a temple.

"Now, Lola, pray and thank the ancestors for what they have blessed us with," my Mom stated. As she walked by me, I noticed that she was carrying a chicken that was obviously falling off the tiny plate she chose to place it on. The chicken was yellowish in color and reminded me of my crayons. What was worse was that the little table my parents chose to place the roasted pig, the chicken, and the incense was the little white table with four green legs that I used to color in my coloring book. Anyway, the chicken made me tremble and I didn't dare to look at it because its head was tilted in such a position that its eyes were burning into me. I quickly mumbled some nonsense and ran back to my spot in front of the television. I took a deep breath and sighed, "Every year, we do the same stupid thing."

The rituals and practices that Chinese Americans do once a year appear to be odd and ridiculous to the non-Chinese. However, we also wonder why Americans go into the forest or store and throw away money to buy a tree which they would only use once a year. More so, they decorate it and let it sit for about three months, simply because Christmas was over and they were too lazy to take it down. Chinese New Year is a time to rejoice for all Chinese people around the world. It symbolizes a new year of prosperity and good health for those who

celebrate it. We practice our customs to pave the way for a rich and wonderful year.

Well, that's what parents said. As a child, I thought it was an embarrassment. To get on my knees and pray to the air, giving all the neighbors more reason to believe that Chinese people were weird, made me sick to my stomach. I never understood the true meaning behind Chinese New Year. It was only joyful when I would meet the relatives for dim sum and I was given money in red envelopes. I figured, "Hey what the heck, I get money for saying a bunch of old Chinese phrases and on top of that I get free food. SCORE!!!"

As I indulged in my own heritage, I came to the realization that the celebration of Chinese New Year was not routine and dull; it was bright and exciting. There was more to it than getting money. Chinese New Year is a time for Chinese people to come together and experience the joy of our traditions. It is a time for us to give thanks to the ancestors for blessing us with the ability to thrive in a society that is not our own. And lastly, it is a time for people to come together and experience the warmth of a family following the traditions of a Chinese family.

It was so obvious but it took years to understand what my parents had said. It also took years for me to actually enjoy the smell of incense, but that is another story.

The bottom line is that every year we rejoice in our culture and heritage, though misunderstood by others. It is our only time to shine as Chinese, and I will take pride in my culture by never looking down upon it, but rather I will raise my head up high.

A Different Kind of Love

Psychologists such as Sigmund Freud believe that childhood experiences and interpersonal relationships play a critical role in laying out the framework for one's future persona. I feel as though behind every child, and in my case a Korean American child, there is a strong parental presence in certain aspects of childhood, which can "create" in a sense certain stereotypes for those outside of Asian culture. The stressed importance of education and differing cultures by 1st generation Korean parents contribute greatly to this Asian stereotype.

From the start of education in kindergarten

Tell Me Your Story: Asian American Identity

all the way until college, my parents would stress how important school and education was. However, this point was not driven home until that first time in kindergarten where I brought home a check minus on my homework. That day was not a pleasant one to say the least, and in accordance with Korean culture there was much physical punishment from having to raise your arms beyond fatigue or getting hit with a variety of household items including but not limited to coat hangers, golf clubs, and the inconspicuous wooden stick. Their excuse was, "we're doing this for your own good and it hurts us more than it hurts you" ...right.

I suppose at a young age everything hurts a lot more than it should, especially when your parents force you to lie to your teacher when they asked about the beat marks on my face and body. Most of my childhood is remembered as such, with a lot of physical abuse on my father's part. And to this day, after much resentment throughout most of my high school career, I am all but indifferent towards my parents although I wish we had a happier relationship so I could have parents that I wouldn't hate.

Thinking about it now, they had such high hopes and dreams which took them half way across the world to start from scratch and work fourteen hours a day to put clothes on my back and food in my stomach (Korean food of course). They put me in a Korean after school as well, to learn how to read, write, and speak Korean. Although I dreaded that mundane cafeteria in a Korean church filled with about thirty, second generation Korean kids just like me, I found some sort of peace knowing that we were all in the same boat and their struggles were my struggles.

Growing up in a "Korean" manner, cultures began to clash when I went to school. The F.O.B.'s ("fresh off the boat") or J.F.K.'s ("just from Korea") were slang terms for recently immigrated children who had difficulty speaking English. Their "doshiraks" (Korean lunchbox I suppose) would often be the source of ridicule from white children at the lunch table. At the time words like "chink" were often heard, but I was too young and naïve to understand what it meant. Reflecting upon those days in elementary school 289 in Queens, the children and even some adults were so ignorant.

I remember one particular teacher asking me where I learned to speak such good English; I just gave her a blank stare in disbelief. After realizing that Asians in general were not the

"norm" or the majority, I soon began to turn away from Korean culture and kids and try to assimilate more into the "American" culture. But no matter how much I tried I still knew I was an outsider in their eyes.

In retrospect I can appreciate my parents forcing me to go to Korean school and enriching my life with Korean culture. Although there was much pressure, guilt and disappointment from my parents to perform and do well in life in order for their sacrifice in coming stateside not to be in vain, I can understand their support even though I still do not believe in corporal punishment.

Sometimes I still feel as though no matter how hard Asian Americans try or succeed in life, we will always be the "other" in the eyes of Americans.

A Stained Tradition

As children, many times we are dependent on our parents to make decisions for us. Whether the decisions be small ones, such as picking out an outfit for a holiday or event, or a major one, like deciding what school to enroll in or what neighborhood to live in, the voices of children are many times unheard in the presence of their parents. The decisions made by adults are often influenced by their own experiences, values, and beliefs, whether they are personal or cultural.

Even though I was born and raised in the United States and follow both Indian as well as American traditions, my parents have held on to most Indian customs and traditions that they grew up with. Now that I'm an adult, I have the option of selecting my own way of life, clothing, and style, but when I was younger, things weren't always this way.

Back where my parents are from, it is a daily routine for children to put oil in their hair and for girls to braid their hair. The oil, which is a special kind of oil made just for hair, is known in India to moisturize and benefit your hair in many ways. When I was in kindergarten, I was just like the children in India, my mom used to drench my long hair in oil and put it in a single long braid. It was okay for her to do this while I was at home, but this created a problem once I started elementary school. Day after day, my mom would oil my hair and braid it.

At first, nobody said anything but after a while, students started complaining that my hair had a certain type of smell to it. Students who

Tell Me Your Story: Asian American Identity

weren't used to seeing people with oily hair started to ask me if I ever washed my hair. In addition to this, the oil in my hair started staining the back of chairs and everything I sat on in school. During nap time, I would put my head down on the desk and later pick it up to see the oily residue it had left behind.

Soon enough, my kindergarten teacher was forced to ask me what I put in my hair. I tried explaining it to her, but the concept didn't really make sense to her. My teacher was forced to send a letter to my house asking why I put the substance in my hair and if it could be minimized or stopped. My mom realized that the oil was causing an issue and stopped putting it in my hair.

I still remember that I was really embarrassed when my teacher asked me what I put in my hair. It's interesting to see how something that is looked upon as a great thing in one culture is really looked down upon in another. That spring, my grandmother was visiting from India. Since she wasn't aware of the situation that had taken place in my kindergarten class, she started yelling at my mother for not taking care of my hair and leaving it dry without oil!

The 'Odd' One Out

Growing up, I've never personally felt that I was negatively discriminated against because of my ethnicity. If anything, it seems that many of my peers and elders have expected positive things out of me because of my Asian descent. I am a Chinese American, and in all the years that I have spent living in the U.S. since immigrating here as a child, I have always encountered the popular stereotype that Asian students excel in academics and are well-behaved all the time. This is not an idea or belief that I was familiar with until I started going to school and interacting with my teachers and fellow students.

For some reason, I always did end up behaving better and sometimes doing better academically than my classmates. It was not any attempt on my part to overachieve or be the best at everything in school; I was just being myself and doing what I thought I was supposed to do. I was also never motivated at home by my parents to need to do well in school either, as many other students, both Asian and non-Asian, may have been.

As time passed by, I seemed to live up to

this highly prevalent stereotype more and more. Part of this may just be due to the coincidence that I was a decent student and never really tried to start any trouble or anything.

However, another part of this paradigm may be the fact that the attitudes and consequently, the outward behavior, of people around me could have caused me to become even more stereotypically "Asian" than I actually was. I started feeling slightly pressured to do well in class in order to please my teacher and to meet her expectations of the model "Asian" student. I also behaved very politely and was very considerate about not calling out in class.

I don't know if I spoke less than other students around me, but I certainly rarely interrupted discussions or talked back to the teacher. This probably caused the people around me to think of me as a quiet and reserved student, reinforcing their pre-formed beliefs.

For my teachers, this type of prejudice may have caused some of them to try to interact with me less during discussions, thinking that I would be shy and not want to talk. Ultimately, this type of student-teacher and peer-to-peer interaction can cause group stereotypes to manifest into a reality.

Even though there were always many Asian students who didn't do well on tests or behave like model students in my classes, this idea of the quiet, smart, and well-mannered Asian has always managed to surface in people's minds. Stereotypes are hard to overcome; when a person emerges who strongly defies the stereotype, they are easily discarded as the rare exceptions. However, when a single lone person's behavior or demeanor is concordant with a popular stereotype, then he or she is exemplified as proof that the stereotype is an absolute and universal truth.

Even if a stereotype about a certain group is not directly hurtful or negative, such as Asians being extremely diligent and conscientious, it can be destructive when it creates false expectations and compels individuals to behave a certain way in order to be accepted. There are also always highly negative stereotypes such as Asians being very shy or submissive, which can obviously be detrimental to the development of self-esteem and confidence. Because of the presence of stereotypes, it seems many of us have to try extra hard sometimes just to be ourselves if our personalities do not perfectly match with the preformed expectations that others already have of us.

Asian World Leader Quiz

As the nations of Asia rise in global prominence and stature, it is important to be aware of the changes in the world economy, power structures, and technological progression.

This quiz is designed to test your knowledge of some of Asia's important political figures. Do you know which name belongs to which face?



- A. Kim Jong-Il, North Korea
- B. Abe Shinzo, Japan
- C. Hu Jintao, China
- D. Gloria Arroyo Macapagal, Philippines
- E. Roh Moo Hyun, South Korea
- F. Dalai Lama, Tibet
- G. Manmohan Singh, India
- H. Nguyen Tan Dung, Vietnam
- I. Hun Sen, Cambodia
- J. Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma
- K. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan
- L. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia
- M. Su Tseng-chang, Taiwan
- N. Mahinda Pajapakse, Sri Lanka
- O. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Malaysia
- P. Than Shwe, Myanmar
- Q. Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Bangladesh
- R. Miyeegombo Enkhbold, Singapore
- S. Lee Hsien Loong, Mongolia
- T. Surayud Chulanont, Thailand

Answers at www.aa2sbu.org/aaaj/quiz/S07.html

AAJ : Asian American Journal

Welcomes its new 2007-2008 Editor-in-Chief

Helen Randazzo

Weekly meetings open to all! First fall meeting date TBA.

Join Facebook group or send email to aajsbu@gmail.com for notices.

Special Thanks

The Asian American Journal would like to thank the following people and organizations who have made this issue of the AAJ possible:

Kaity Huang, former Editor-in-Chief of the AAJ, for securing funding for this year's AAJ.

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AA E-Zine for many of the photographs used in the color centerfold from its online gallery, as well as for the use of their office and equipment. www.aa2sbu.org/aaezine

Print Digital Plus for low cost, superb work done with a smile even when brought to them with the plea of 'Can we have this by tomorrow?!' www.printdigitalplus.com

USG, the Undergraduate Student Government, for our student activity fees which pay for copies of the AAJ to be printed. www.stonybrookusg.org

Submissions Guidelines

AAJ welcomes submissions from all backgrounds, Asian and non-Asian. However, works that bear relevance to Asian American issues will have priority. All work must be in digital format. We accept poetry, essays (fiction and non-fiction), artwork, photographs, etc. Please send your material as an attachment to aajsbu@gmail.com.

AAJ Spring 2007 Background Images

Most photos used in this issue came from the authors or submissions. Some backgrounds are non-copyrighted online images. The credits/urls for them are at www.aa2sbu.org/aaj/spring07/images.



AA E-Zine & SBU AA E-Zine!

www.aaezine.org for off campus news & events

www.aa2sbu.org/aaezine for on campus news & events

Online-news, events, photos, and videos focusing on the Asian and Asian American Long Island/metro New York Community. Free! Each week a link is sent to your inbox via Yahoo Groups (no spam or junk ever!) Sign up in the left column of the Zine or send an e-mail to aaezine@yahoo.com. SBU students join Facebook group.

For SBU students: Zine now in its 5th year. Join the first weekly Asian American college 'paper' in the country. Hard copy also published in the **SB Press** bi-weekly. Events are videotaped and put online. Volunteer or earn credits. We will train you. Learn Quark, iMovie, and more.

All Welcome! Alumni & community members too! Editors, journalists, columnists, essayists, poets, researchers, cartoonists, photographers, videographers, and media techies! Learn video editing. Show the world your creativity!

SBU Campus Office: Union Room 071, Zip +3200 * 631 632 1395

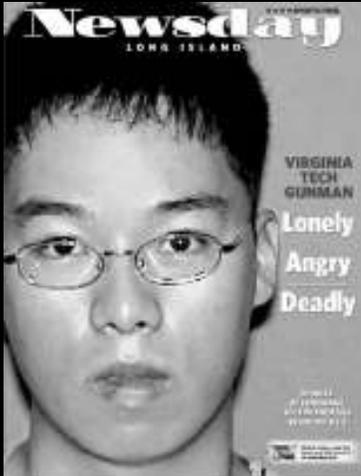
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Weekly meetings open to all! Fridays @ TBA, SB Union 071

The Intersection of the Media and Racism

How We and the World See Us/US Through Virginia Tech

by Yina Chun & E-Zine Staff



On April 18th, *The New York Times* focused on the right perspective - the mourners. Newsday simply put up a large photo of the killer.



As news of the Virginia Tech tragedy spread, there was grief in America. But as news broke that the mass killer of 32 students and professors was of Asian descent, other feelings arose too, both here and abroad. The tragedy made the front page of every paper and headlined TV and radio news. In 'special reports' every aspect was extensively discussed but more than anything else, the killer's face was everywhere, his country of birth and his name spoken in the same breath.

Before it was known who the killer was, word spread online that the suspect was from Shanghai. During his spring break, the son of a SBU China alumnus studying in a US boarding school had visited SBU to go to classes with us. He emailed his father's advisor, "Will the US send all boarding school students back to China?" "NO! America understands this was just one crazy person" she said to calm him, hoping Americans really would. But she IMed students, "Be careful."

Everyone waited for the facts, hoping their greatest fear would remain unrealized. For Asian Americans as well as Asians in America, there was also another sense of fear, either spoken or unspoken, that we will again be singled out and judged. Based on the stories of blatant acts of discrimination against people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent since 9/11, that fear was inevitable. As it became known the killer, Seung-hui Cho, was South Korean, other Asians breathed a sigh of relief. "I know it is wrong," said one SBU Chinese grad student, "but I prayed and thanked God that he was not Chinese."

South Korean Ambassador Tae-sik Lee's first words were that he hoped "the tragedy would not stir up racial prejudice or confrontation" against South Koreans, exactly what many had dreaded. Another SUNY student, Hyun-Choi Lee, told online Korean American *iChosen Network2.0* that he "missed classes since he feared retaliation." Virginia Tech Korean American students hid in their rooms and some were advised to say that they were Chinese when asked.

Apologies from the Korean / Korean American community poured in. It was as though the guilt of the shootings was the communal guilt of an entire nationality. President Roh of South Korea apologized and held a Cabinet meeting to discuss what to do if Americans resorted to racial discrimination. Would American society view the shootings as more than what it was - the heinous acts of one deranged student? Why were Koreans being held up to such scrutiny because of the act of one person who happened to be of Korean descent?

As these questions linger in the air, we can only wait for answers. Do we believe in lessons learned? After 9/11 there were hate crimes against anyone who looked Middle Eastern.

The Iraq War was extrapolated from a terrorist act by Al-Qaeda, yet our President used 9/11 to make war on another country under false pretenses, manipulating our fear. What fears will the Virginia Tech massacre create?

Fear takes multiple forms. While the fear of retribution that Koreans were afraid of has not come to bear in violent ways, it has still occurred. At WUSB, SBU's radio station, the Korean Life program got calls telling them to "Play things that are American. This is America." China Blue announcer Norman Lee, often mistaken for Korean, said he could be quoted: "I was fearful." He said Korean Life disconnected the incoming phone lines because they were tired of the racist calls, including one repeat caller making derogatory remarks. The calls were confined to Korean Life. China Blue never got any.

Nor is it just hate speech. There is also the subtle fear and discrimination. Will the quiet, studious Asian child, once stereotyped as the "model minority", now be viewed as a potential threat? Senior honors student Allen Lee of Cary Grove High in Illinois learned that answer the hard way. His teacher told students to write, to "Be creative. There will be no judgment and no censorship." Lee's essay included a make believe violent dream. The next day he was arrested. Only after legal talks did school officials admit he was not a threat. His lawyer called it paranoia from the Virginia Tech massacre.

Korean Americans were divided on how to react. Eugene Lee, a Korean American at UC Berkeley's *Daily Californian*, made valid points in *Finding the Korean Voice*. He said South Korean Ambassador Lee did not have the right to speak for Korean Americans, only Koreans; that all Koreans fasting one day for each life lost to prove they are a "worthwhile ethnic minority" would not prove anything, and; that no one should repent for sins they did not commit. "There was nothing Korean about what Cho did... [but nevertheless] we fear that Cho will indirectly become the mainstream image of Korean America, and we desperately search for an alternative champion." He concluded, "we can overcome this dark day, not as Koreans linked in shame, but as Americans united under tragedy."

But as illustrated by the 9/11 aftermath, the fear all Asians felt as the Virginia Tech tragedy unfolded, and the emphasis on Cho's nationality in the visual images and words of the Korean media, more is needed than finding the Korean voice. Eugene Lee quoted former Senator Norman Mineta, a Japanese American WWII internment camp survivor, speaking about 'the need to find a coherent Asian American voice within the national discourse.' Until that happens, we will remain the "perpetual foreigner" in our own country.

SBU STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE FOR AIDS, COUNSELING, FAMILY PLANNING, STD TESTING, MORE

True Story: Sitting in the office working on AAJ, talking about the AIDS/STD article. Conversation turns to "What did your parents tell you about sex?"

Unanimous answer from the females. "Be a good girl." End of conversation.

One male gave his parents a letter in junior high saying he would be in a class on puberty. Not knowing the word, he thought he would be learning about poor people - poverty. His Mom's response? "Oh, you're growing up now" - the only thing either parent ever said to him.

Another student said, "I need to go to a gynecologist but I don't have money or a car to go to Planned Parenthood. I can't go to the infirmary because it will show up on my parent's health insurance."

She is not sexually active but as a pre-med major - medically aware. But many parents do not understand that a pap test is medically smart. They just think going to a gynecologist can only mean sexual activity.

They are very typical APA college students. Most of what they know came from their high school health class, if they had it. Asian immigrants don't have that class unless they came here young. In religious high schools 'abstinence only' is taught. They read about sex and sexuality online or in popular magazines but more often they just learn from each other.

SBU students have three facilities and should take advantage of them. First is the Infirmary. Although the Student Affairs website makes it seem sex is non-existent, a gynecologist is there too! And it is FREE! Students have unlimited visits with any doctors as part of the Infirmary Fee. Nothing goes on parent's insurance unless lab tests are done that are sent out. They will try to help you find a way to take care of yourself without anyone knowing. They distribute condoms too.

Medical Clinic: 632 6740

Women's Clinic: 632 6740

Health Educators: 632 6689

The second facility is Planned Parenthood, located just 6 miles from campus. Unlike the infirmary, everything there can be done without insurance, or under 21 can sign up for special insurance with paperwork sent to a campus address. It will cover all procedures. Most visits with all tests included range from \$60-\$100.

And if you need to talk to someone about any issues arising in your personal life, sexual or not, the third facility is the Counseling Center on the 2nd floor of the Infirmary. Totally FREE too, there are even Asian and Asian American counselors who understand all the cultural and family pressures you are under.

Counseling Center: 632 6720

Think carefully before becoming sexually active. College has enough stress without adding it to the mix. But if you do, then do it wisely.



**Charles B. Wang
Community Health Centers
www.cbwchc.org**

268 Canal Street
New York, NY 10013
212 966 0228

136-26 37th Avenue
Flushing, NY 11354
718 886 1200



**Asian Pacific Islander
Coalition on HIV/AIDS
www.apicha.org**

400 Broadway, New York, NY 10013 (enter on Walker St.)
212 334 7956 *** APICA @ apicha.org

APICHA is a non-profit organization providing HIV/AIDS related services, education, and research to Asian and Pacific Islander communities in New York City. We provide free and confidential HIV testing, STD screening and treatment, acupuncture, and much more. Check out the website or call us at 866 274 2429 to make an appointment.



Your trusted provider of
health information and services.

Planned Parenthood offers high quality sexual and reproductive health care including family planning, gynecological health care, STI/STD testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, and abortion services, all on an income based sliding scale. Many in NYC have Asian translators. Check website for the center nearest you. For SBU, contact Smithtown Center, 6 miles from campus, at 631 361 7526.

www.plannedparenthood.org



NAWHO

National Asian Women's Health Organization

www.nawho.org/reprohealth.html

**The National Asian American
Reproductive Health and Rights Project**

NAWHO has a national reproductive health and rights campaign encouraging Asian parents to educate their adolescent children about reproductive health and safe sex behavior. The campaign seeks to promote responsible sexual behavior in an effort to reverse the growing rates of teen pregnancy and STDs in Asian American communities.

Deadly Secrets: Asian Americans and AIDS

by Mai Luong and Chetan Prabhudesai

Some Asian American students have a mother-like figure to whom they can comfortably confide their secrets, things that they wouldn't dare discuss with their parents. These "secrets" include their fears about school, life, the future, but most of the time, they talk about their relationships (the ones that they are not supposed to have and their parents don't know about) and the subject that is often referred to as "it," if their parents even bother to mention "it" at all.

Although Asian cultures have different beliefs in varying complexity, the general consensus is that sex, sexuality, and intimacy in Asian culture is private, not to be spoken of or paraded about in public, or even at home in front of family. Even kissing is viewed as an intimate act meant only for the bedroom and not in front of one's children. These ideas ("the old way") have immigrated with our parents, who have tried to instill them in us. It goes without saying that the "old ways" – marriage for life, even arranged marriage for many, and modesty, clash horribly with the "American way" – promiscuity, pre-marital sex, and divorce, as illustrated and even condoned in some American media.

Asian Americans who are raised with the ideals of their Asian heritage in an environment that has American influences are faced with two conflicting ideas about how to live their lives. Given that Asian parents do not want to think about the possibility that their children are dating, much less having sex, many children are not taught about sex or sexual health other than what they learn from school or from their friends.

In 2005, researchers at Howard University's Department of Psychology published a study on 248 Asian American college students that surveyed the extent of their sexual activity and HIV risk behaviors. The study found that "Asian American students' acculturation through college attendance, English language acquisition, and American entertainment, *in combination*, increase their likelihood of more sexual activities, including unprotected sex... that are more common among their non-Asian American peers (Wong 466)." This means that as Asian Americans become more assimilated into American culture, they will behave more like Americans and have an increasing tendency to imitate certain sexual behaviors that have been promoted by the examples set by their American peers and the media. This is evident in another portion of the study, which found that "participants who speak only English at home are more likely to have had intercourse (Wong 463)."

However, few Asian Americans completely abandon

their old traditions. Many younger Asian Americans pick and choose the things that they like about their cultures, and in doing so create their own sense of culture. This mish-mash of traditions sometimes cause Asian Americans to lead a so-called "double life." Their parents have a very different picture of their children's lives (an illusion the children may have painted themselves) as opposed to what is actually going on.

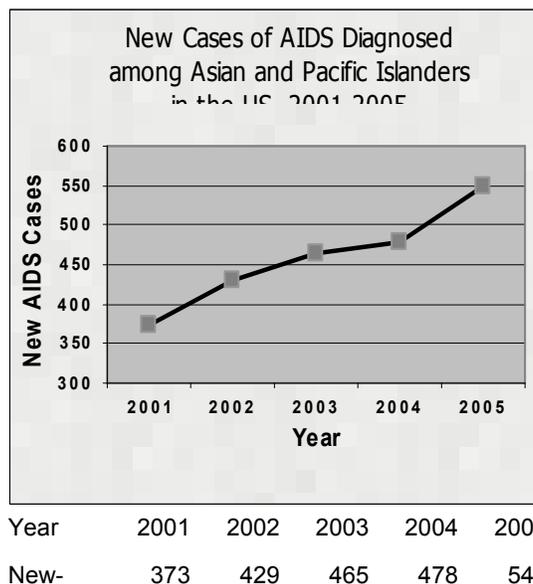
Despite the impression of duplicity that shrouds finding one's niche in two different cultures, many Asian Americans seem to be making the right choices when compared to their peers. According to several studies done by the CDC and other organizations, Asians and Asian Americans are the lowest risk groups for HIV. Unfortunately, the study by Wong also found that HIV knowledge among Asian American college students is insufficient. This can possibly be traced to the lack of education these students received from their parents, and it appears that high school programs did not teach them enough either.

This lack of understanding about how HIV spreads has dire consequences. A 2005 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention studied the prevalence of AIDS across the nation, and found that AIDS diagnoses among Asians and Pacific Islanders have increased from 2001-2005. The graph shows that HIV/AIDS is clearly a growing problem in the Asian and Asian American community.

But what does all this mean for us? What can we do about it? These statistics point to the need to be more aware of the rising numbers of Asian Americans contributing to the world's current AIDS/HIV epidemic and

the increasing risks among college and high school age youths for contracting STDs, partly due to increasing "Americanization." Acculturation is not necessarily a bad thing, but Asian parents and their Asian American children need to come to an understanding about intimacy, sex, and sexual health practices through open communication. For parents, this is a better alternative to mandating sexual abstinence, expecting their orders to be obeyed, and being shocked and disappointed if their child becomes pregnant, contracts an STD, or has an abortion in fear.

There are also organizations that address these health issues in the Asian American community. A few are the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (www.apiahf.org), the Asian and Pacific Islander Wellness Center (www.apowellness.org), APICHA: Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (www.apicha.org), and many more can be found online.



C
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Summer
internship
abroad
by
Huy
Huynh
and
Steven
Leigh



Three Pools Reflecting the Moon
West Lake, Hangzhou



Hyatt Lounge, Jin Mao Tower, reflected
in window facing Pearl Tower, Shanghai



Great wall



Laughing Buddha, Hangzhou



Wang Law

Soochow University

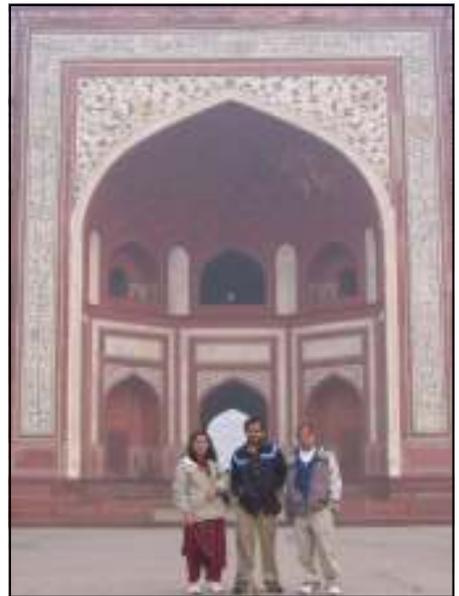


INDIA

Family Ties



Ancient Sundial



Entrance to the Taj Mahal on a foggy morning



by Chetan Prabhudesai, his Mom & Dad



Gao by the seashore

