

# Gidra

Summer 2001 • Volume 1 • Issue 4


**Community** | No thrilla in Lil' Manila

**Drugs** | An ePiphany

**Youth** | Thuggish and ruggish

**People** | Wen Ho Lee: Free at last?

**Politics** | Love in the time of elections



**• We've Got  
ISSUES**



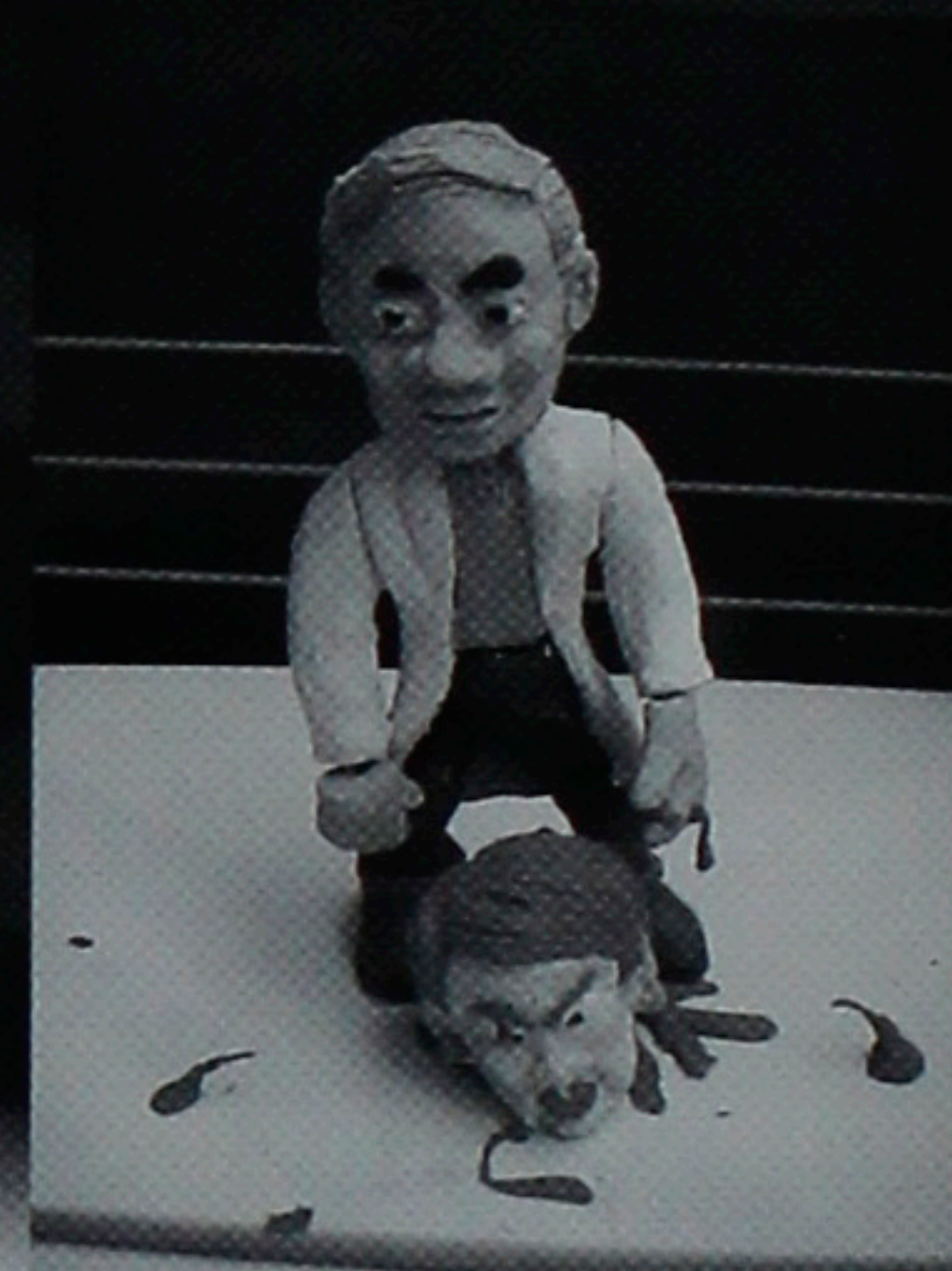


**Wen Ho Lee**

**VS**



**Janet Reno**

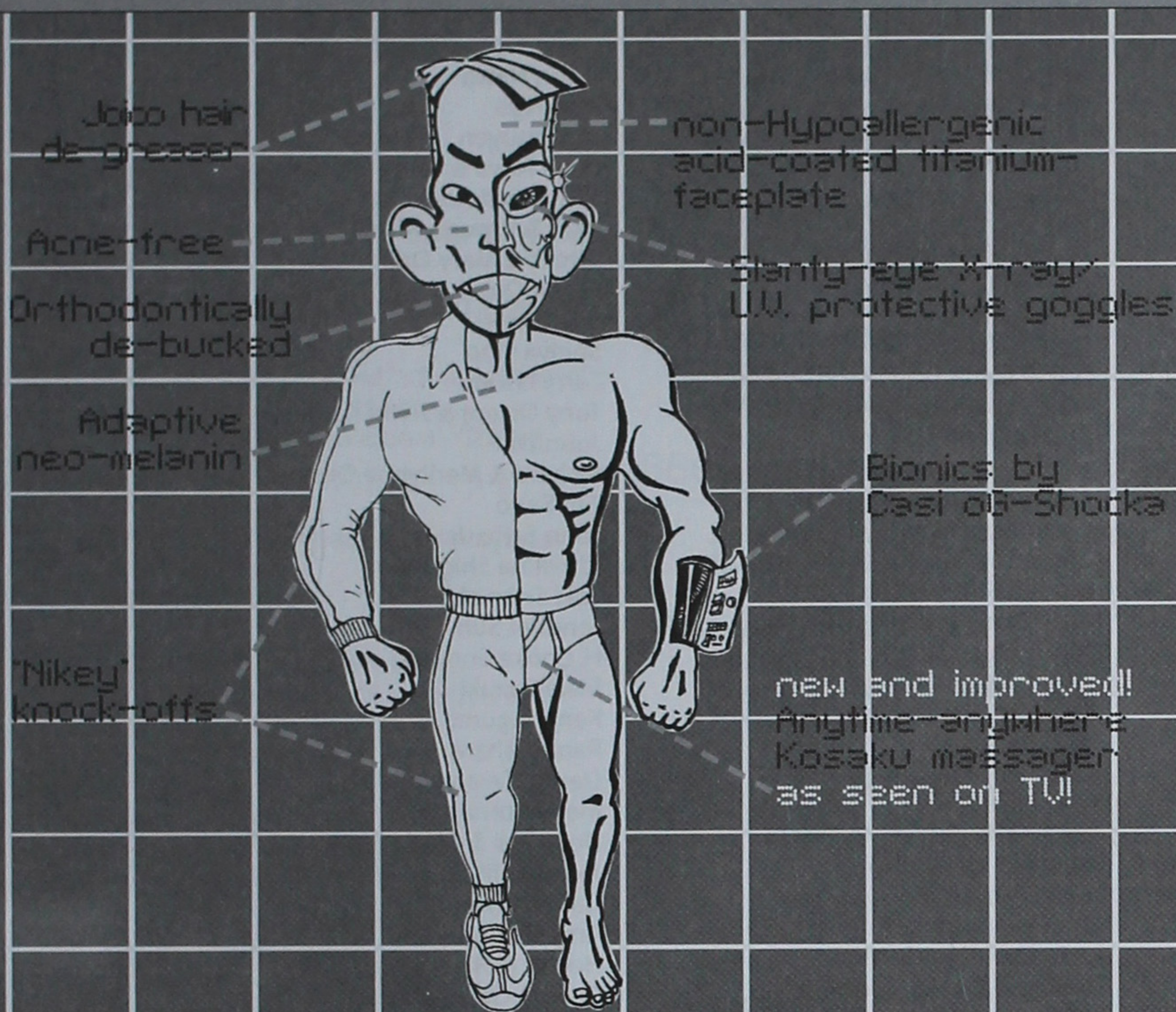


Figurines by RICKMOND WONG

**GSPN** for all the action you want to see



# Welcome to the Bidra Bio-Transformer Test Facility and Horticultural Study Page



UPGRADE  
STATUS:

DONE

Code Name: Mr. Wong  
A.k.a.s (aliases): Stereotype A, House Boy, Mr. Moto, Fu-Manchu, Hop Sing, Yellow Peril, Grading Curve Busta, Abacushead

Height: Short  
Weight: Skinny  
Hair: Greasy  
Eyes: Jaundiced

Notes: Due to the inherent unpredictability of our work in the Esteem Recovery Unit (ERU), the subject, Mr. Wong is prone to lapses in certain behavior modification. Beware recurring inscrutability, two-facedness, sexual perversity accompanied by impotence, chronic submissiveness. Considered dangerous; adept at three forms of karate: jiu jitsu, aikido, and the regular kind; also passive-offensive, and inclined to internalize frustration, even while handily adopting popular ways of mainstream society.

## intro: an apologia

### points for speaking: what is wong?

Ah, an opportunity for explanations. We'd like to tell you about where we've been of late. And we want to keep it short and sweet. For this, you gotta love bullets.

- Why the delay? Yes, well, we've all been busy. Hmm, okay we fucked up. In hindsight, it seems all too clear that it's possible to care about something so much, that you have a hard time letting go of it. Even a magazine that's (supposed to be) bound for the printer.
- We are sorry. Seriously. Self-reproachment and sincere regret going out now to all writers, photographers, artists, other contributors, subscribers, donors and moral supporters. But, per Vy's instruction, we should not grovel.
- What we plan to do to avoid this sort of situation in the future: appoint a Heavy for when it comes time to round up stories, photos and art for production. As has been the case in the past, we will spend time individually reflecting on then deciding formally as a group who will bear responsibility for adhering to the next deadline. Which is to say, there's more fun on the way.
- What this issue is about: a response to our newly adopted mascot Mr. Wong who has, for Asian Pacific Americans at least, become a symbol of the dotcom failure and one visible marker of the rise of The New Anti-Asian Sentimentals, in particular those in federal law enforcement circles who have poured their hate juice on the dreaded Chinese.\* We also take

notice of the spike in hate crime numbers and victims, and sundry other, inside-out monoliths who give us flashbacks of a bad Kung Fu episode. Who we kidding? Every episode of Kung Fu sucked ass. And we still watched.

- Who we are: a group of once-close colleagues who have witnessed the toll a seemingly innocuous magazine has taken on our friendship. Some people refer to us by the petname, Weirdos with Issues. Issues? Hell yeah, we got issues!
- As it stands, we know the stories in this installment of the giddie monsta are worth printing and sharing, and any further delay only adds to the sense of guilt and shame that swings from our necks like a No Limit Records medallion.
- So if you are with us, that would mean you are trying to put aside the lag time, and getting to the issue at hand. Because, as you well know, in the end it's the thought that counts.
- Well, enjoy.

love, gidra

\* Janet Ah, resident gidra security and sanitation control expert, blames "the dreaded Chinese" at Pac Ties for violating our story lists, the ensuing delay, and the mid-air spy plane collision over the South China Sea.



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Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics

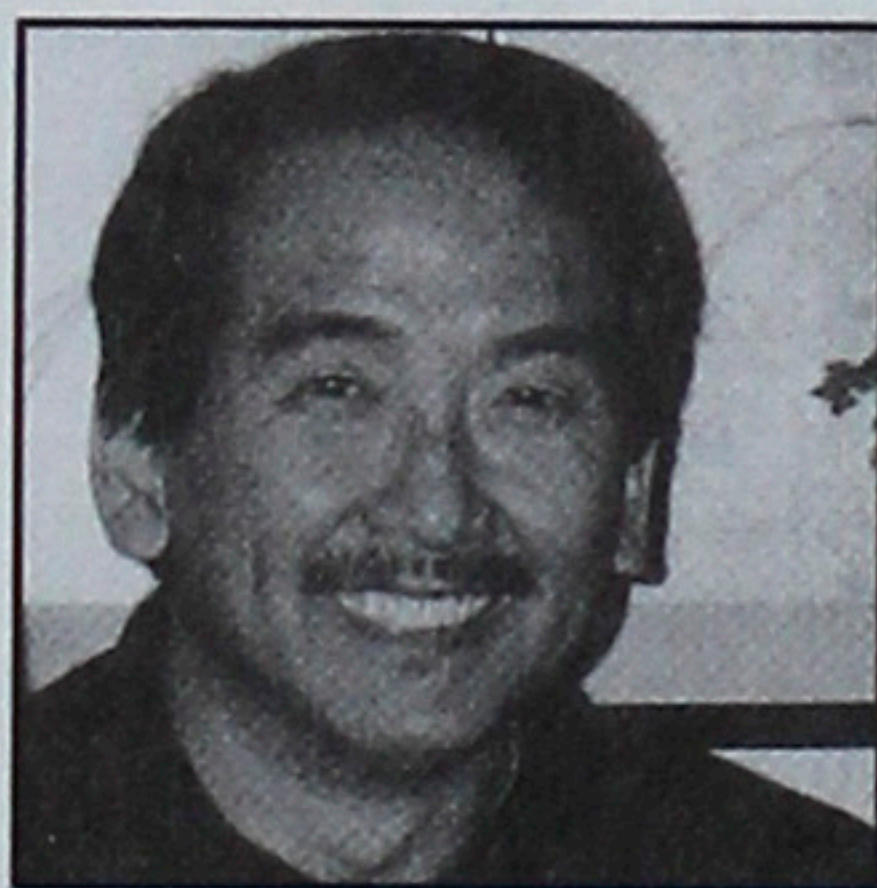
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**And thanks to our many subscribers!**

We dedicate this issue to our friends who passed on this year. Their support and kindness helped make the magazine possible.



### Henry Omori

Henry Keisuke Omori, May 9, 1949 - March 6, 2000. Henry passed away from complications arising from a liver illness. He organized at-risk youth in the Japanese American community in the late 1970's. A friend to the original *Gidra*, he also worked with Vietnamese students to educate Americans about the unjust war in their homeland. He is survived by his wife, Sue Oda, and daughters, Dawn and Lyssa.



### Glenn Horiuchi

Composer, shamisen artist, pianist, community activist, teacher, husband, father and friend, Glenn Horiuchi passed away last summer after a long battle with cancer. Throughout the 1990s, Glenn traveled the United States, Mexico, Canada and Germany, performing music informed by internment camp experiences and his own Japanese American perspective. He is survived by his wife, Edna, and son, Kenzo.



### Duane Ebata

Duane Toshinari Ebata was the artistic director of the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center who long recognized and actively promoted Asian and Asian American performance work. In honor of his memory and vision, family, friends, and colleagues established the Duane Ebata Memorial Prize, an annual award of \$1,000 to an emerging APA artist. For information or to make a contribution to the memorial prize fund, contact the JACCC (213) 628-2725, ext. 115.



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[text]

Sefa Aina, Shipra Bansal, Susan Cheng,  
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Alex Dong Ko, Charles Ku, Scott Kurashige,  
John Lee, jeff liu, Albert Lowe, Khanh Ngo,  
Tram Nguyen, Vy Nguyen, Anthony Pinga,  
Justin Prasad, Dawn Mabalón, Raul Vasquez,  
Ernesto Vigoreaux, Eric Wat

[copyedits&proofing]

Ayako Hagihara, Alex Ko, Charles Ku,  
Shingly Lee, Amy Luu, Han Pham, Eric Wat

[design]

Paul Dang, Page Kishiyama, Charles Ku,  
jeff liu, John Lee, Vy Nguyen,  
Anthony Pinga, Richard Wang

[photos]

Shipra Bansal, Paul Dang, Alex Ko,  
Charles Ku, jeff liu, Vy Nguyen, Brian Minami,  
Ernesto Vigoreaux, Eric Wat, Won Woo,  
Lyndon Versoza

[art]

Alp Altiner, Michelle Banta, Keu Cha,  
Victor Llamas, Rickmond Wong

[cover] art: Keu Cha,

Alp Altiner and Victor Llamas  
design: Page Kishiyama

[cybernauts]

Wataru Ebihara, Richard Wang

[funds] Ayako Hagihara

[etc.]

John Lee, jeff liu, Vy Nguyen,  
Rodney Ferrao, Alex Dong Ko,  
Richard Wang, Ayako Hagihara

[advisors]

Rocky Chin, Bruce Iwasaki, Mike Murase,  
Alan Nishio, Glenn Omatsu, Meg Thornton,  
Arvli Ward, Evelyn Yoshimura

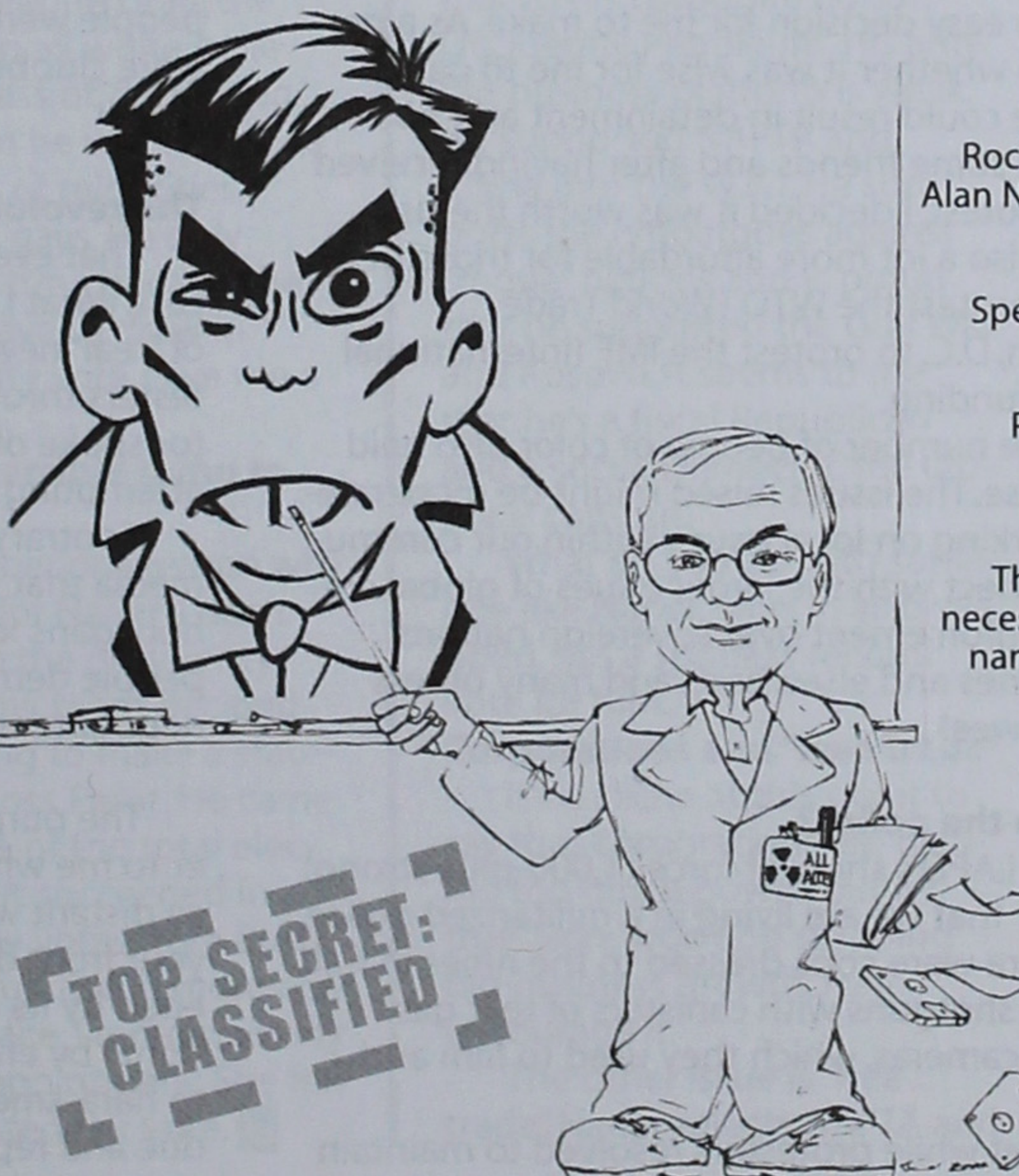
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## Gidra

231 E. Third Street, Suite G104  
Los Angeles, CA 90013  
www.gidra.net  
gidra@apanet.org





## reflections from last fall's elections

# Run DNC

## the view from outside

intelligence: KHANH NGO  
surveillance: ALEX KO

**A**s an Asian American activist and member of the Third Eye Movement, a youth-led community organization committed to fighting against police brutality and the criminalization of youth and youth culture, the opportunity last fall to join the tens of thousands protesting the Democratic National Convention (DNC) and the unjust, undemocratic two party system was something I could not afford to miss.

At the same time, it wasn't an easy decision for me to make. As a permanent resident, I contemplated whether it was wise for me to participate. An arrest and felony charge could result in detainment and possible deportation. After consulting some friends and after having received training in preparation for the protest, I decided it was worth the risk.

The DNC protest in L.A. was also a lot more affordable for those of us who wanted to go to Seattle to protest the WTO (World Trade Organization) and to Washington, D.C. to protest the IMF (International Monetary Fund), but lacked the funding.

L.A.'s population, with its large number of people of color, also held the promise of being more diverse. The issues raised might be more relevant and provide those of us working on local issues within our community with the opportunity to connect with the larger issues of global corporatization, increased military enforcement over sovereign nations, slave wages in third world countries and elsewhere, and many others that would be raised during the week.

### Who's going to protect us from the police?

L.A. was in a state of war. The LAPD's show of force (1,000-plus strong) during the protests made it clear that we are living in a militarized police state. Everywhere we turned, there were cops dressed to the nines in full riot gear: plastic handcuffs, rifles, shotguns with canisters of tear gas. Some were even equipped with cameras, which they used to film and photograph protesters.

Perhaps most striking was that while protesters resolved to maintain

peaceful demonstrations and were committed to non-violence, the LAPD used excessive force.

Instead of dealing with the few protesters who threw empty water bottles at police, the cops overreacted by tear gassing and shooting into the crowd. When we were given orders to disperse, we were faced with having to negotiate our way through the police line blocking the exits. Many people were beaten while trying to leave the area. Some were clubbed as they asked police for directions on where to exit.

### The revolution will not be televised

That evening I turned on the news to watch the broadcast. What I saw was typical of the mainstream media's idea of "real" news. The newscast showed images of a few protesters throwing things at the police while the commentator spoke of violent protesters provoking cops and attempting to destroy property.

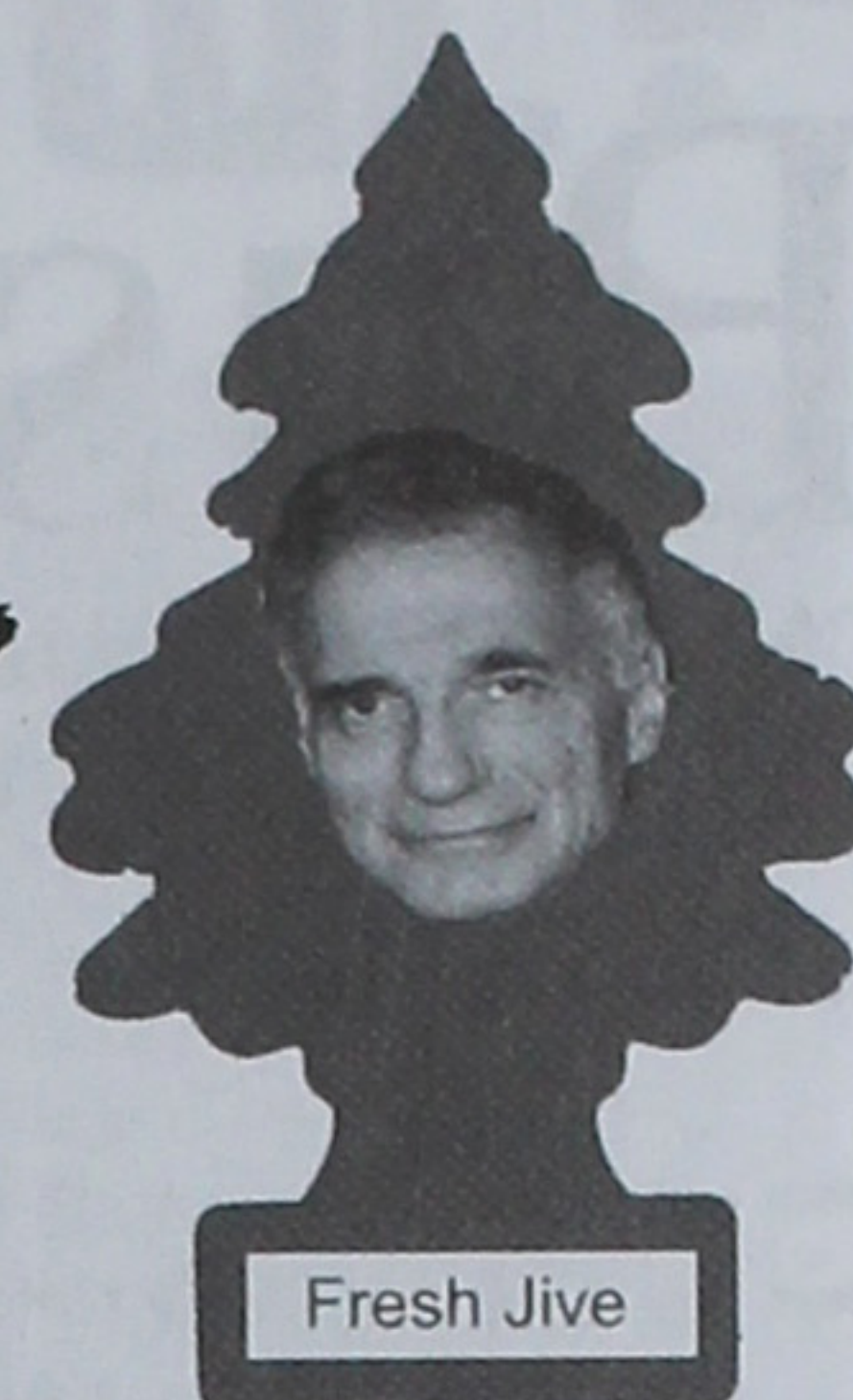
Contrary to the propaganda put forth by the corporate media that protesters can be likened to terrorists and hooligans looking to engage in property damage, most people demonstrated peacefully, some even helping to negotiate through instances of conflict.

The purpose of my decision to go to L.A. became clearer to me when I returned home. Global issues didn't seem so distant when the war was being waged right outside your front door. What I saw in L.A. was a system so threatened by its own people exercising their constitutional rights by engaging the political process that it would resort to harassment, intimidation and violence, in order to subdue and repress discontent. I made the right decision. **G**





# WHEN POLITICS BECOME PERSONAL



Susan Cheng attended the DNC as a Democratic News Service intern. Meanwhile, Charles Ku joined the protest march outside. Susan voted Gore. Charles went with Nader. After the recount mayhem and anxiety, the winner turned out to be the one candidate who wasn't even invited to the *Gidra* debate. Typical. By the way, Susan and Charles were dating (each other) at the time of this writing. And while they maintain their respective positions well into the Bush administration, the current status of their relationship is, er, well, undetermined.

## Gore by default

By SUSAN M. CHENG

When the Democratic Convention hit Los Angeles last August, I interned at the Democratic News Service. I went through 45 minutes of interrogation by Staples guards and CIA Agents, and passed through security barricades to work 15 hour days for free. I made my boyfriend drop me off three blocks away from the LAPD guarded compound for the week while he joined the protesters outside on Figueroa St.

At the convention Reverend Jesse Jackson's two lines were, "There's More with Gore" More Education, More Opportunity, More Equality, More Prosperity. His other chant: "Stay out of the Bushes."

### Bush

I get turned off by the know-it-all twang in which Bush declares himself master of the nation with only six years of experience as a governor. I hate his plans for privatizing social security and it pisses me off to think of him giving tax breaks to the rich few who sit at the top and crack the backs of everybody down below just like his father did before him. And NO, "affirmative access" is not the same as affirmative action.

### Gore

I voted for Gore, because he represents the lesser evil of the

two MAJOR choices. And with all his weak points, he holds true to some core issues I believe in. I am pro-choice, I believe in national health care plans and I want a commitment to hate crime legislation and affirmative action.

### Nader

Nader was appealing, but he still didn't get my vote. He's just like all those other politicians out there.

He still advocates for consumer protection as only a white-middle class struggle. He's an Ivy League Grad, the product of an all white male Princeton Class of '55. During his campaign he was oblivious to the issues of minorities, women, and gays. He only changed his tune because he knew he'd have to draw in some minority vote. Give me a break.

### A vote is a terrible thing to waste

The number one reason why I didn't vote for Nader: I don't want Bush in the presidency.

In 1992 my mom decided she was going to make a statement with Ross Perot. He came in at only 2% of the total electoral vote but succeeded in sucking away votes from Bush Sr. and giving Clinton more of a lead in the race. I remember my mom's disappointment. She felt she had wasted her vote. **G**

## No Pork or Chicken! I voted Nader!

By CHARLES KU

I never thought it'd come down to that. Bush, a name that I never thought I'd hear again after 1992, except in declassified CIA files. Then Gore. The stickman from *The Blair Witch*. It was a choice between Brand E and Brand X. Thank God for Nader!

Now Gore seemed like a good choice on the surface. He's a self-proclaimed environmentalist (it has to be self-proclaimed because his record doesn't show it), pro-choice, and anti-big business. Ha, tell that to his corporate donors Occidental Petroleum. His anti-big business platform is weak. He supported NAFTA and China into the WTO. He supports the embargoes against "rogue" nations and is proud that he supported the Gulf War and Kosovo. It seems to me that he's a fiscal Republican and a social Democrat, the ultimate cop-out.

What do you do with someone like Nader, who, in all likelihood, has a spotless record? Vote for him.

### Corporations and "free trade"

It's a cliché at this point to say that corporations are gaining too much power, but it's true. Gore won't be stopping big business growth; he'll encourage it.

The other issue is "free trade." Nader rejects NAFTA and

the WTO, which Gore supports and can't get enough of. Both hurt labor and the environment while turning everyone into a Coca-Cola addict. I'm one, I should know.

### Race

Many complain that Nader has no sensitivity toward racial issues. But nearly all of Nader's issues benefit people of color whether he is outwardly about it or not. I can forgive him for not being as sensitive to the issue so long as he doesn't want to send me to a desert camp and call it an evacuation for my own safety.

### Capital Punishment

Gore and Bush love to send people to heaven. Well, I suppose it's really Hell, but in any case, neither has made it an issue (since they both agree). It seems self-evident that if 40 percent of death row inmates are black yet making only nine percent of the population, something seems to be awry. Nader seems to be the only one that realizes that.

### So what I'm saying is?

Basically, I liked Nader. I don't like the lesser of the two evils argument because you'd still be voting for evil (Thanks Michael Moore!). **G**



# Busted?

*Chinese Daily News* employees fight for their rights, and win a union election. Still, they meet with resistance.

By ALBERT LOWE

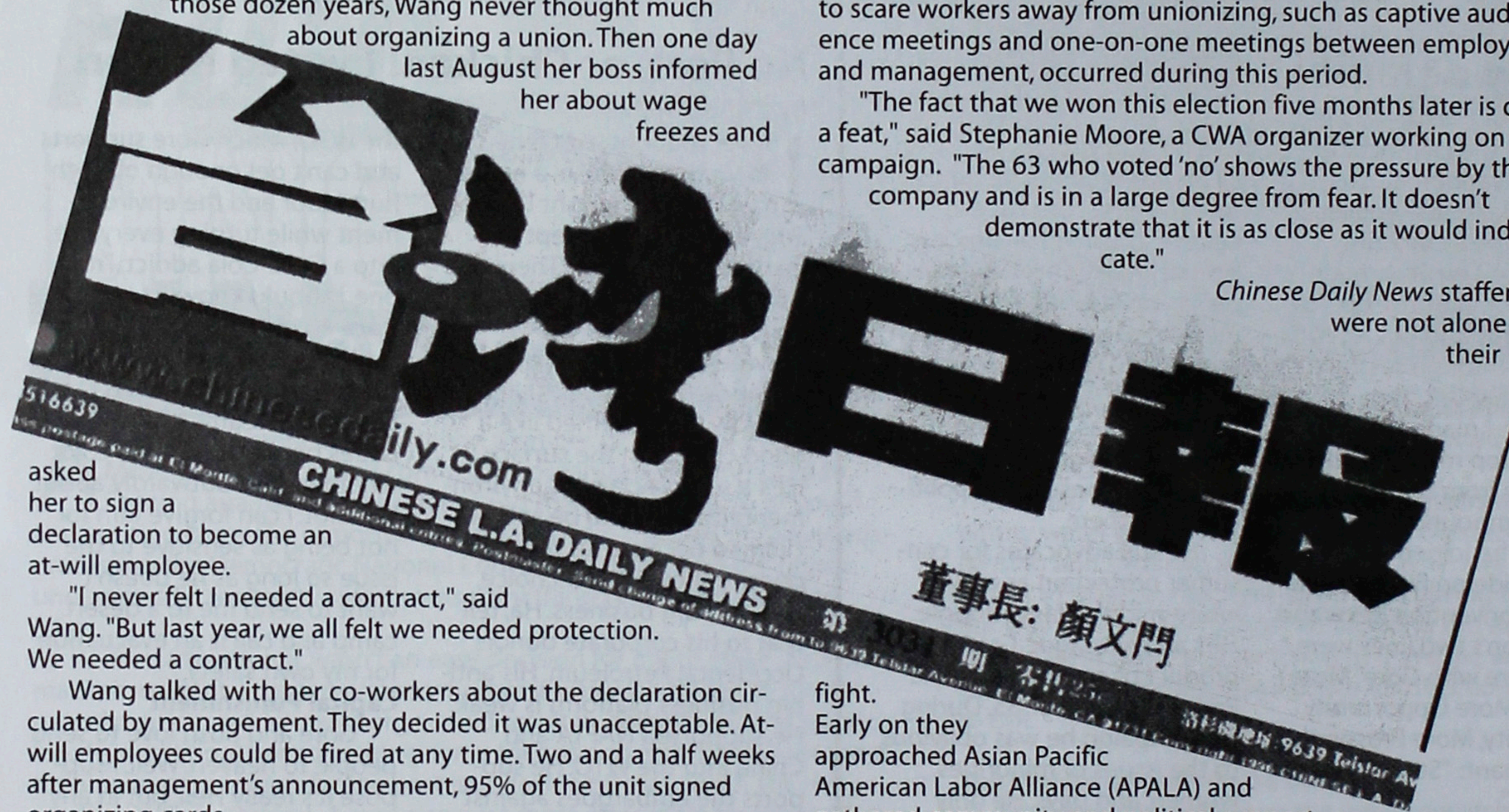
For over twelve years Lynne Wang worked as a reporter for the *Chinese Daily News*, one of the largest Asian language newspapers in Los Angeles County and the country. In those dozen years, Wang never thought much about organizing a union. Then one day last August her boss informed her about wage freezes and

voting against the union.

The management for the *Chinese Daily News* switched presidents on Nov. 1 and hired a Chinese union-busting firm. Tactics to scare workers away from unionizing, such as captive audience meetings and one-on-one meetings between employees and management, occurred during this period.

"The fact that we won this election five months later is quite a feat," said Stephanie Moore, a CWA organizer working on the campaign. "The 63 who voted 'no' shows the pressure by the company and is in a large degree from fear. It doesn't demonstrate that it is as close as it would indicate."

*Chinese Daily News* staffers were not alone in their



asked her to sign a declaration to become an at-will employee.

"I never felt I needed a contract," said Wang. "But last year, we all felt we needed protection. We needed a contract."

Wang talked with her co-workers about the declaration circulated by management. They decided it was unacceptable. At-will employees could be fired at any time. Two and a half weeks after management's announcement, 95% of the unit signed organizing cards.

Seven months later, on March 21 2001, the staffers at the *Chinese Daily News* won their first election, 78-63. They chose the Newspaper Guild - Communication Workers of America (CWA) to represent them. All 152 employees, including printers, reporters, and packers, are represented in the unit.

The election victory currently marks the only Chinese language newspaper in the United States to win an organizing drive. They are joining a trend of foreign language media, which includes Univision and the *Korea Times*, in successfully organizing into a union. However, unionization has not been easy.

Staffers at the *Chinese Daily News*, known in some circles as the "Chinese LA Times," filed for recognition on Oct. 26, but had to wait five months for their election. When the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) allows an election to be pushed back, the employer gets the opportunity to intimidate workers into

fight.

Early on they approached Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) and gathered community and political support.

Notable political supporters include Congresswoman, Hilda Solis, State Senator, Gloria Romero, and Monterey Park Councilwoman, Judy Chu.

CWA is currently surveying each department to determine the key issues for the first contract. However, the company is contesting the results of the election, arguing that improprieties occurred during the election. It is not uncommon for management to resist election results.

For anyone who wants to get involved, Quynh Nguyen, APALA organizing director, suggests sending letters of support to the newspaper and the union. "Tell the company to respect the election results and bargain in good faith," she said.

"We want to negotiate a good contract," said Wang. "We're not greedy. We are still part of the paper."

The address of the *Chinese Daily News* is 9639 Telstar Ave., El Monte, CA 91731.



# Came Overs For Holiday Bowl?

By SCOTT KURASHIGE

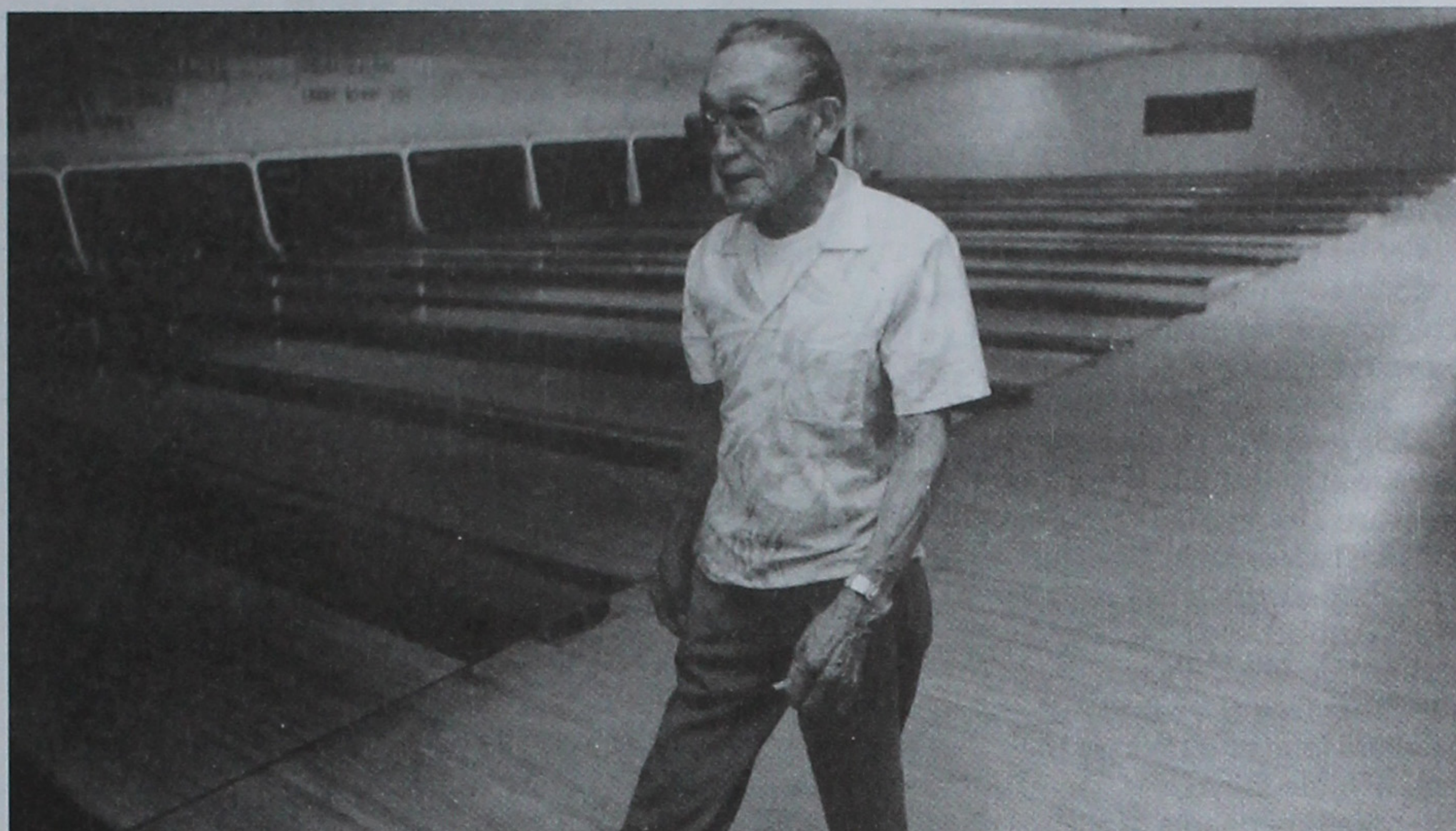
Until its doors closed last May, Crenshaw's Holiday Bowl constantly drew together Angelenos of all races, ages and classes. It was a unique social space unlike any other in Los Angeles, or for that matter, the world. While its modernist "Googie" architecture alone makes it worthy of landmark status, Holiday Bowl has been far more than a physical structure.

Contrary to previous racially restrictive covenants, Crenshaw was at the forefront of the fair housing movement in the postwar era. After opening in 1958, Holiday Bowl became the hub of this integrated neighborhood. The coffee shop's menu — an eclectic fusion of grits, udon, chow mein, and hamburgers — mirrored the diversity of its patrons.

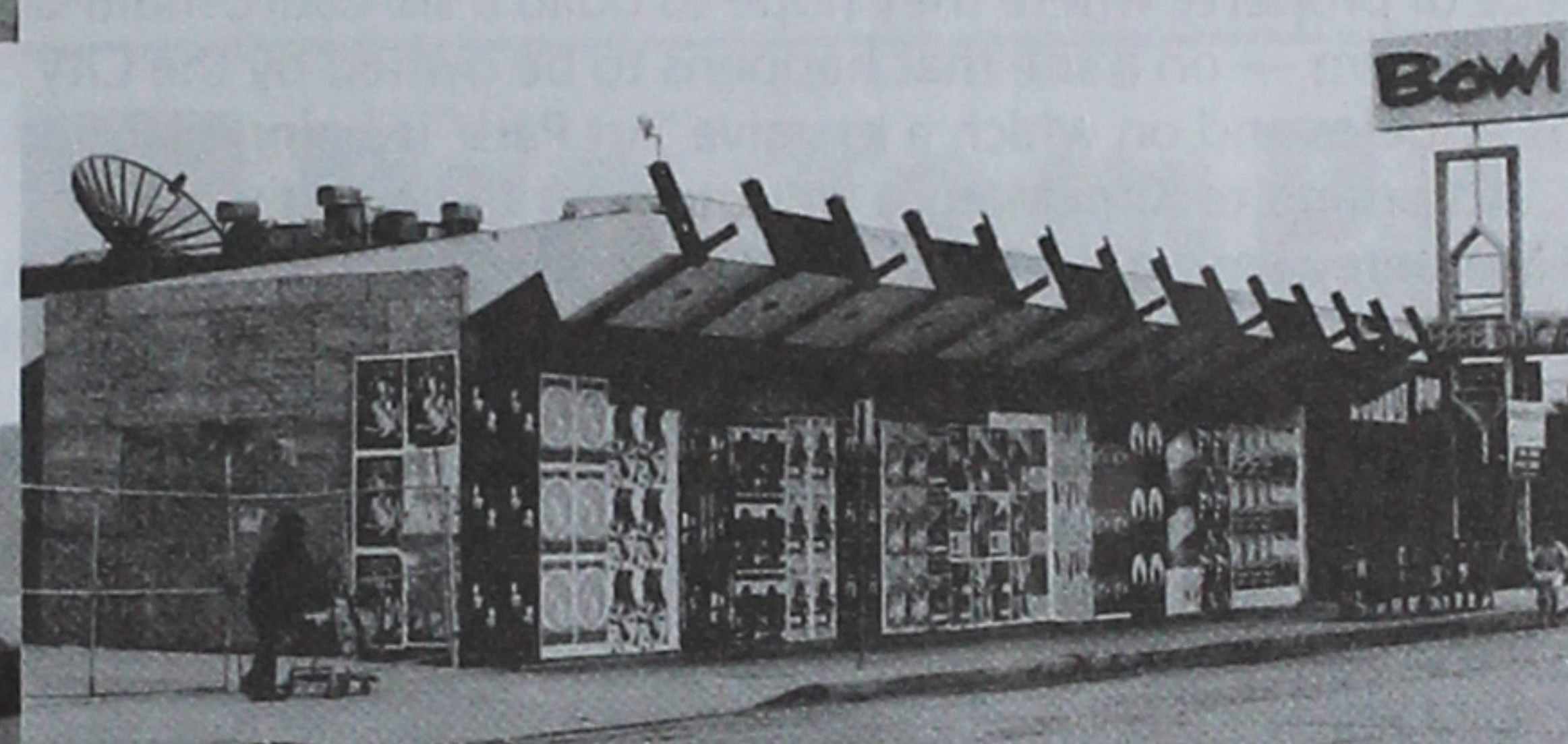
For Japanese Americans interned by the government during the war, the Bowl's very construction symbolized the rebuilding of shattered lives. Its five Nisei founders sold shares in the Bowl throughout the community to finance the business. During the 1960's and 1970's, Holiday Bowl was arguably the most recognized hang-out for the Sansei generation.

For African Americans, the Bowl's active recruitment of all races gave it a central place in the desegregation of bowling leagues. Holiday Bowl is one of a few historic structures remaining on the Crenshaw Boulevard strip that is in many ways the "Main Street" of Black L.A., but is becoming increasingly made over by corporate retail establishments.

Unfortunately, the combination of recession and bad management decisions crippled the business in the 1990's. Holiday Bowl was abruptly shut down on May 7, 2000. In escrow to buy the land



Photos: BRIAN MINAMI



and structure (which had always been leased by Holiday Bowl's operators), developer Abe Shofet of Axiom Real Estate applied for a demolition permit to make way for a strip-mall. Councilmember Nate Holden rushed to support demolition, advancing the misguided notion that community residents must choose between preservation and economic development.

Word of the Bowl's possible demolition spurred the creation of the Coalition to Save Holiday Bowl and a grassroots effort which has kept it alive against all odds. Supporters of the landmark argue that the popularity and name-recognition of the Holiday Bowl would make it a drawing point for a new development that incorporated it into its plan.

Responding to a community campaign for preservation and revitalization, the City of L.A. Cultural Heritage Commission voted last July to designate Holiday Bowl an historic-cultural monument. The City Council voted to preserve only the building's facade, leaving the bowling alley available for redevelopment.

Before a wrecking ball destroys this irreplaceable treasure forever, now is the time to act on the Bowl's behalf. Contact: John English, Coalition to Save Holiday Bowl (323) 666-9623. **G**





# Hang Time

Little Tokyo's been quartered and drawn, and some say there's still no room for a gym.  
By RAUL VASQUEZ

For five years, efforts led by the Little Tokyo Recreation Center Community Development Corporation and Recreation Center Board have tried without success to nail a site — any site — in Little Tokyo to build a gym that would host statewide athletic tournaments, martial arts classes, sport activities, as well as senior lunches for the local elderly population.

Last October, the LTSCCDC and the Little Tokyo Recreation Center Board made their message heard loud and clear on the streets of Little Tokyo.

Hundreds of people of all ages and ethnicities met and marched on Oct. 28 around a piece of property where they hope to build a six-court, multi-use gymnasium — on a site that happens to be owned by the City of Los Angeles and on which a massive "Art Park" is being planned.

According to Kimi Maru, a volunteer for the event who lives in Monterey Park, over 400 people "from as young as 18 months to as old as 78 years" signed a giant canvas with their hand prints — a sort of petition — in favor of building a gymnasium.

Since then, she said, they have added hundreds more hand prints, as well as gained the support of dozens more organizations — including the L.A. Lakers and the L.A. Sparks — to support the building of the Recreation Center.

Like many supporters, Maru said she became interested in helping out with the recreation center campaign when she heard about it in June of this year.

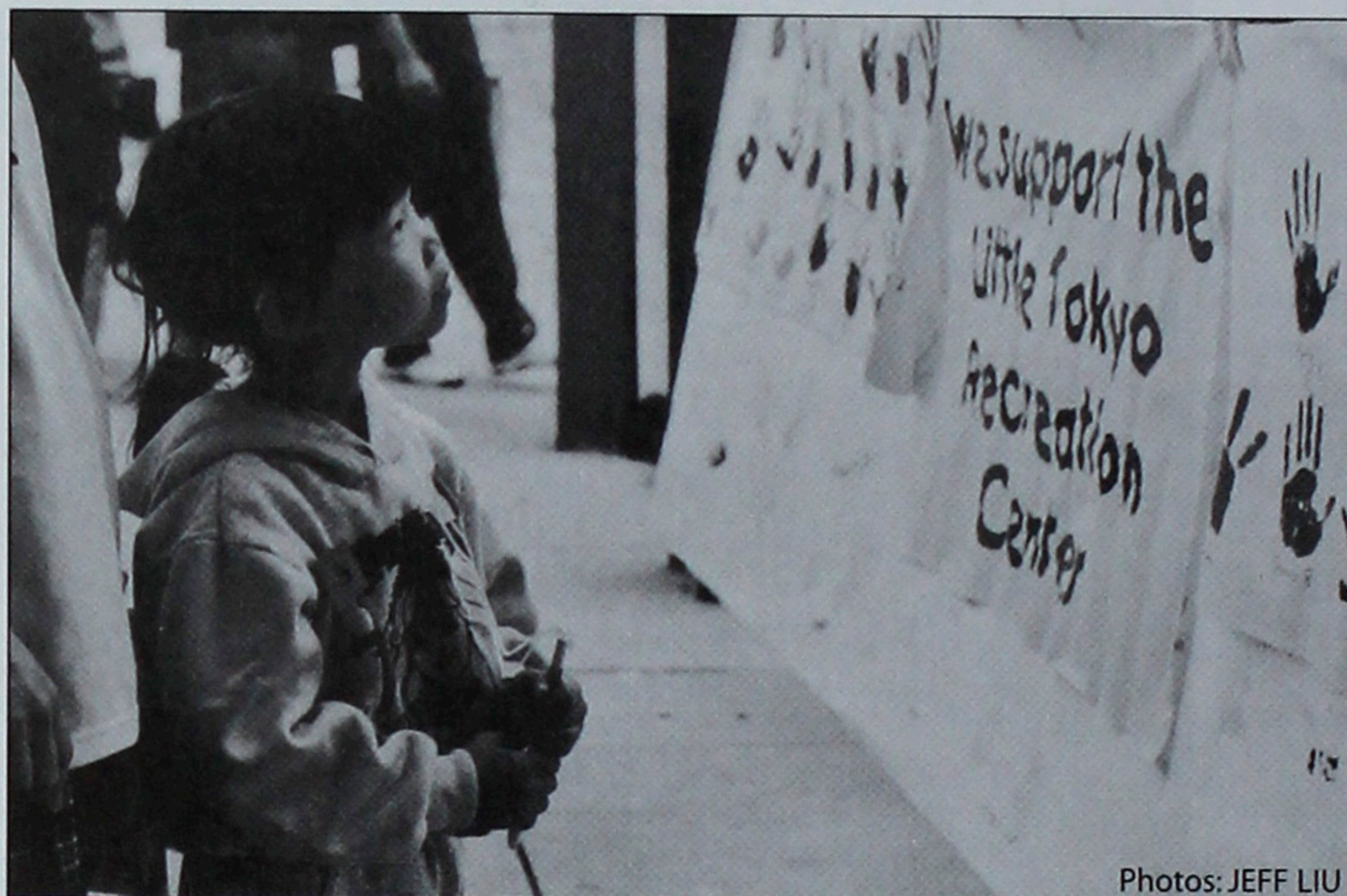
"Both my kids play in two different [basketball] leagues — my daughter in the Tigers League and my son in the Mustangs," she explained. "Both of them have had difficulty about where to hold their practices. Many times when they go to practice to the junior high school, the doors are locked and practice is cancelled," she said.

"But the main thing is I would really like to see a recreation center in Little Tokyo — it would really be good for the area and would help make Little Tokyo the center of JA activities again."

However, like many in the Japanese American community, she also feels disappointed and even betrayed by the fact that the gym continues to be excluded from any serious plans for the site, which currently is filled with parking spaces.

According to Lisa Sugino of LTSCCDC, over 25 possible locations have been seriously considered during the last five years. "Currently there is no other piece of land that is for sale or is available, or where the seller is willing to sell," she said. "And that's the bottom line. We're on top of this every day, and there isn't any other property available."

Except for one, that is. The city-property called the First Street



Photos: JEFF LIU

North — where hundreds gathered on Oct. 28 to demand the construction of a gymnasium.

The property is located right next to the Union Center for the Arts, the Japanese American National Museum, MOCA's Geffen Contemporary, and a series of restaurants and businesses in an historically designated district, as well as the soon-to-be-built Children's Museum.

Members of the community, led by the Japanese American National Museum and MOCA, have moved forward in the last several months to build an Art Park, which would include an amphitheater but not (to the dismay of many) a gym on the 230,000 square foot property.

Maru blames local City Councilmember Rita Walters for the situation.

"The city hasn't been very helpful [in getting the recreation center built]," she said. "Walters has opposed the gym on that site, and she has made it very difficult."

Walters, who will be termed out of office in June, has never minced words regarding her opposition to the gymnasium on the First Street North site.

In a recent public memorandum, Walters said, "[LTSC] and the Little Tokyo Gym Board have once more raised the issue of constructing a gymnasium as part of the Central Avenue Art Park. I support the construction of a gymnasium in Little Tokyo, but have consistently opposed its presence in the Central Avenue Art Park."

She explained that the vision for the property was to provide green space and cultural amenities, and "I did not feel a gymnasium was compatible with this goal."

In addition, "by all accounts, the primary purpose of

continued on next page



the gymnasium would be a facility specifically used by Japanese American basketball leagues. Such activities ... are laudable. But I strongly believe [the gym] should be built with private dollars and financially supported by the users. The City of Los Angeles should not be expected to subsidize these types of private activities with land or grants."

However, according to Maru, "there's absolutely nothing negative about having a recreation center in Little Tokyo — it is something good for Little Tokyo and the community."

But what irritates Maru even more than Walter's opposition is the fact that those leading the planning of the Art Park have up to this point refused to oppose the councilwoman — especially the two largest and most politically connected organizations: JANM and MOCA.

"I think both MOCA and JANM oppose the gym [be included in the Art Park] because Walter's opposes it," she said, adding that "we feel really betrayed by JANM, because the JA community has been behind them and supported them."

## 'I support the construction of a gymnasium in Little Tokyo, but have consistently opposed its presence in the Central Avenue Art Park.'

—Rita Walters, City Councilmember

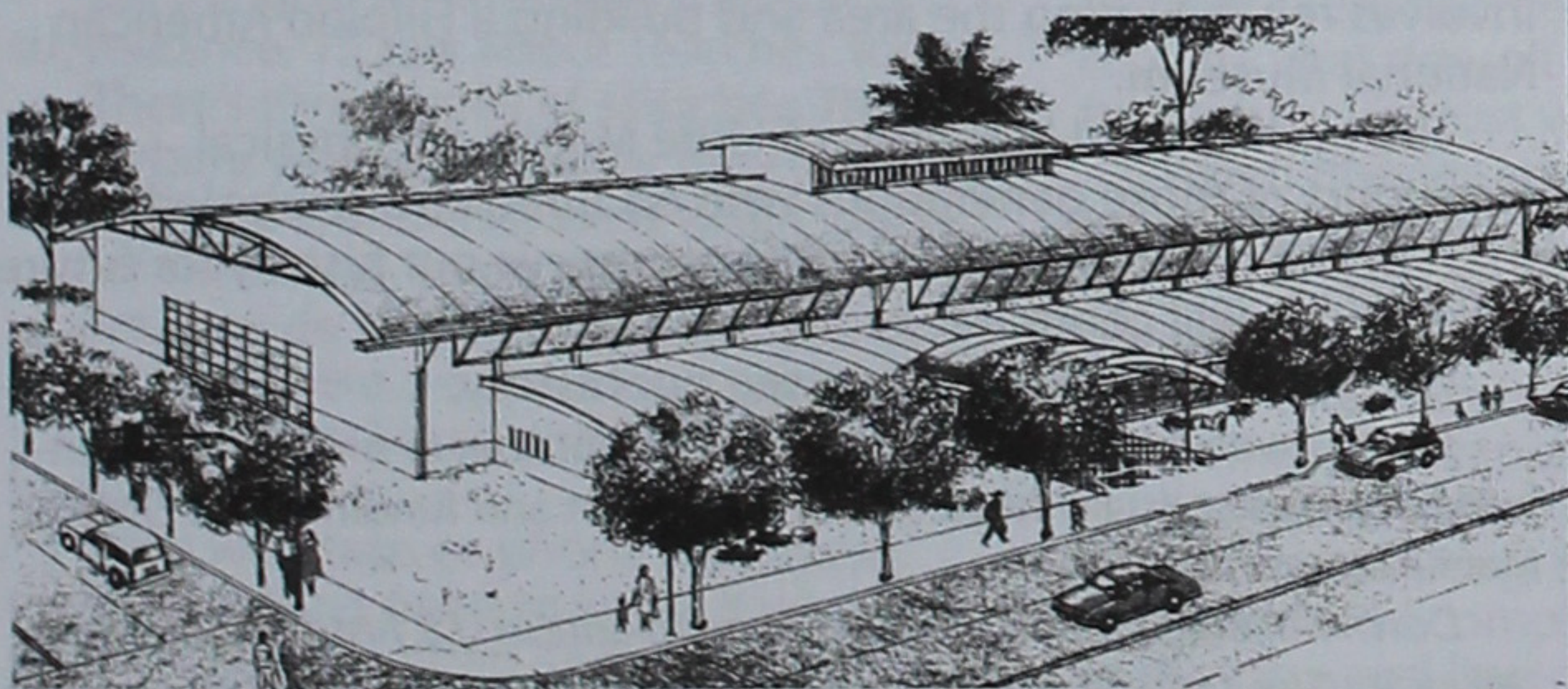
"For me it's very puzzling why they would oppose the gym there. I mean, they have that exhibition up in their museum about the importance of sports in the JA community — really, they should be in the forefront of this movement," she said. "Ultimately I still hope that both JANM and MOCA change their position."

Other supporters who have joined the cause include about one hundred organizations, including *gidra* magazine, NCRR (now Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress), UCLA Nikkei Student Union, JA Historical Society, several churches, individuals and athletic leagues throughout Southern California.

In addition, Recreation Center supporters have raised \$1.3 million of the \$4.7 million cost of the facility — without even having secured a site yet.

Evelyn Yoshimura, a local activist and supporter of the gym, continues to be hopeful that they will build a gym in Little Tokyo. "I think there is a good chance [of the recreation center being included in the First Street North plan] because there is so much sentiment and a strong will on behalf of so many people," she said. "Because of that, I feel very optimistic. They have to build it eventually."

Maru feels the same way. "I truly believe it will be built," she said. "With the kind of support this project has, it's just a matter of where and how quickly." **G**



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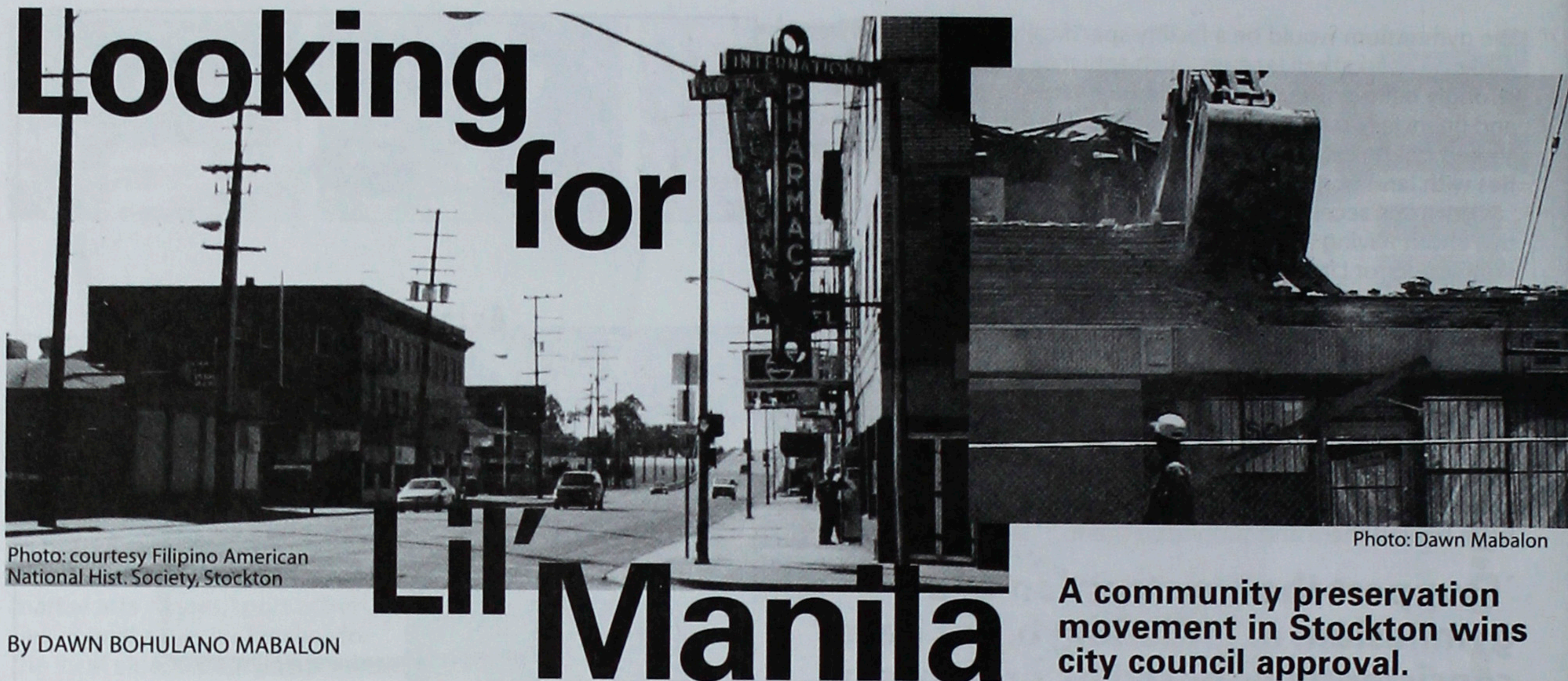


Photo: courtesy Filipino American National Hist. Society, Stockton

Photo: Dawn Mabalon

By DAWN BOHULANO MABALON

# Lil' Manila

**A community preservation movement in Stockton wins city council approval.**

**T**oday, what is left of Stockton's Little Manila is a single block of decaying pre-war buildings. During a recent two months, more than six decades of history were razed in the name of urban renewal.

Few non-Asian Stockton residents know the area's rich history, and few Filipina/os younger than I have any idea that the intersection, long regarded as a city eyesore, was once more than a trash heap of tired buildings, drunks, drug dealers and homelessness.

We often lament that Filipinos lack a physical place on the cultural landscape that we can claim. But years ago, we did have a Little Manila, a place to call our own.

## Little Manila, USA

My grandfather arrived in America in 1929 and worked all over the West Coast, sweating in the Alaskan canneries and stooping in the asparagus fields of the San Joaquin Valley, eventually settling in the sleepy Central Valley port city of Stockton.

He bought the Lafayette Lunch Counter with two neighbors in 1931. Until he sold the hole-in-the-wall restaurant in 1978, Lolo Ambo ran the business in the heart of Stockton's Little Manila, the Filipina/o community at the intersection of Lafayette and El Dorado Streets in downtown.

Approximately 6,000 Filipina/os lived here during its heyday in the decade before World War II. Thousands of new immigrants flocked to Stockton annually. They stayed because the area provided work year-round: pruning in the wintertime, asparagus in the spring, and tomatoes and grapes in the summer and fall. By the 1930's, numerous businesses, organizations, and families made Stockton their home.

"We used to own El Dorado," observes old-timer and second-generation Pinoy Jerry Paular.

My mother, Christine Bohulano Bloch, a second-generation Pinay, says, "I played there as a little girl, and remember seeing all the old-timers dressed up, giving me quarters because I spoke the dialect."

## In With Renewal

By the 1960's, city officials began to cast a wary gaze on Chinatown and Little Manila. City officials, planners and developers were envisioning a bright, new city without the ethnic neighborhoods and accompanying litter: the low-cost housing in single-

room occupancy hotels, ethnic grocery stores, working-class bars, pool halls, restaurants and dance halls and old churches.

Two blocks of Little Manila, north of Lafayette Street, were razed in the late 1960's to make way for the Crosstown Freeway. My cousin Joan May Cordova, a scholar of Filipina/o American studies, speaks about how the bewildered and angry old-timers watched as their homes and gathering spots were torn down. Relatives scrambled into the hotels to grab anything that wasn't bolted down while bulldozers stood ready to reduce the community to rubble.

## Looking Back

It is May of 1999, and I am in front of a padlocked, abandoned Lafayette Lunch Counter, watching the demolition kickoff. The Gateway Project, as the Redevelopment Agency has dubbed it, will replace modest amenities serving the block's residents with a filling station and a fast-food restaurant.

The demolition took more than two months. The buildings had housed generations of tired, brown bodies. Bulldozers pushed in walls efficiently, if not ruthlessly. Backhoes deftly plucked bricks.

Today that block is a barren lot, just dirt and weeds. Several months after the demolition, construction on the new station was stalled. Apparently, the ground was contaminated by fuel tanks buried deep in the earth from the old Supnet Garage.

Last November, the City Council unanimously approved the proposal for the Little Manila Historic Site. The Filipino American National Historical Society Stockton Chapter is currently planning a memorial for the site within the next year. A long-range plan involves rehabilitating the area and building a Filipino American National Museum.

The markers and buildings of Little Manila are physical reminders of those generations who endured and struggled so that we can prosper. The struggle to preserve our history for future generations will continue.

Where others see blight, we see our history.

To get involved, contact [stocktonfanhs@aol.com](mailto:stocktonfanhs@aol.com) or [dmabalon@stanford.edu](mailto:dmabalon@stanford.edu). We especially need letters of support and funding for a Little Manila memorial plaque.

Dawn Bohulano Mabalon is a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. history at Stanford University. She wrote to *Gidra*, "A McDonald's will be placed in the block where my grandfather's restaurant used to stand." **G**





# U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Imagination

## POP SECRET: ABOUT WEN HO LEE by ALBERTA LEE de-CLASSIFIED by gidra

The following is a transcript of surreptitiously recorded conversations with Alberta Lee, daughter of the Los Alamos scientist whose espionage case is a priority with The Bureau.

Alberta: We had kind of known it might happen. We didn't know when. It was this huge time of limbo. We had the nine cars following us everywhere. But we didn't know if my dad was going to be arrested or not. And when he finally got arrested we found out from a reporter. Reporters always know things before you do.

I was living in North Carolina at the time. I had to fly back, right away. My dad called me right before they came. He knew, because there were like eight media vans parked outside my house. You know what he said? 'It's gonna be OK.' He told me, 'I'll be out. It's just going to be a weekend, and I'll be back. You don't have to come home. It's all OK.'

I said, 'Dad, just don't smile for the camera, please.'

It wasn't just a weekend. It ended up being nine months. I went through hell when he got arrested. I lost 15 lbs., and I was throwing up. I don't normally throw up, even when I'm drinking — um, I don't drink that often.

I'm not usually that physical. It was just the idea of my father, one of the best people I've ever known in my life, who came to this country for a better life, for a more stable political system, and had to have this happen to him. I was just so disgusted.

I want my dad to be really angry. I mean I want him to be out there pissed and, like, letting people know what happened to him. You're right as a group Chinese Americans do seem to have a tendency to be docile, submissive and sweet. And even I still fight that. I mean I'm still trying to be modest, and I'm not. I try to be sweet and submissive. Or whatever. Try not to seem angry. I think my dad knows; I think he realizes the impact of this case on the community, as well as how much work all these people did for him. Eventually I think he will speak out.

My dad's 60. And he's used to being just a simple, sweet, happy-go-lucky guy. How can you erase 60 years? ... He can't become angry overnight. I do think he does have bitterness. I do think he's angry about what happened. The first thing he told me was he felt like he

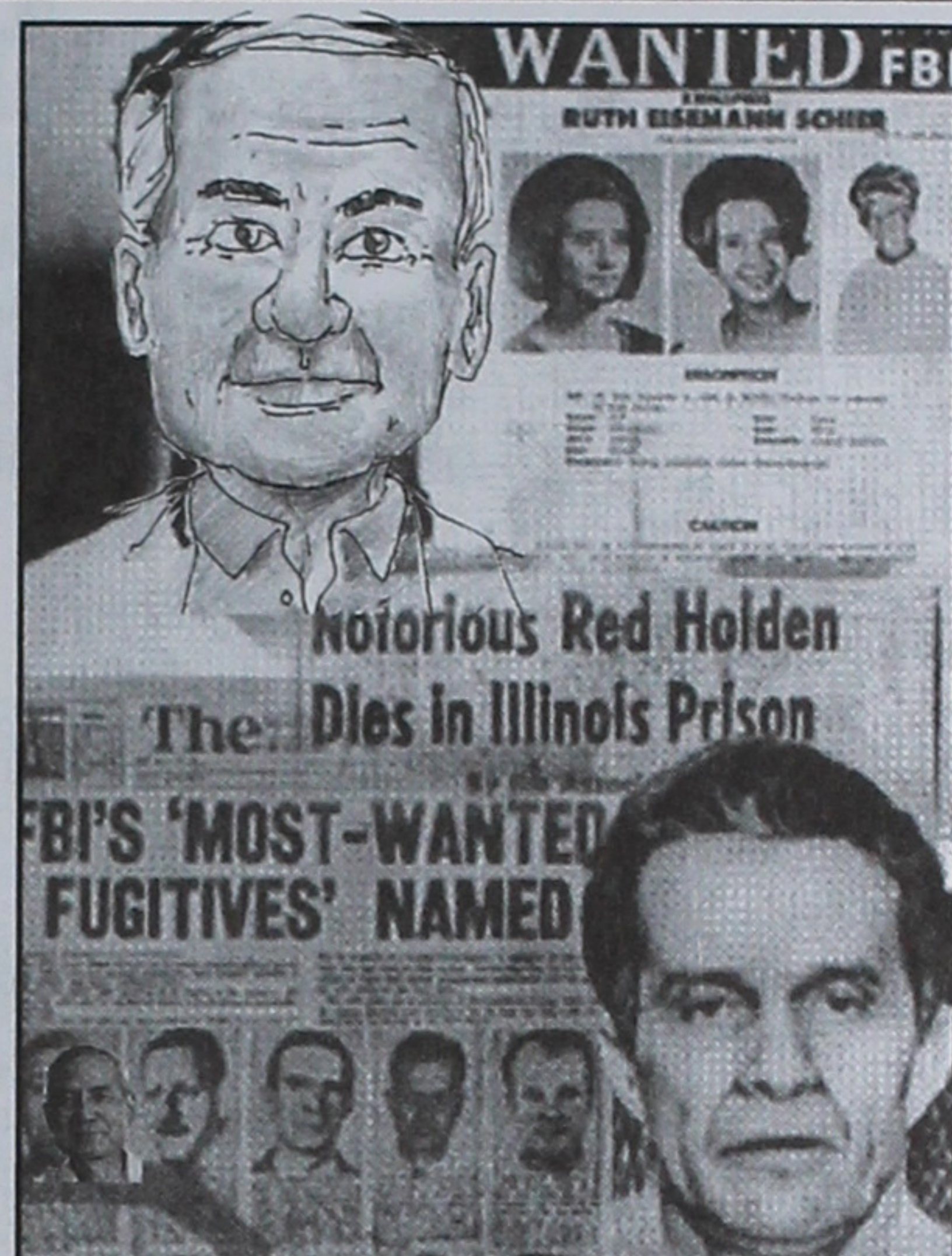
was being treated like a cat or a dog, just being thrown around. They did everything they could to either kill him off or have him confess to something he didn't do. He kept a diary, and it's pretty amazing what happened to him in jail. So if he doesn't rise up, I'll try to do it. You know? I'll try to communicate what happened to him.

It's hard. It's like an awakening. It's like coming out of the closet or something. Because you have to face the fears you have. It's been, for me, the best thing I've done in my life. And it's something I feel I have to do now with my life. Whether I like it or not.

I'm trying to let the community know. We thank everybody who helped. We thank everyone really hard who helped. The debriefings aren't over. That's why my dad isn't speaking out right now, but he will. You're right.

This makes me so troubled, because I have people tell me, people who are Muslim American, or Indian, about what happened to their families, and in some ways of looking, this might start the (filing of cases). I don't know. We must end it. Come on this is the 21st century. It's not supposed to happen any more. Our generation can stop this bullshit from happening again. I mean that's just all it is. We can all help document the immediate, now. There's so much we can do. We are going to have leaders by virtue of this. Just stay active. And tell people what happens to you.

To me "racial profiling" is just a bureaucratic term for racism. You know, America is not supposed to have racism. One of the things I hope to do is just to let people be aware that racism does happen. I never thought something could happen to my family. And it did.



## How Alberta Lee tells if her phone's tapped and if that's legal

Let me give my little quick lesson on surveillance. I'll talk about searches, too.

There's three types of searches. There's one where you have no clue they're going to search you, and they do it when you're out of the house. There's another type where they do let you know, and you don't have to be there. And there's a type where they do let you know, and you do have to be there.

With wire taps or phone taps, same thing. You don't need to know if your phone's being tapped. They will let you know sometimes. I think there is a California law that tells you on the phone

bill that there's someone watching your records. That doesn't mean you're being tapped; they're just watching your records.

When phones are tapped, you can't just tap one phone, you have to tap a bank of phones. So let's say they wanted to tap [a] phone now ... that means all the phones in the first three digits of that phone number are going to be tapped, too.

You're not supposed to be able to physically hear anything. But everyone in my neighborhood complained about a variety of things: weird line-dropping, not just like on a cordless or cell phone, but your line drops out and it comes back in really

quickly. Not a click, like a hang-up, but just dead air. Another thing you would hear is on the call-waiting beep, you hear the regular beep, then you hear this second-type which came right after it. Then there was a third one. The third beep.

Have you ever called overseas and been delayed on the phone? You get the same delay only it's not consistent. So you have a delay, then you don't. Then you have it in the middle or at the end.

It shouldn't be legal to tap someone. In fact they have taps in our houses or our cars or our phones. That's also something I've got to talk to my dad about. **G**



# unsung dead

## remembering hate crime victims

On duty as a letter carrier in the summer of 1999, Joseph Iletto was killed by an Aryan Nation member. A movement has since risen to dedicate to him a commemorative stamp. Since that year, hate crimes have risen by 12%. These postage-ready portraits and the accompanying timeline are to remind readers of some of those who have died and why.

Art by MICHELLE BANTA  
Text by ANTHONY PINGA



In 1996 **Thienh Minh Ly**, a Georgetown University student, was brutally murdered on the tennis courts of the Tustin high school he had graduated from. He was stabbed over a dozen times by Gunner Lindberg and Domenic Christopher, two alleged white supremacists.

### April 1999

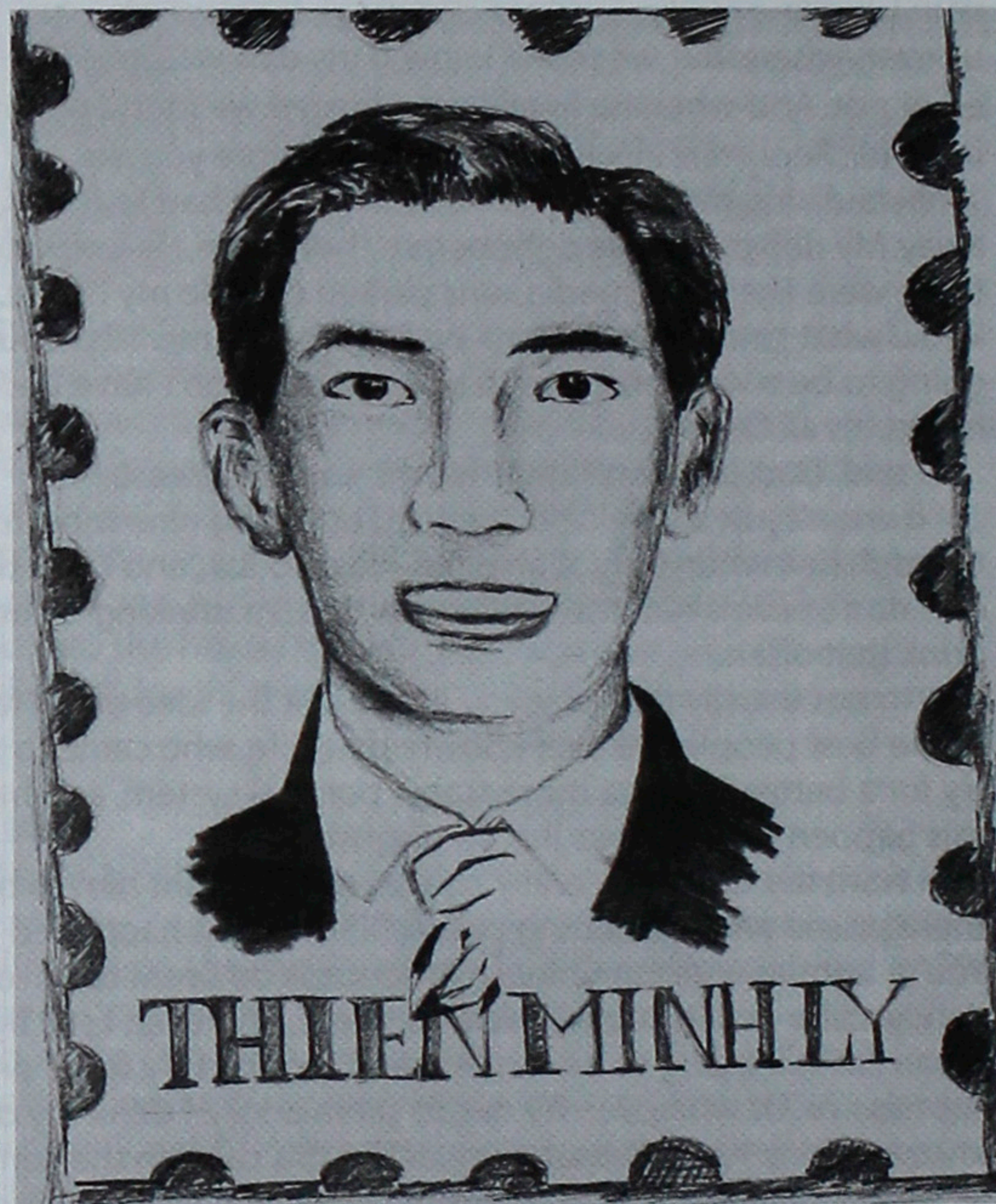
After going to several stores and questioning employees about their ethnic background, Douglas G. Vitaioli entered **Naoki Kamijima's** store and shot him dead. Kamijima left a wife and two teenage children.

### July 1999

During a shooting rampage in Indiana, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, member of the Church of the Creator (a white supremacist group), killed **Won Joon Yoon** just outside his church, while his congregation, mostly Korean, were leaving the service. Among Smith's other victims was also **Ricky Birdsong**, an African American man.

### August 1999

**Joseph Iletto** was shot and killed while on duty as a letter carrier by a self-proclaimed member of the Aryan Nation. The suspect allegedly said Iletto was

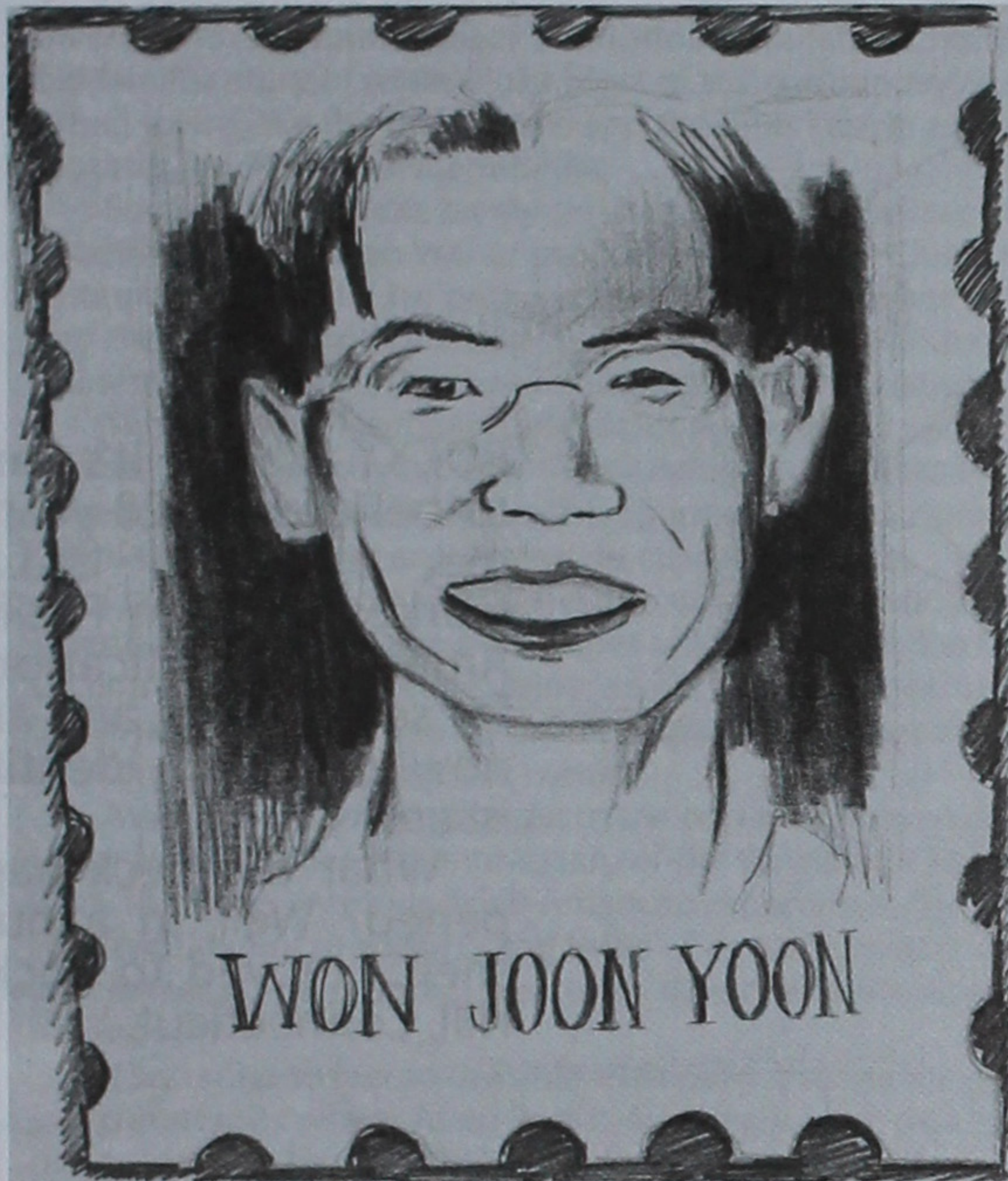


targeted because he was a non-white in a federal uniform and therefore a "good target of opportunity." Earlier in the day, the perpetrator had shot and wounded five people, including three children at the North Valley Jewish Community Center.

### April 2000

A Chinese man and a Vietnamese man, along with a Jewish woman, an Indian man, and an African American man, were killed when Richard Baumhammers went on a shooting spree in the Pittsburgh suburbs. Baumhammers, a white immigration





attorney, was apparently involved in forming an anti-immigrant political party. Authorities initially found Baumhammers incompetent to stand trial, but reversed the decision several months later and charged him with murder and hate crimes.

#### May 2000

**Hubert Chow**, a Burmese man living in San Francisco, was taunted by a group of more than four men before being shot to death while heading home from a midnight fishing outing, according to a friend who was with him that night. Bullets followed beer bottles, as the group assaulted the friend and shot Chow, who died at the scene.



#### September 2000

A Korean man was stoned and later died from his injuries in an incident for which reports show no mention of a motive, except speculation that the crime may have been part of a gang initiation.

In the same month, the beating and murder of Chinese restaurant owner and deliveryman **Jin-Sheng Liu** was explained by investigators as a botched robbery attempt by a group of misguided teens out to get a free meal.

#### October 2000

Hate Crimes legislation is omitted from Department of Defense bill by Republican leadership in Congress.

#### some numbers

- Hate crimes in 1999 totalled 859. Of these, 458 were motivated by race.
- Hate crimes rose by 11.7% increase since last year (incidents last year totaled: 769)
- Despite the overall crime drop and a healthy economy, 1999's hate crimes total is the second highest ever reported.
- Racially motivated hate crimes are up by 22 cases, a 5% increase from a year earlier.

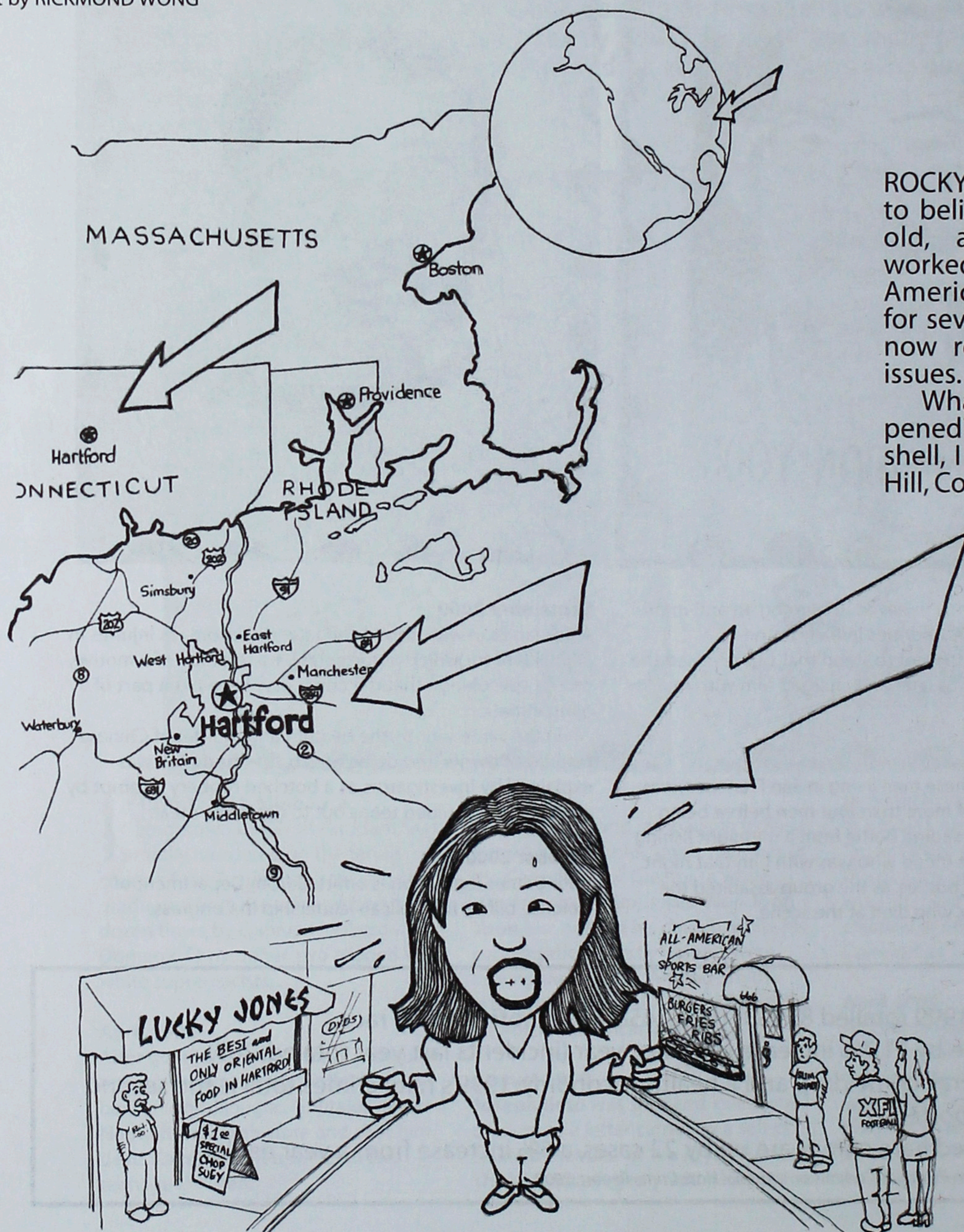
Source: Los Angeles Human Relations Commission's Annual Hate Crime Report, 2000



# DisConnecticut

By JULIE HA

Art by RICKMOND WONG



ROCKY HILL — It's hard to believe I'm 28-years-old, attended UCLA, worked at Asian Pacific American publications for seven years, and am now revisiting identity issues.

What the heck happened? Well, in a nutshell, I moved to Rocky Hill, Connecticut.



**M**y husband and I moved here a year ago from Los Angeles, for my job at a newspaper called the *Hartford Courant*. The state's capital, Hartford, is actually fairly diverse, with substantial black and Latino populations. It's that old familiar story of white flight. Most of the surrounding suburban towns, like the one I live in and the ones I cover as a reporter, are 90-plus percent white.

Forget Asians. We're barely on the radar screen, except for veterans of the Korean War or people who frequent Chinese restaurants. I feel like I'm back in grade school in the late '70s and the '80s, a period of time when I was only allowed to be Chinese or Japanese. There were no third or fourth options.

The transition has been difficult for my husband and myself. There's frustration over the mundane. It's hard to find a decent Asian restaurant, where the operators haven't dummed down their cuisine to accommodate culinary gringos.

I buy Korean products from a tiny store called Young's Oriental Grocery. My own newspaper ran an article in the food section that called Korean cuisine "exotic." It must be exotic because two of the three Korean restaurants in the greater Hartford area go by Japanese names.

Asian Americans tend to get in the paper only around Lunar New Year or a big anniversary of the Vietnam or Korean wars. There are only four Asian American reporters at the *Hartford Courant* (0 editors), and three of us came as part of an affirmative action program created to diversify mainstream newsrooms.

It's strange to feel so invisible, especially after growing up in a community where Asian Pacific Americans were making great strides to be seen and heard in politics, the media and the arts. Because my husband and I are still on certain mailing lists from back home, we get e-mails on all these APA events: the release of a new film on breast cancer among APA women or a conference on the Wen Ho Lee controversy. All take place in L.A., of course, and we think, "If only we were there!"

APAs are still "other" here. My husband and I are a part of the other community. And for the first time in many years, I truly feel like a minority. It's an isolating feeling.

It can also be a deeply painful one, when someone throws that in your face. My husband couldn't even sleep one night, after a group of young White guys mumbled a "ching-chong" noise as we passed them in a parking lot complex in Hartford. My husband's a pacifist, a doctor who saves lives for a living, but what rage he felt that night.

Those kinds of offensive comments, the lack of Asians we see making a positive raucous in the name of civil rights, and the numerous days of feeling like we have no Asian Pacific American community to be a part of here, all have contributed to a cumulative pain.

So we've sought relief (read: escape) in different ways. He's become obsessed with martial arts films with strong Asian male leads and a martial arts-based video game called Tekken, where he gets to kick ass with his Korean, tae-kwon-do-fighting character. He's rented just about every Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan film available at our local Blockbuster.

I, on the other hand, slipped into a passive malaise. I go to work, collect my paycheck, contribute to my 401-K, spend weekends grocery shopping and watching the Food Network.

Interaction with the Asian community? Well, there's the Iron Chef.

I was thinking the other day how I miss family and friends back home. Is it also possible to miss a community?

You know, when you're bicultural, you go through this evolution. By your late teens, you're no longer ashamed of being Asian, you take Asian American studies classes in college, you start seeking connection to your ethnic community and establish that connection. You become part of a community, which you feel an obligation to represent and help, to a degree, because you share a common struggle against discrimination and invisibility.

But during my time here, I've felt increasingly detached from this sense of community and purpose. It's jarring because I had long tied my life's mission to serving this APA community in some way, shape or form. My pursuit of journalism was primarily fueled by this desire to make a difference, slay stereotypes with my pen and erase powerful but false media images, like that of the racist Korean grocer who would kill a black teenager "over a \$1.79 bottle of orange juice."

But it's harder to be "down for the cause" when you don't see expressions of any cause around you. Upon moving here, I couldn't even bring myself to write 1,000 words for my column for *gidra*, an Asian American publication that I supposedly cared so much about. And how troubled I've been just trying to find my voice again to write this column now for a primarily Asian American audience, from which I feel strangely disconnected.

But, slowly, I'm trying to fight myself out of this disconnectedness, this malaise, this uneasy contentedness that comes with my anonymous suburban life and growing bank account.

I guess, I'm getting a taste of what some Asian Pacific Americans growing up in a place like Ohio must feel and, like many of them, am seeking a connection to my APA community via whatever forum is available, i.e., the Internet.

Another thing that I'm doing which has resurrected me from the suburban dead is start teaching a writing/journalism class for some Korean American youth in Hartford.

After the first class of imparting things like journalistic "news values" and information-gathering techniques, I realized that that's only a small part of what I want these kids to learn. The big part has to do with planting in them just the idea of using writing as a tool to make a difference in their world and especially to use the medium to humanize those people who too often get mis- or underrepresented.

Just the other day in class, it was a shock for the kids to read a newspaper article where many of the main subjects in the story were Koreans, one being a shopkeeper gunned down in L.A. and the other a police officer.

I'm excited to show them publications like *KoreAm Journal* and *Gidra*.

One teen asked me, "Do people actually subscribe to these magazines?"

I'm grateful for the experience so far. Being put in the position of teaching these minority children, I'm forced to remember why I became a journalist in the first place and forced also to confront my failure to stay true to the ideals that thrust me into this field and, ironically enough, into the Connecticut suburbs. **G**



# Packets of Spice

By RODNEY "12am" FERRAO

So, once in a while she would leave something in a paper bag at the bus stop. She had not learned to cook, even though she wished desperately to capture the childhood memory of the sting of chilies in the coconut curries only her mother could make.

Too caught up in the complications of the Ricardian theory in Econ 101 and the confusion of metering the rhyme of Coleridge's "Xanadu," cooking for herself was a luxury she could ill afford. She felt it was a task best left to those who knew how to do it well. Like the cooks at Didi's on the corner of West and 47th. Even on those rare occasions when she did cook, she felt she was depriving Didi's of its business.

And the food she cooked could never truly be called Indian. Like the pasta last week. She threw some curry powder into the pasta sauce that she poured out of a bottle that was not made in Italy.

SPICE, continued on page 28



Photo: VY NGUYEN



Everyone said that Dong-yip would be a great patriot some day. It was the one thing he took pride in. He wasn't intelligent, athletic or good-looking, but Korea was foremost in his heart. And that was all that was needed to be popular during those days.

One Friday evening, Dong-yip's father took him to a clandestine meeting of Korean nationalists. The twelve men, mostly small proprietors by profession, sat around a small, unstable wooden table. They ate a meager meal of rice, seaweed and kimchee before getting down to business. Nobody talked while they ate; their faces were buried in their food. Dong-yip picked at his food while watching the intense faces of all the men. They all look so ordinary, he thought. It was hard for Dong-yip to imagine that these were the great Korean patriots of his time. When they finished eating, the table was cleared and the host served hot tea, which the men drank noisily from small, poorly made ceramic tea cups.

They talked that night about the approaching American navy and the future collapse of the Japanese empire. A barrel-chested, short-legged ship builder, who had once sent a mail-bomb to the Japanese military governor, stood dramatically and demanded the circle of nationalist Koreans promote rioting throughout the country to encourage the Japanese to withdraw. All the men nodded their heads in contemplation. The oldest member of the circle, a tall, lanky old man with a full, flowing white beard, cautioned his hotheaded comrade.

"We must remember that dying empires are the cruelest," he said. "Rioting now will cause many deaths among our fellow countrymen."

All the members of the group, except for the ship builder, agreed. The ship builder blushed with indignation and slumped in his chair. No one, Dong-yip learned, questioned the old man with the flowing white beard; he had seen too much and done so much for the cause.

The group vowed to continue sending the provisional government secret reports on what was happening in their homeland. After an hour of discussion, the circle agreed to meet again

in a month's time. They did not say where or when they would meet; they left that to the old bookkeeper who would write a time and destination in code in one of his old books that he passed around to all members of the circle. That was the way they operated.

One could never be too careful these days. Dong-yip loved the secrecy for he thought that he had access to the most important men in the world.

Dong-yip and his father got up to leave. As they were putting on their thick blue coats, the old man with the flowing white bearded patted Dong-yip on the head and predicted that Dong-yip would be a great Korean leader someday. Dong-yip smiled widely showing his chipped tooth. Dong-yip's father accepted the compliment, neither grinning nor saying a word; he simply looked at the old man and nodded his head as if he was saying that compliments are nice but there was so much work yet to do.

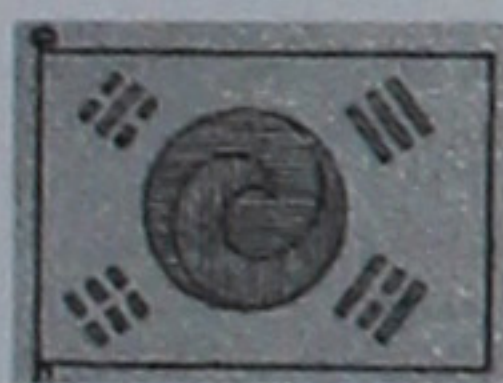
Dong-yip and his father left the meeting. They walked through the crisp, clear night beneath the full moon hanging heavily and seductively in the sky. Dong-yip's father hummed a song that Dong-yip did not know, while Dong-yip recited the debate that he had heard that evening in his head. He wanted to argue just like the adults. But he knew that he could not repeat any of the arguments in public. The Japanese and their collaborators were like flies in the summer: they were everywhere. But Dong-yip was dying to impress his schoolmates. No nine-year old ever went to a meeting of the Patriot's Circle. Dreaming of standing on a soapbox and lecturing his schoolmates on the intricacies of Korean nationalism, Dong-yip reprimanded himself in his mind. He must not do anything to betray the circle.

When they reached the gate to the house, Ddang-ddang, the ugly stray mutt his father had found two years ago in Incheon, barked loudly. Dong-yip's mother opened the door and welcomed them with a wide smile. She wore an apron and her hair was done up in a bun. Dong-yip thought she looked beautiful.

"You're just in time for tea," she said.

"I've had enough tea for the evening," Dong-yip's father

**PATRIOT, continued on page 29**



# **THE PATRIOT**

A short story by JIMMY CHO



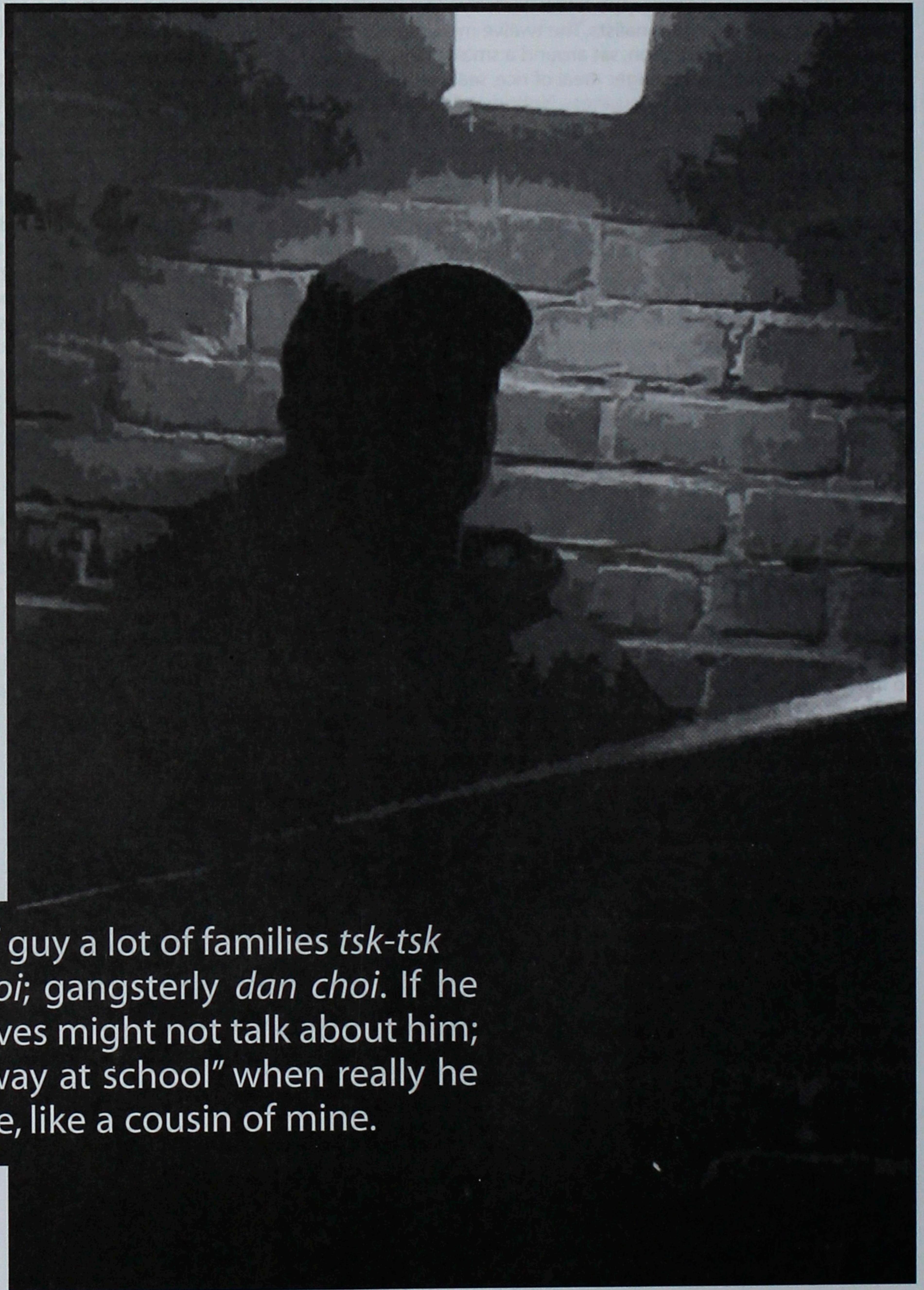


# Living The Fast Life

## đời sống nhanh

By TRAM QUANG NGUYEN

Photos: by PAUL DANG



Randy's the kind of guy a lot of families *tsk-tsk* at. Dust of life *bui doi*; gangsterly *dan choi*. If he were family, my relatives might not talk about him; they'd say he was "away at school" when really he was in jail doing time, like a cousin of mine.



**H**e arrived as a refugee baby in America, transported from Vietnam with a family splintered by war. His mother and older brother escaped with him by boat, while she was pregnant with another brother. Two sisters stayed behind in Saigon. His father was put into Communist re-education prison for 12 years. At age 16, when Randy finally met his father, it was the teenager who was locked up this time.

This was the same boy who joined his church youth group and stayed until he passed the age limit because he was so excited to be going to movies and picnics for the first time. Now at 23, the same Randy has also robbed so many Asian families in their homes at gunpoint and fought so many gang brawls he can't remember how many times he's done either.

I first met Randy downtown about two years ago, when he was working behind the counter of the Union Center Café. We didn't talk much, but he made a good Thai iced tea. I noticed the beginnings of some wild tattoos peeking out the back of his T-shirt. I thought he was an ex-troublemaker trying to turn his life around. But, as I learned, not all of Randy's troublemaking

days were in the past.

A few months passed, and he left under murky circumstances. Apparently he wasn't cutting it, even with the café's supportive staff. I heard snippets of news about how he was hanging out with his gang, going to community college, trying to get a job. Then I lost track of him.

It wasn't until elections loomed in California for the "juvenile justice" initiative Prop. 21 that we caught up. By then, Randy was going on his second year out of prison and had a new job selling jewelry for a local wholesaler.

Randy already had two strikes on his record from a 1994 arrest for a home invasion armed robbery. He did five years in Juvenile Hall, the California Youth Authority's maximum security Youth Training School (known by inmates as "gladiator school"), and also at Chino and Soledad state prisons. A gangster from the age of 14, Randy talked about mistakes he'd made, and what it was like to be on the receiving end of a crackdown on juvenile crime. At the time he was cautiously optimistic about breaking from the cycle of crime and incarceration.

That was before elections.

By March, when Prop. 21 underwent the ballot and passed, Randy was already back in jail.

The following conversation took place just before Randy's second arrest.

#### **So what about jail?**

**R:** It's about survival. It's about how a kid that's 16 years old is gonna survive put in a situation where, say this guy took something from you. You don't wanna kill this guy. You don't wanna stab him. You don't wanna fight. But everyone's watching you, watching what you're gonna do to this guy. I paid this white guy to do a dragon on my back. He only did half of it. And he kept delaying it, delaying it. One day, I said, man's what's up, and he gave me attitude. Everyone knew he did this dragon on me and never finished it. I said, aw man, this guy's testing me. And he was a lifer. I talked to him one last time, and I told him, you're putting me in a situation where I don't wanna be. I can't walk in this yard with everyone thinking I'm a punk. I might be small, whatever you think, but I'm just letting you know that I'm gonna do you up if you don't give me my money back. He gave me attitude, so I said, okay, this guy's gonna make me do him.

So I'm trying to figure out how can I do this guy without getting caught. We have a gun tower, if you get caught in a fight, the guard will shoot you. So I said, I don't care, I have to do this. For a week I was watching him. He was looking at me, and he knew right away whether I was serious. I called his bluff. He came up, and he gave me half my money back.

#### **How are you adjusting to life on the outside?**

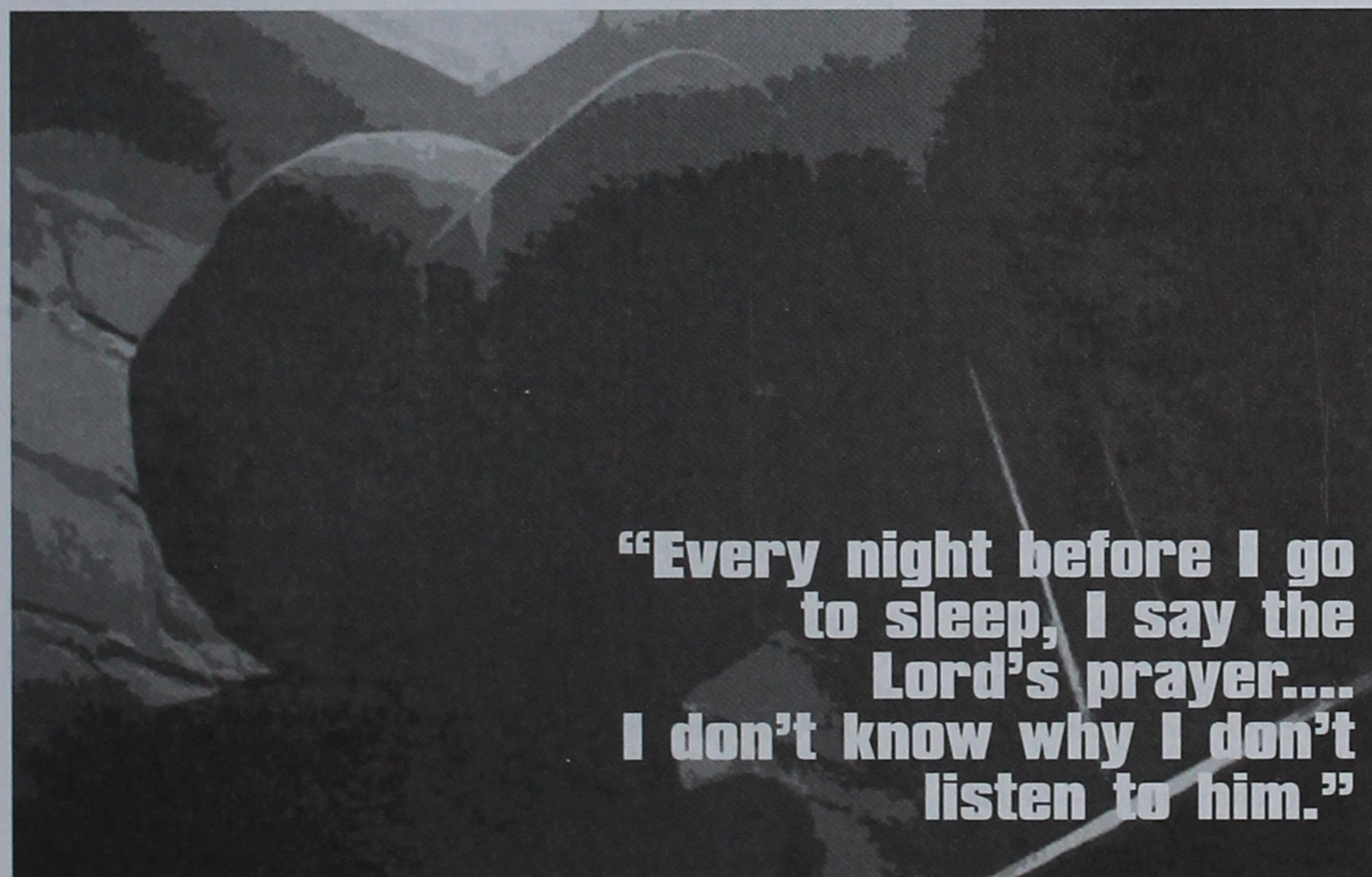
**R:** It's a constant test. I've been out for almost a year and a half. I start doing things that I haven't done since I was 16. A lot of things I don't know how to do. I'm trying to catch up with everybody.

But this generation, they have it tough. They do one crime, gone. Carjacking: 25 to life. Fuck. If I did a carjacking in 1990, I'd get probation. Fourteen, 15, 16, you go with the flow. Whatever is cool to do, you're gonna do. I seen a lot of guys, one mistake, wrong place at the wrong time, someone got killed and they get 25 to life. My friend, just last week, he got sentenced to 33 years. It broke my heart.

#### **What would have reached you when you were 16?**

**R:** I was at the age where nothing could reach me. Nothing in the whole world. My mom couldn't reach me. I cared about my friends and I cared who were my enemies. But this generation, they can be reached. It's a phase. It's cool to be a gangster. They're gonna outgrow it. Maybe for one or two it's not a phase. They're really down. You can't reach those kids no more. You have to catch them before they turn that way. If I had something to do when I was a freshman, if I had the right parents, if I just had something to do when I was in that transition, when I was a lost puppy looking for someone to lead the way. I would have followed whoever came my way.

**RANDY, continued on page 41**



**"Every night before I go to sleep, I say the Lord's prayer.... I don't know why I don't listen to him."**

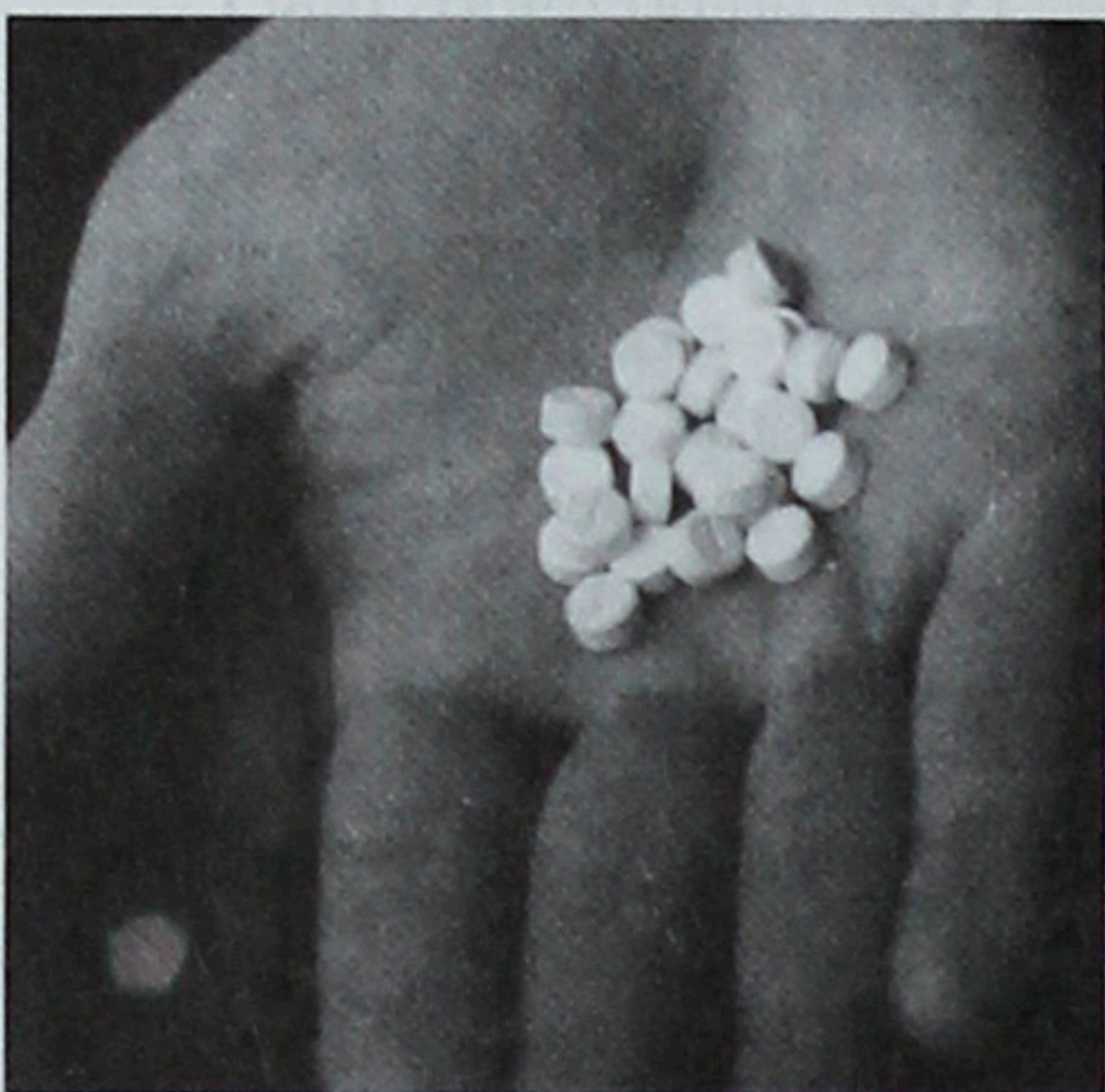


I can still remember the first time I dropped Ecstasy. It was six years ago, when I was still in college. My high school homey got hooked up with a couple of capsules and we were on our way to a party at San Francisco's Gift Center.

In an alley a few blocks from the venue, we drank 40 ozs. of malt liquor while talking shit and complaining about "bitches." But before we went in, my friend Thomas and I split a capsule. And we were good to go.

While in line, I started to feel anxious. Something was definitely different, in the way that one finds themselves getting excited just being in line. I was giddy, full of expectation that this would be a phat party.

Of course, something had to go wrong. As soon as we got in, Thomas began to complain that he couldn't feel anything and wanted to take another half. I was reluctant to split another with him, as I was already in my own little Wonderland. But I thought, better to go ahead than to hear him bitching and complaining.



Besides, I had already gone this far...

In less than half an hour, I was floored. Unfortunately, I didn't realize just how sensitive the Ecstasy would make me. My ability to sense wackness was magnified. I wasn't bugging, but I definitely wasn't feeling the music nor the people. And so, I spent the rest of the night smoking a pack of menthol cigarettes outside, pondering on clean air issues and looking up at the sky. By myself.

Well, let me just say that my lungs felt like shit the next day. The one thing I learned (and they should put this in an international drug abuse manual)—if you're taking any recreational/psychedelic drug for the first time, don't do it with someone who doesn't know what the hell they're doing.

Looking back, I was a lot more careless then. If you asked me to drop E a few years before, I would have passed. Probably because of the few honeycomb hideout "rave" parties I went to in 1991, my first year in college. They were fun and psychedelic experiences, but I was too freaked out watching kids sucking Nos (Nitrous Oxide) out of industrial-sized aerosol cans labeled "Chalkboard Cleaner" to take something I knew nothing about; where it came from; or how it was made. It's synthetic, I reasoned. Who knows what that shit will do to you?

A few years later, after drinking enough alcohol to drown a cow and chronically smoking bowls from a bong made out of aluminum foil, a stripped-out Bic pen and liter bottle of soda, I somehow felt that I was ready to step to the next shit.

Sure, I didn't have the best first experience, but I'm not one to let a disappointing trip stop me—which isn't necessarily a good thing.

The second time I dropped, someone was there to make sure I had an enjoyable and fun trip. It made all the more difference—because we were on the same level and Ecstasy and music brought us there.

Ecstasy's active agent, MDMA, has that kind of power—to pull people together into similar states of emotional consciousness. It's

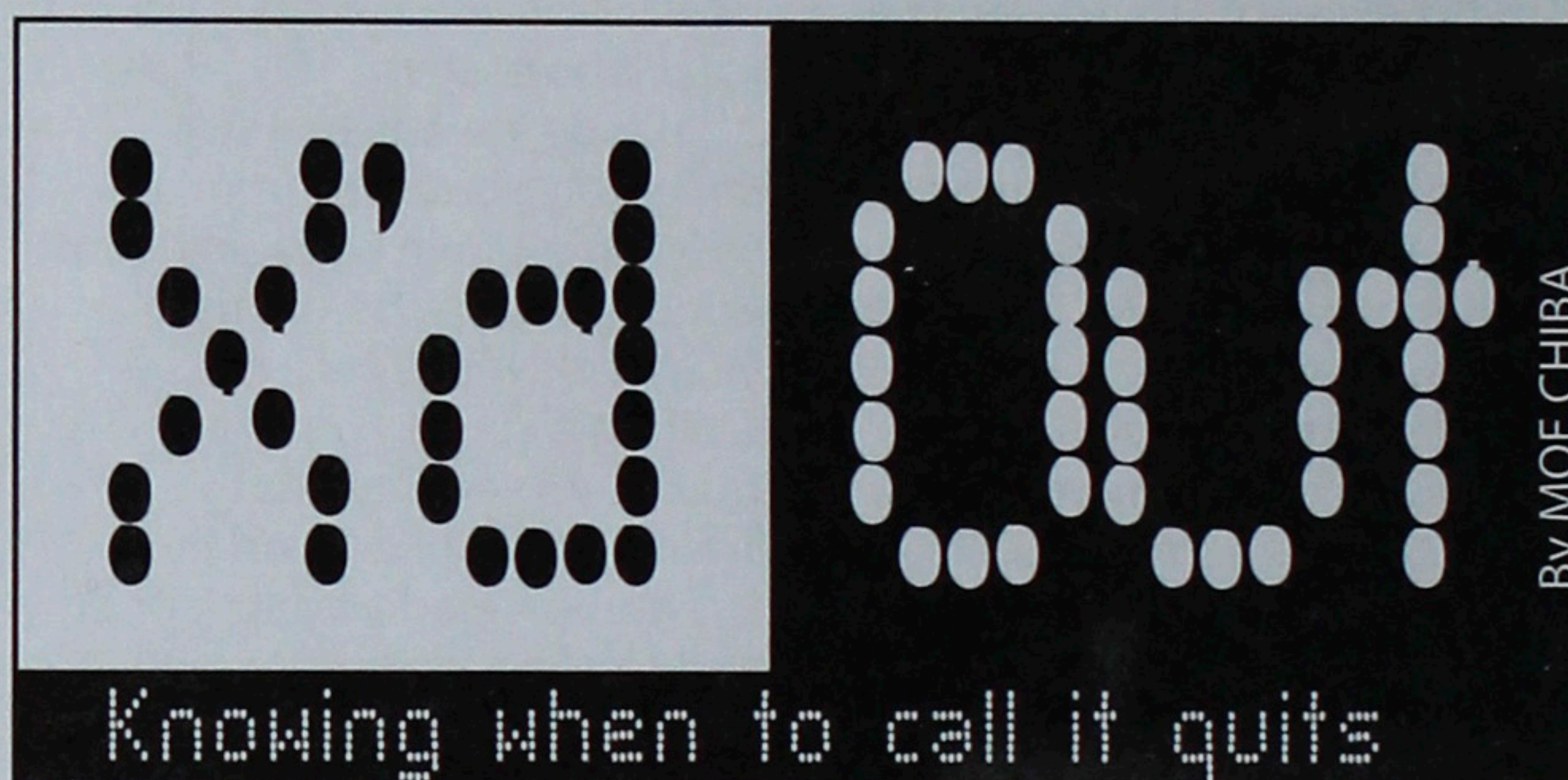
like that warm, fuzzy feeling, only ten-fold. Relationships with friends achieve new heights and suddenly you find yourself making friends with complete strangers. Good music makes this more magical.

What Ecstasy does—and why I think it became so popular—is that it allows people to drop their guard while turbo-charging their pleasure centers, upping their sociability and connecting them with others through a shared experience. Which is why I also think that this drug, in a demented way, is almost meant for Asians.

It didn't take any 1-900-PSYCHIC calls to predict the impact Ecstasy would have in communities here in California.

About three years ago, I knew the end would soon be near. I was at an undisclosed bar in downtown San Francisco, a party night sponsored by a local Asian sorority. Here I am, trying to get my fade on when, without warning, this girl two feet away asks her friend: "Do you feel it yet? DO YOU FEEL IT?"

All the alarms went off in my head. I did a double-take. Asian



sorority girls dropping Ecstasy while listening to Biggie Smalls? Notorious, sing it: *Baby-baybeh*.

Maybe it was her squeaky voice, but hearing drugspeak at this far-from-sororitous occasion made me roll my eyes. Shit, I thought, if sorority girls jumped on E like they jumped on Polo Sport, it's overs. Everybody would be doing it. Everybody.

That was 1997. By some accounts, it took about a year-and-a-half and a Jocelyn Enriquez billboard chart-topper for the feel-good drug to reach a significant population in the Asian American community. Another six months after that, youth from across the country embraced Ecstasy as a drug of choice and sought Romper Room-style fun in the form of raves.

The underground party scene became flooded by revelers in search of their dose of E. And when this wave hit, it changed the entire party landscape.

The popularity of these all-night venues grew and ultimately so did the entire party scene. Seeing their clientele diminish in favor of these all-night parties, Asian party promoters began jumping on the bandwagon. Suddenly, all these DJs in the Asian club circuit began spinning house and trance in addition to Hip-Hop. Even Import Show-Off, hosts of premier California's motoring exhibitionist extravaganza, held a few show and glow parties. In L.A.'s Koreatown, the capital of under-age freakdom, club owners touted "Rave Nights" and, more recently, after-hour parties.

As "raving" became more commercial, the parties lost their specialness. The Orange Show in San Bernardino, Pomona Glass House, San Jose Fairgrounds and Home Base in Oakland (dubbed as the "Oakland Rave Center") became expensive, institutional, WWF-scale affairs and synonymous with Xtreme drug sports.

At Audiotistic, the last rave party I could bear to go to, I met Misa, a 25-year-old Japanese American girl who had taken Ecstasy. Half an hour after she dropped, Misa threw up because the MDMA was too strong for her. About an hour after that, she was nearly a



zombie.

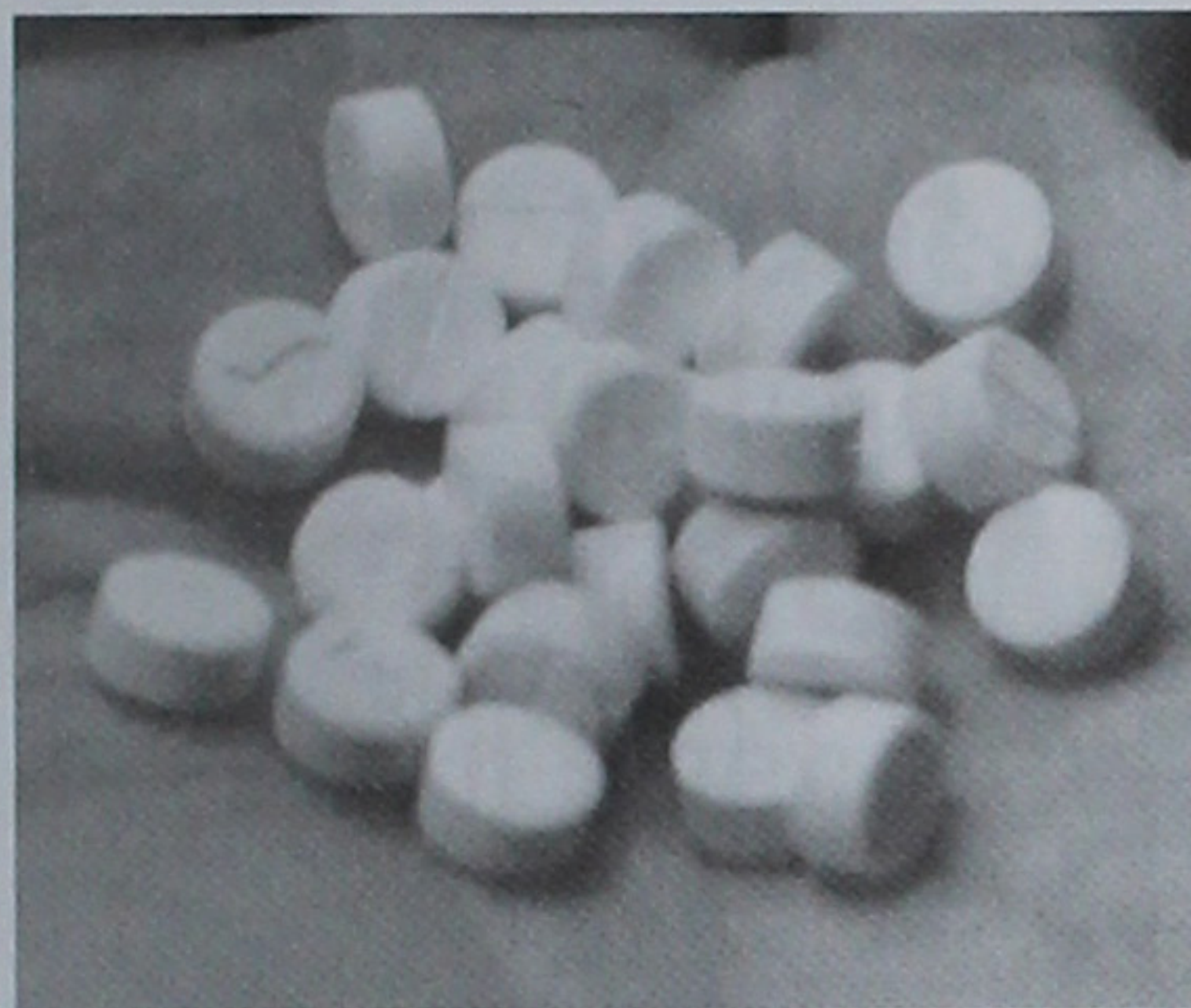
I asked her how she was. She said, "I feel so...", her sentence hanging in mid-air while she continued to sit there, hair in two small ponytails, make-up slightly smudged, eyes crossed.

"Hey, snap out of it," I said. Misa swayed from side-to-side for a bit then leaned her thin, bent frame into me.

"I feel so ... happy," she finally finished.

A few hours later, she landed back on Earth. A little embarrassed, she said that this reaction is common with her. Apparently, she was a "veteran" with four previous drops and subsequent barfs. I suggested that she try taking half a dose next time, because it's an entirely different trip when you're high and remain a fully functional being.

So I stopped going to rave parties, because I was tired of seeing the rows of Asians against the walls or huddled in the middle of the dance floor, sucking on pacifiers, clutching their precious glow sticks, just vegetating.



Snap by PAUL CHAN / NINO

I began going to clubs again, to try and escape. But it was only a matter of time before such spots as Giant, Ten-15, Space 550 and Twilo would be infiltrated by mobs of Asian youth, looking for a place to get fucked-up high.

Partying became a bad dream. Here I am, trying to get away from reality, from the stresses in my life, and I find that I can't escape. Everywhere I go, I see a group of people who look like me, getting E-tarded.

Even more E-tarded is what I've been hearing more of recently: stories of middle school and high school youth who drop before class, at home, or whenever they're bored.

It's funny. Because the thing that's known for bringing so much joy and pleasure actually brings with it a depressing quality. More and more, I began to wonder, "Shit, how did we get to be this way?"

My friend Bill and I talked about this for hours.

"I just wanted to try it," he recalled. "I like the feeling, everybody's hella cool to you. And you feel like you're the fuckin' king."

"The environment totally accentuates the feeling. The music goes straight to your heart; your spine is tingly. Girls talk to you. Colors trip you out; lasers make colors in your eyes. Then you dance like a muthafucker. Then you think you're a good dancer no matter if you are or not. And people give you big, fucking sweaty hugs."

I laughed, then grimaced at the thought. After complaining about everything from crappy pills to loco drug dealers, we were able to touch upon some things which could explain why Asian American youth love this drug so much. For Bill, a 27-year-old Chinese American, Ecstasy gave him the confidence he needed, not just with girls but in everyday life.

"It depends on how their parents raised them, but usually in Asian families, [parents] beat down their child's ego. You know, 'Why did you get a B?' Look at my dad—'Why you talking on the phone? You have a test coming up.' I read seven straight chapters. What the fuck is up with that? So when they take E, they're on top

of the world. They don't think about anything."

"Of course you're chasing the high, the euphoria," he added. But it definitely makes people come out of the closet. Shit, it made me the man I was, which was cocky. But then, reality set in."

In one experience, Bill says he went to the mall while on Ecstasy and went home with all kinds of stuff. But the next day, he had to go back to the mall and return everything.

"I used to do that but it's not productive. Shit, things happening outside are still happening outside. But you're just doing nothing. It's a waste of a good E."

These days, good E is hard to find. Despite what the dealers may claim, street E rarely contains pure MDMA, the chemical which makes Ecstasy the drug that it is. It's usually mixed with other substances, some of which may include chalk, LSD, speed, caffeine, crystal meth, MDA, the animal tranquilizer ketamine and a variety of over-the-counter cough medications.

The lack of quality control and the greediness of some manu-

facturers have caused people to get sick, not to mention numerous deaths. Big government busts and a clamp-down on the chemicals needed to manufacture MDMA also made things worse. Underground labs are pumping out dirty MDMA cocktails, laced with chemicals accidentally synthesized at the same time.

Slowly, I'm seeing the benefits of taking Ecstasy being overshadowed by the risks. Questionable purity is one thing, but potential health problems is serious shit. Studies have shown that Ecstasy depletes the body's reserves of serotonin; a brain hormone which plays an important role in sleep, appetite, memory, sexual behavior and mood. The more you drop, the more you lose. Permanently.

With the threat of living a grayer, more depressing life, is also the increased possibility of developing Parkinson's disease, a disorder most commonly associated with symptoms of uncontrollable movement on one side of the body, slowness of movement, stiffness of limbs and problems with balance.

Going to these parties, seeing all these Asian Americans—F.O.B.'s, weekday gangbangers, K-town pre-teens, yuppies, not to mention fraternity and sorority girls—you'd think something would happen. Something might click and they would start removing the walls they've placed between each other, or at the very least, be nicer people. But that hasn't happened, not to the extent which could be possible. Instead, kids are using Ecstasy like super-concentrated, street prescription Prozac. And as their bodies build up a tolerance, they're not taking just one, but several at a time.

Sure, Ecstasy boosts happiness and makes you feel all good. Ecstasy may even change your outlook on life, but I realized it's not something that's going to change how your life is going.

I don't know if I'm going to drop Ecstasy again, but it probably won't be anytime soon. The costs of partying have been going up. And the combination of knowing it can make me be like jerky-boy when I'm older and the shortcomings of drug reliability are telling my neurotransmitters ... it's time to get out while I can still count. **G**



# PRETTY & PLUMP

By SEFA AINA

Photos by CHARLES KU

**Big and beautiful in a size-conscious world.**

**big  
guy**

**XL**

**extra  
large**

**size 15**



**L**ast Christmas, my father-in-law gave me a \$100 gift certificate to Mervyn's. Two years ago he came back from a vacation in Acapulco with a X-Large t-shirt for me. Are these gag gifts? Is he trying to send me a message? — "Don't crush my daughter, fat ass!"



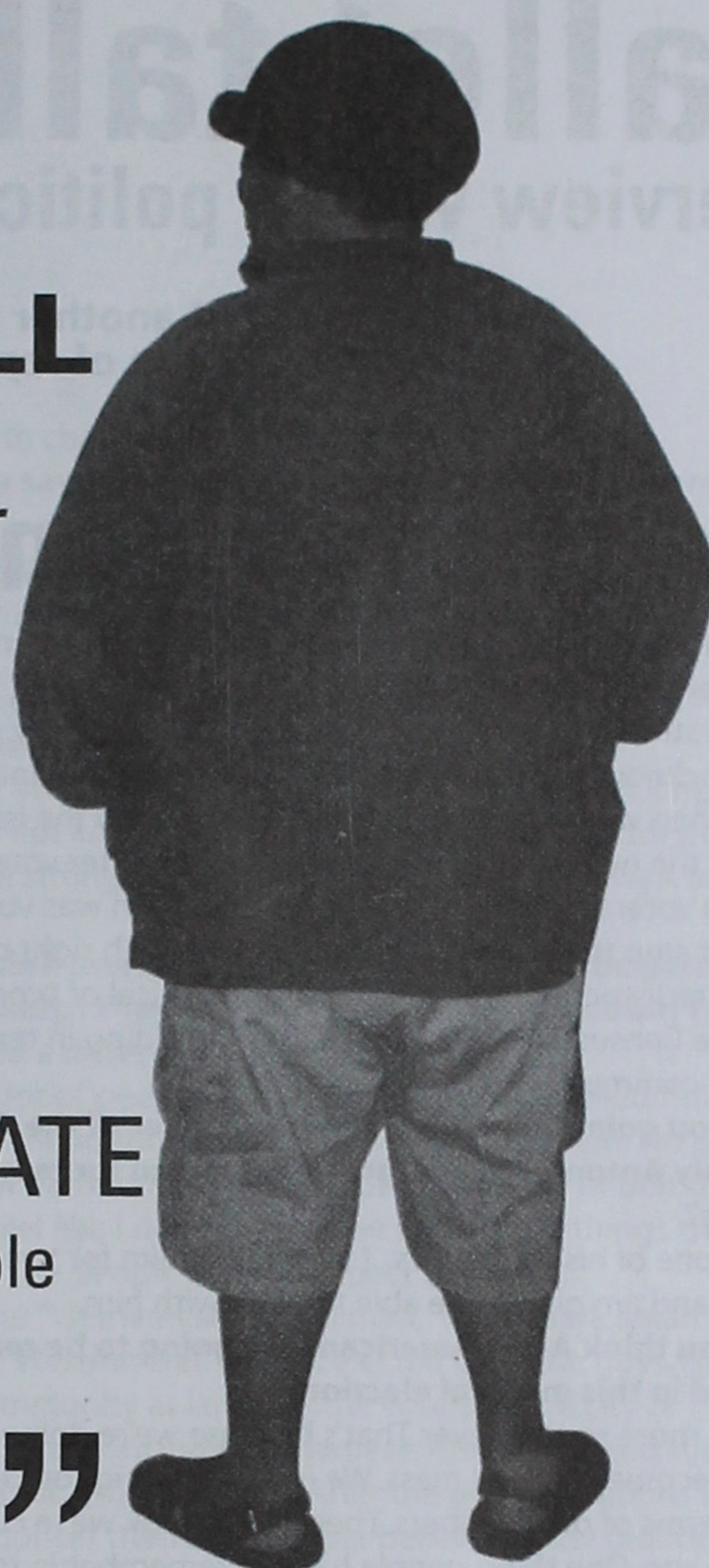


“

I still get **ALL**  
of my  
*fresh gear*  
from the  
**swap**  
**meet.**

Only now  
**/know**  
it's because  
they **don't HATE**  
on *husky* people  
like myself.

”



I asked my wife, “what’s up with that?” She assures me that her father likes me and then proceeds to try and re-build my self-esteem by stroking my arm and saying, “it’s okay baby”. Then she says, “just buy some socks”, like I’m supposed to get \$100’s worth of socks.

Then she said to go ask the manager if they can refund the gift certificate. So while I’m standing at the service desk trying to reason with the manager, the manager looks at me and says, “why did your father get you this?” Which really means, doesn’t your father know that we only carry normal sizes in this store? All the while my wife is standing next to me, rubbing my arm again.

She always does that whenever my weight is being *exposed*. Like the time when we were flying to our honeymoon destination. As we boarded our flight, as is true in most cases, I found that I needed a seatbelt extension.

That’s cool, I thought, I’ll just waive one of the stewardesses down, and discreetly whisper to her that I need an extension. I’ve done it before and in some cases the stewardesses were even so considerate as to slyly pass the extension to me without other judgmental eyes seeing the transaction.

Not this case though. She didn’t call it out on the intercom or anything like that. No, all she did was to signal for me and my wife

and the other person sitting in our aisle to stand up. I was like, “Okay what’s up?” then she proceeded to take my seat apart and unscrew the “normal” belt and replaced it with Prof. Klump’s belt.

While she’s performing mechanical surgery on my seat, I could feel the other passengers staring at me with eyes of compassion, and disgust, but I wasn’t acknowledging any of that. Then it came ... the loving stroke of my wife on my arm, “It’s okay baby.” Well it was okay until she did her “fat man pity stroke.”

You know I wasn’t always this big. Believe it or not there was a time when I could fit into the “normal” belt. I could even buy clothes from Mervyn’s, although I prefer the swap meet.

I used to think I liked the swap meet because it was more affordable than those over-priced stores in the mall. But one salary job and 10 major and department credit cards later, I still get all of my fresh gear from the swap meet. Only now I know it’s because they don’t hate on husky people like myself.

If I had to describe the way that I buy clothes, I’d say by accident. For example, I took my mother shopping a couple of months ago, and I came across some size 15 Nikes. Had to get ‘em, because only I know how precious and few these moments are.

PIECE (of Pie), and I’m out (like the light in my refrigerator because it’s always open)!!! **G**



# ballot talk

## Interview with a politician (or two)

In the midst of another election season, two API elected officials talk about the politics of representation. Interviews by VY NGUYEN

### Warren Furutani

**gidra:** What organizing efforts are currently happening with Asians around electoral politics?

**WF:** The strategy we've been working on was a pretty simple one. It was an acknowledgement that if 70% of our community are immigrants, then we need to do citizenship. And with the issue of citizenship, the next step was voter registration. After voter registration was voter education. After voter education was voter turn out. The next step that we're currently involved with right now is the issue of redistricting, which is the most political of processes related to the Census. So there is a strategy unfolding in terms of getting our community to become empowered.

**g:** Are you going to be involved in (Speaker of the California Assembly Antonio) Villaraigosa's campaign for mayor of Los Angeles?

**WF:** I'm one of his volunteers. I worked for him for two years. I really respect and am glad to be able to work with him.

**g:** Do you think Asian Americans are going to be really involved in this mayoral election?

**WF:** Yes, more so than ever. That's because we're doing two things. We've become a critical mass. We just can't be ignored anymore, just in terms of our numbers. Then, two, I think we're coming of political age. One thing people have to remember in terms of our political maturity in the API community, is that the first generation couldn't become naturalized citizens until the middle 1950s. So my grandparents who came from Japan couldn't become citizens. They arrived in the 1920s. Earlier. They couldn't become American citizens until the 1950s. At that point, to them, after being in camp, the question was, why? We really got one generation at least stunted in terms of political growth.

It's an interesting dichotomy. On one hand, I can start pointing to successes, and on the other hand I can point to increased hate crimes and a mad man going down the street and killing our brother Joseph Ileto. Then you know the ongoing list of Asians killed in hate crimes. It's hard to keep score these days.

**g:** Through your work in coalitions, do you see conflicts coming up in the future?

**WF:** There are conflicts because there's so much change. That's why I harp on this thing about who the public is. Redistricting is interesting because the API community is going to be fighting for districts of influence. Latinos are going to fight to maintain what they have and to get even more. African Americans are going to be in a tough spot, because they're going to try to hold on to what they have although underneath them their district populations are

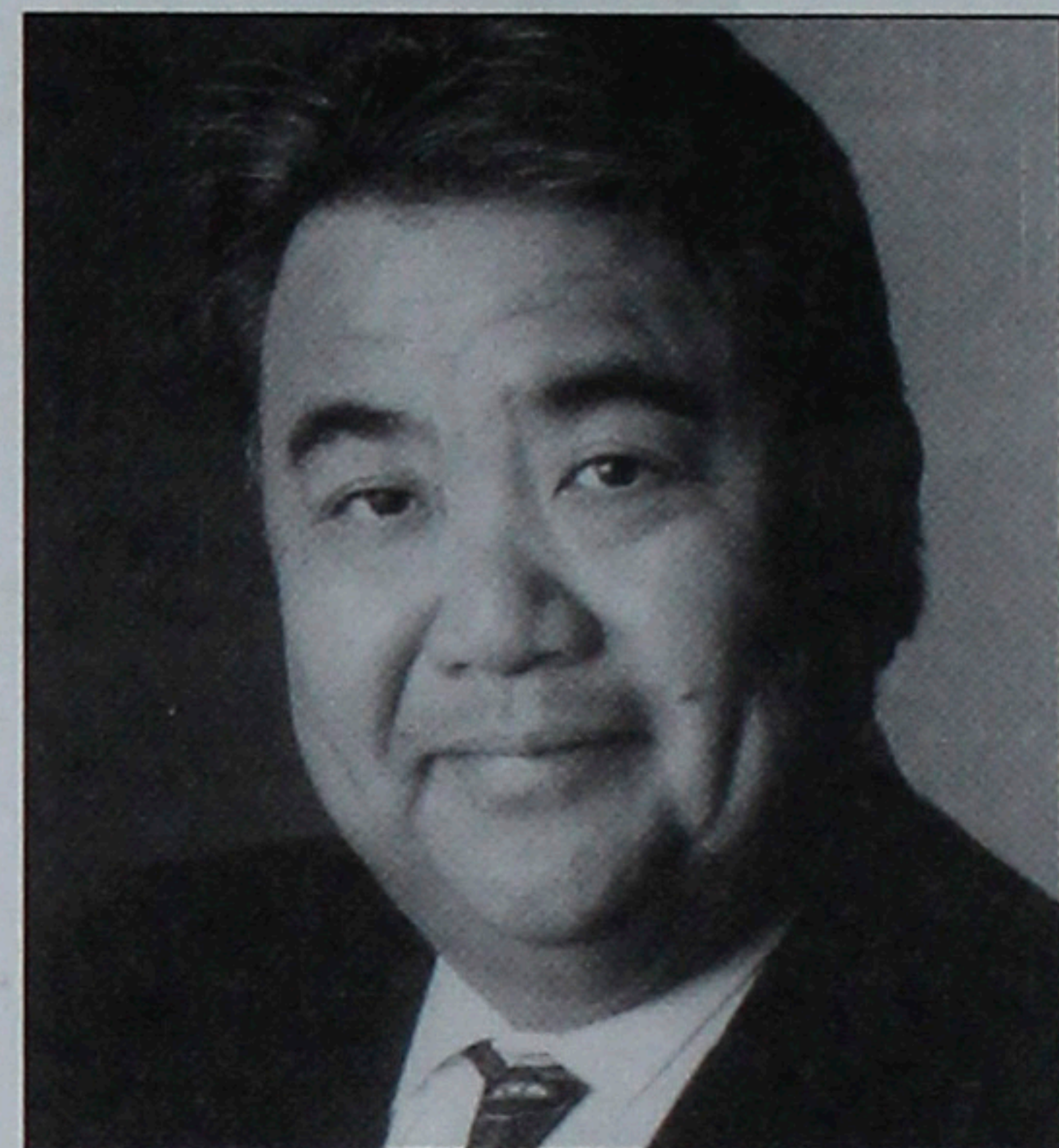
becoming Latino and Asian. And the White community, they don't quite know what to do. The Jewish community has a real tradition, as does the African American community, around issues of Civil Rights. It's a really interesting time of change. And the reality is that nobody is going to be able to do anything any longer based on them being the majority. Everybody is a collective majority. Everybody is a minority. That then means you have to build coalitions in order to get anything done.

**g:** In the mayoral elections do you see a lot Asian/Latino coalitions? Where do you see the APA community leaning in terms of the mayoral election?

**WF:** I think a lot of it's going to be regional. In a city election, regional politics become very strong. The Valley always has a critical role. With a lot of the secession movements like Hollywood, the Harbor, San Pedro/Wilmington, the San Fernando Valley, people are going to be looking at candidates as much as around their issues. The ethnic piece of it is going to be interesting, just because there's going to be two Latinos running. But the Latino voter bloc is not that big, it's only going to be about 15%. So the key is going to be who builds the coalition. And one thing about my friend Antonio is that he has strong labor, but interestingly enough, he also has strong business support.

**g:** Oh really?

**WF:** Yeah. It's an interesting combination coalition he's building. For example he's paving inroads into the African American community with the younger leadership. He's been endorsed by Genethia Hayes, president of the school board, Herb Wesson who may be Speaker of the Assembly in a couple years, Kevin Murray, and so forth. Jimmy Hahn has the support of old time African American elected officials and community folks, really strong people. The Westside, without Zev Yaroslavsky running, has really opened up the Jewish American community influence, which I think Antonio, interestingly enough, is going to get a sizeable piece of. Asians are going to be large numbers. I think the younger activists are going to be moved by Antonio's campaign and his politics. **G**



Warren Furutani,  
LA Community Colleges  
Board of Trustees





**Tony Lam**  
Councilmember, City of Westminster

# Tony Lam

**gidra: Why should electoral politics be important to Asian Americans? What are some of the important issues today?**

**TL:** I believe that the more the Asian American communi-

ty gets involved in politics the more our voice will be heard, and of course our rights can be fairly protected.

As for Vietnamese, in the course of eight years now — and this year we got a couple more Vietnamese elected — one is a councilman elected in Garden Grove and another elected in Virginia, one of a small town as the mayor — I'm very pleased with the outcome.

I've been repeatedly telling them that they have to be involved in mainstream America and not to bring up the issues of Vietnamese alone. If they want to run for office they've got to know that there are many other issues for the community at large, and they've got to learn the campaign the Americans' way. They cannot even put up signs in the Vietnamese language alone, for example. Or they only brought up the issues of Vietnamese, forgetting about the issues at large.

**g: Do you think that Vietnamese Americans are participating more in politics? How much do people vote in Westminster and in the Vietnamese community?**

**TL:** The Vietnamese community has no more than 5,500 votes in the city of Westminster, but the total resident population of the Vietnamese community is approximately 20,000, out of 86,000. That's a high number.

**g: Were you the first Vietnamese elected official?**

**TL:** I've been the first and only until now. During the course of eight years, I've gone through three different elections. The first time I was elected in 1992 for a mid-year term election. Then a year and a half later I was hit by a recall election staged by the fireman's union. Five months later in 1994 I ran for re-election, a four-year term. Then in 1998 I ran for re-election again for another four years. So my term is up in 2002.

**g: Are you running again?**

**TL:** I don't know. I haven't made up my mind. But it's very frustrating. I was hit by demonstrators last year after they hit the Hi-Tek owner who displayed the Communist flag and Ho Chi Minh icon. I was advised by the city attorney not to participate in that demonstration because of the potential liability to the city, and then a small group that had a personal vendetta against me demonstrated against my restaurant for 73 days. And I have lost over \$134,000

in legal fees to chase those guys away.

**g: Were they saying that you supported the Hi-Tek store owner?**

**TL:** Well, it was just an excuse. They used it as an excuse, saying that I am a Vietnamese elected official, I should participate in the demonstration.

**g: Is that an obstacle for Vietnamese elected officials — the issue of Communism?**

**TL:** I am very strongly against any kind of intimidation, one way or another. I do not bow to any kind of intimidation for political reasons. I feel strongly against the Vietnamese who want to intimidate me.

**g: Do you think there are people who would participate more politically except they feel that the community doesn't tolerate any view that's different?**

**TL:** There's a lot of people that expect me to be anti-Communist — fanatically anti-Communist. But I always answer them: I'm damned if I do and I'm damned if I don't. If I follow the way of doing things here, then I feel like I don't have a free hand to do things that I want, or that the people at large expect me to do.

I'm not the "Vietnamese councilman," I'm a councilman for the whole city of Westminster. I'm not elected by those guys. I'm elected by the community at large, by the voters of the city of Westminster, which include Vietnamese, Americans, and Hispanics and other ethnic groups as well. After the demonstrations last year I got more support than ever. People believed that I did the right thing by not participating in that demonstration.

**g: How do you feel about the 80/20 initiative, which is designed to have Asians vote as a block?**

**TL:** That's a good step forward to show that we are strong politically, we have the vote, and we should not be written off, we shouldn't be ignored by the majority. I was elected to the steering committee of 80/20 myself, but at a very late stage. I was not aware that the steering committee already approved to endorse Al Gore, and at that time I was not prepared for it because I'm a registered Republican and advocate for the Republican party here in Orange County. But whatever the steering committee made the decision on, I think that we have to be bound with.

**g: What about coalitions with other ethnic groups?**

**TL:** It is very, very advisable that we should really work with other ethnic groups in order to get their hearts and minds for the same causes. And if there is a chance to help other groups to move ahead, then why not do so? **G**





Photo: courtesy FijiLive.com



# LOCALS ONLY



*the Fiji Coup* By JUSTIN PRASAD

Often described as paradise, the Fiji islands of the South Pacific have been the setting for such famous movies as *The Blue Lagoon* and *Shipwrecked*. An archipelago of about 300 islands, Fiji is 2,250 miles northeast of Australia. While the world outside thinks of Fiji as nothing less than exotic, the situation within the country would cause one's head to swim.

May 19 marks the third anniversary of the Mahendra Chaudhry government. A native born Fijian of Indian descent, Chaudhry was the first ethnic Indian in Fijian history to be elected Prime Minister. Some indigenous Fijians, however, opposed the new multi-ethnic government. This time last year, led by nationalist leaders such as Apisai Tora, the Veitokani ni Lotu Vakarisito and Vanua Tako Lavo political parties, over 10,000 indigenous Fijians marched through Suva, Fiji's capital in protest.

Later that same morning, rebels led by Ilikini Naitini, more popularly known as George Speight, raided Fiji's Parliament House where Chaudhry and his cabinet were meeting. Brandishing AK-47s and M-16 rifles, the rebels stormed the complex and took all inside as hostages. By 11:30 a.m., telecommunications services within the tiny island nation were cut off, making contact impossible.

When news of the takeover was relayed to those marching in Suva, the crowd went wild, looting and burning businesses owned by ethnic Indians and indigenous Fijians along Suva's main business strip. Later, the violence moved to the surrounding villages where many homes, mainly those of Indians, were targeted. Clouds of smoke hovered over the capital and were visible for miles.

Mahendra Chaudhry's election as Prime Minister shocked many who expected Sitiveni Rabuka, leader of the 1987 coups and incumbent Premier, to be re-elected. Rabuka's earlier campaigns

preached indigenous Fijian superiority, and attempted to keep minorities from power. His ideas were drafted into the 1990 constitution.

With this constitution in place, major trading partners, such as Australia, Britain and the United States placed sanctions upon Fiji, throwing its economy into turmoil and making it an international pariah. When the United Nations pressured the government to ensure equality for all citizens, a committee was instituted to review the constitution. As a result, in 1997, a new constitution was drafted. It ensured equal rights for all Fijians by promoting multi-ethnic identity. Sanctions were lifted and Fiji was reinstated into the British Commonwealth following its 1987 expulsion. The new constitution received the blessings of the Bose Levu Vakaturaga, Fiji's influential Great Council of Chiefs.

Consequently, Rabuka's political party, the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei, feared that minorities would get more political power. A split in the party caused another political group, the newly formed People's Coalition, to gain ground. Tui Nayau Ratu Kamisese Mara, former Prime Minister and President of Fiji before the coup, decided to support Chaudhry and persuaded the Great Council of Chiefs to do so too. These developments along with indigenous Fijian support due to tribal chiefly influence, made Chaudhry Fiji's first ethnic Indian Prime Minister.

In his one-year tenure, Chaudhry gained public support by cracking down on political corruption. However, his policies also came under fire when he refused to allow landowners to raise the rents on land leased by Indians who produce much of Fiji's multi-million dollar sugarcane crop. The lease rates were set at low prices under British colonial law before Fijian independence in 1970. Many of Fiji's *mataqali* (landowners) insisted that they receive com-



pensation for the cane grown on their land.

Blaming Chaudhry for instituting pro-Indian and anti-Fijian policies, Speight justified the coup that was Fiji's third in thirteen years. The rebels claimed that the coup was necessary to protect Fijian sovereignty. The rebels aimed to strip the Indians, who control much of the economy, of power and to abrogate the 1997 constitution.

Two days later, President Mara declared a state of emergency. Within two weeks, the nation was placed under martial law and military leader Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama assumed executive control. Even with the military in charge, attacks upon Indians and major establishments continued, such as the assault on the Fiji One Television Studio.

With the threat of violence, schools were closed for security reasons. The town of Suva was virtually deserted as shop owners were reluctant to return there. Anybody wishing to travel through the city was required to attain a day pass due to the possibility of danger.

After two months of deliberation with the army and the rebels for the safe release of the hostages, Speight and Commodore Bainimarama signed the Muanikau Accord, officially ending the crisis. The accord gave the rebels immunity in exchange for release of the hostages as well as inclusion in the interim government, which would be chosen by the Great Council of Chiefs. The agreement also allowed for the dissolution of the 1997 constitution in favor of a new one. This new constitution omitted the key elements in the 1997 document that promoted multi-ethnic equality. Minority groups would once again become second class citizens as in recent past.

On July 14, the remaining 18 hostages were released from Parliament following a directive of the Great Council of Chiefs. The Council elected Josefa Iloilo as Fiji's new president. Iloilo went with the army's pick for

prime minister, Laisenia Qarase, and formed a new interim government comprised mostly of indigenous Fijians.

Ironically, Speight and his supporters were arrested on July 23 for unlawful assembly and not returning all stolen weapons. Speight was initially booked on minor charges, but later he and his co-conspirators were charged with treason and for threatening the life of interim President Iloilo among other

his disapproval of the Chaudhry government's deal with British investors to sell Fiji's mahogany reserves. This deal deterred Speight's own plans to sell the mahogany to other investors.

According to the *Fiji Times*, Speight defrauded many investors, including some Americans, in his plan to allow the decimation of Fiji's mahogany forests — the largest in the world — and to sell these resources at high prices. It was



**South Central Suva:** Looters take to the streets in Suva, Fiji's capital, after a group led by former businessman George Speight (right) took Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and 30 other government workers hostage in the name of indigenous rights. In the 56-day ordeal, Speight managed to dissolve Chaudhry's government and the constitution, not to mention divide Fijians along ethnic, regional and tribal lines. A failed mutiny attempt at Suva's main military barrack on Nov. 2 however, is leading many to believe that another element masterminded the coup and is prompting public and military dissent to seize control of government.



Photos: courtesy Fijilive.com

crimes. In an Oct. 1 High Court decision, Speight and his group were stripped of their immunity.

Within a week, a refurbished charge of treason with 13 criminal counts, including damage done to Indian shops and homes, was filed against the rebels.

Even though Speight led the coup in the name of indigenous Fijians, many critics agree that it was more of a personal vendetta against the Chaudhry government. Speight had been dismissed as the head of Fiji Hardwood, Ltd. when he voiced

also stated that Speight had taken funds embezzled from investors and the Fijian government and placed them in a secret bank account in Australia, where he holds permanent residency status. A few days before the coup, Speight was tried in the High Court of Fiji on charges of embezzlement and fraud, to which he pled not guilty.

The coup has already caused drastic and possibly permanent damage to the nation's fragile economy. An estimated

\$1.3 million was lost daily in the tourism industry. The damage done within Suva on the first day of the coup was estimated at \$30 million. Close to 8,000 have lost their jobs, mainly in the garment and tourism industries. Many ethnic Indians also fled the country to avoid persecution.

Indians were brought to Fiji by the British between 1879 and 1916 as indentured servants to work in the sugarcane fields. Fiji became a British colony when High Chief of Bau Island and King of Fiji Ratu Seru Cakobau ceded control of the islands on Oct. 10, 1874. The deal protected Fijian sovereignty and interests at a time when Europeans were trying to ravage the island for prized resources, such as gold and hardwood.

Indians now account for 44 percent of Fiji's population and hold vast control over Fiji's economic sector, especially in the sugar industry and city businesses. Indigenous Fijians, who number 51 percent of the population, are among the poorest in the nation.

Even though 89 percent of Fijian land is owned by indigenous Fijians, many landowners and nationalists want all land to revert back to native control. The British Crown, wealthy prospectors and a few Indian families own the remaining 11 percent. Much of the land owned by Indians has already been taken from them and been reverted to traditional landowners or placed on government reserve.

It might take years for Fiji's economic and social wounds to heal. Some in power manipulate many of Fiji's indigenous people claiming they know what is best for them, causing the racial split between Indians and Fijians who have lived harmoniously for the past century. One can only hope for the overall resurgence of Fiji as a whole and wonder about its uncertain future. **G**



# THE CALL

What happens when the directors of a Chris Rock comedy got your number?

By JOHN CHO

I am still drunk, not hungover, when the telephone rings. I am told I have to get on a flight at 10 a.m. to New York. It is 6 a.m. now. I get up, start to pack. I was in New York a week ago, filming the new Chris Rock movie *Down to Earth*, which was then titled *I Was Made to Love Her*, a remake of the Warren Beatty movie *Heaven Can Wait* (confused yet?).

It's about a sweet but unfunny comedian, Rock, who wants one posthumous shot at some laughs at the Apollo theater. I play the guy who is kind of the amateur night champ at the Apollo, beating Rock with a ridiculous rendition of a tune by Jennifer Holiday, "I Am Telling You, I Am Not Going," wearing, I might add, a Tito-Puente-esque showman's outfit and a two-foot pompadour.

**The Call:** I had come back to Los Angeles to finish the run of the play I was doing, *My Tired Broke Ass Pontificating Slapstick Funk*, at East West Players in Los Angeles. I wasn't supposed to go back for another couple weeks. Evidently, the weather had turned bad, forcing them to move to interiors suddenly. We had closed the play the night (or hours) previous, and we all had done some obligatory drinking. So, the call comes, and I get back on the plane.

**A Tip:** When a limo is sent to pick you up, have some tens on hand for tip. Both ways.

**The Lodging:** The Waldorf-Astoria. I felt like Ferris Bueller: "So choice."

**The Star:** Whenever you do a movie or television show with a well-known actor, one is always asked, "How were they?" or "Was he/she an asshole/bitch?" Evidently, this is crucial information (actually, allow me a clause. It's secondary if the celebrity in question is a suspected homosexual, in which case the question of their sexuality becomes primary and their disposition secondary). We've been slinging the asshole indictment since high school ("She's soooo stuck up") and I am unsure of what to make of it. My suspicion, though, is that in this case, the question has, at its root, 1) a low regard for the profession of acting, and 2) a sense of ownership of stars. To clarify: acting is easy, anyone can do it, and one achieves success in it through the grace of lady luck. Secondly, if anyone has bestowed upon that actor success, the public has done so. So, no trace of hubris is allowed for the actor. Humility is a job requirement for stars ....

I think that's funny because other professions are allowed prideful posturing: take Donald Trump, who is somehow allowed to be an asshole — evidently, his career has room for hubris. IN ANY CASE, to answer the unasked question, Chris Rock seemed cool to me.

**The Sophomores:** Coming off a massive success like *American Pie*, one might imagine the studio pressure to produce another hit would stifle their directing style, but that is not the case. Chris and Paul Weitz make movies as though they were making a sketch to be performed for the going away party of a long-time friend — unabashedly worry-less and intimate. After a take, they giggle amongst themselves, confer, then walk over to you, displaying the residual smile, and then, giggling will say something in an almost whisper: something like, "Okay that was funny, man. Let's do it again, but why don't you try this time ...." One

feels a childish participation in an inside joke or prank, resulting in an enthusiasm for making the scene better. But, most of all, they're good peoples. I like them, and enjoy giving a performance that makes them happy.

**The Bit:** The scene sort of morphed into something a little more than the script had indicated, with amateurish rhinestone flourishes. It became pretty fun, after I got the jitters from performing on the Apollo stage out (I forgot it was a movie, and that the extras were required to applaud. I half expected the Sandman's cane on my Adam's apples after every take). Chris Rock emerged from the shadows to do some choreographing. The routine got increasingly ridiculous, as did my character. I hope it's funny, because it was funny at the time.

**The Replacement:** In the absence of Steve Harvey as the Apollo emcee, Rock's advice to Mario Joyner to be more Harvey: "Put 'Apollo' in everything. 'Let's give a warm Apollo welcome,' or 'Apollo, show your love ....'"

**The Background:** There's something about a guy who has a small part in a big movie. They figure you for an extra who got lucky. So, a day on set, if one is not careful, can quickly turn into a career counseling session.

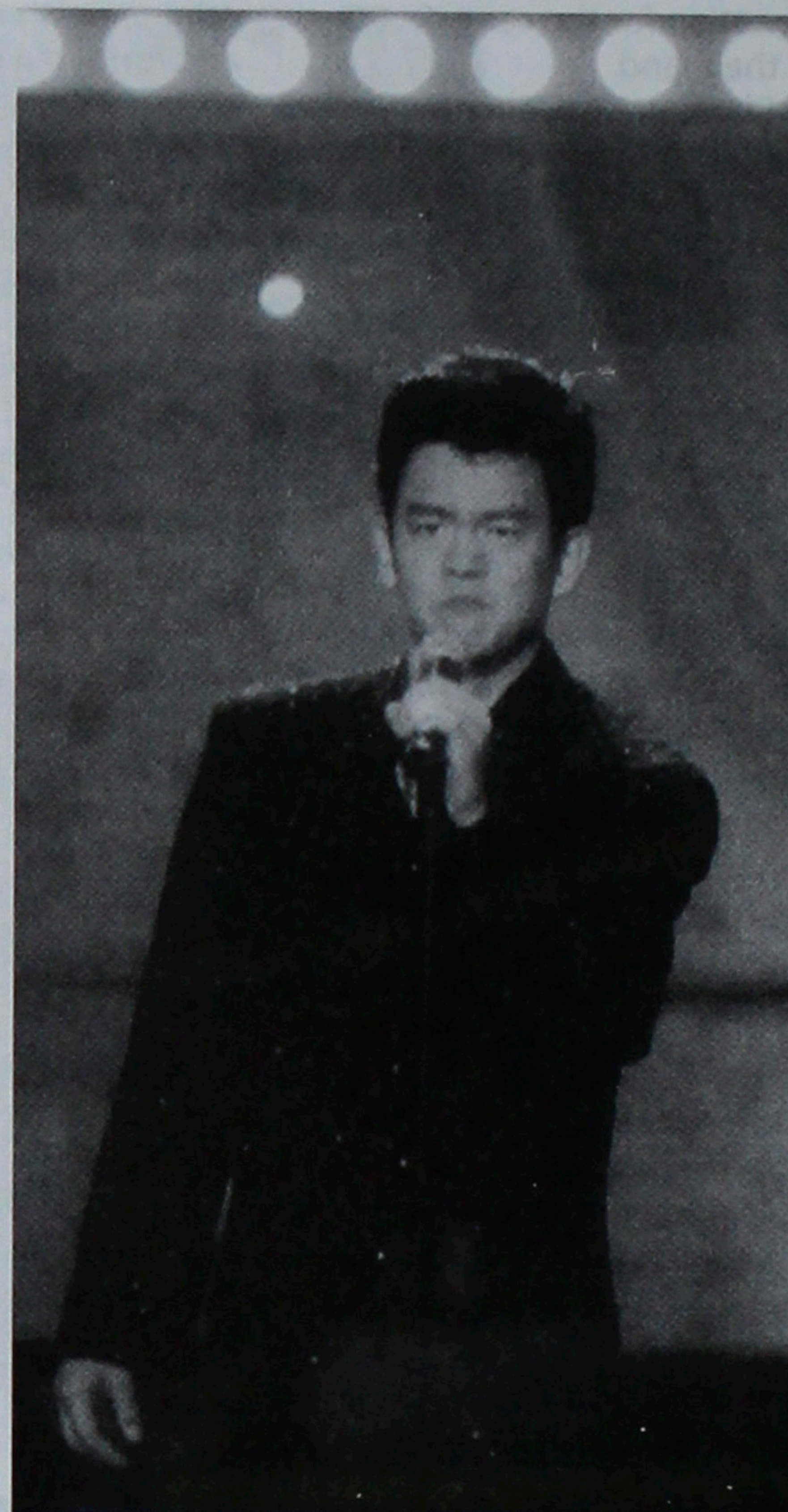
**The Day Off:** New York parties like no other city. I call a friend of mine up. We decide to go out that night, after shooting. After dinner, it is decided that he will give me a call at the hotel. HBO, a shower, and it is 12 a.m. No call. I feel like Jan Brady. He calls me at 12:30. "You ready?"

"What? It's 12:30."

"Right! Let's go!"

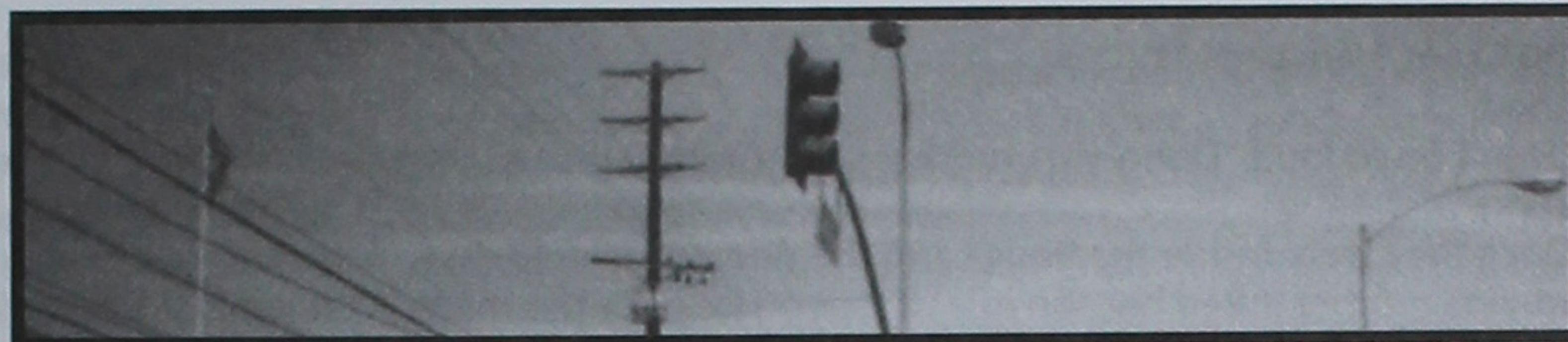
**The Ethic:** One day, Chris Rock was hanging around after he had already been dismissed, observing, and the crew figured out they could film a scene scheduled for the next day right then, because the lighting was already set.

Rock agreed, got back in make-up and costume, whereupon he was thanked heartily for his work ethic. He said, "Listen, if this thing sucks, everyone else here will work again, but I won't." I hope that's true. I hope I work again. **G**





She wondered if these were the kinds of meals that Rajiv and Sonia may have had. That is, before he went the way of the other Gandhis before him. She



thought to herself, the Gandhis are to India what the Kennedys are to America: icons of a modern culture, a heady mix of politics, mystery, glamour, and tragic death. Rajiv was Indian and Sonia, Italian. They had met at college, she seemed to remember. "If they ever made this kind of food, I hope it tasted better than this," she said out aloud, pushing away the plate of cooling spaghetti. Immediately, she hoped that her roommates had not heard her. They already thought she was strange.

Her mother knew that she liked mango pickle and those hard to find tins of Milkmaid. Yeah, Milkmaid may just be condensed milk, and you can find condensed milk anywhere. But not in any of those other tins could there be found the memories of coffee lightened with liquid thick milk and sugar, looping out one of two triangular holes, strategically cut in the lid. Nor the memories of lightly toasted bread with condensed milk dripping over the sides, like in *The English Patient*. The book- NOT the movie, she thought.

The care packages came from Fremont with regularity. When she received them, it was always with a tinge of guilt. She would call and thank her mother, but also argue with her for spending too much money:

"Stop sending me stuff, mai ... No, no. I'm really happy that you thought about me, but you know I don't have time to cook, and I don't want you to waste your money ... I miss you too."

Sometimes, she wouldn't open the parcels for a week. When she did, she would gingerly lift out the wrapping, trying to make out incomplete stories torn mid-sentence from Indian community newspapers with which her mother always packed the parcels. Next, she would take out the bottle of mango pickle, marveling that the oil hadn't leaked out rather than that the glass had not broken. For some reason, there was always dust on the top of the Milkmaid tins. A smile would curl one corner of her lips as she traced a finger through the light dust.

It reminded her of childhood trips down to Nadka's, the little Indian store where her brother would play a game of hiding from her behind the shelves stocked high with boxes, tins, and packets of food items. Together, they would secretly exchange the sticky price labels between bottles of hair oil and tins of ghee. Their favorite thing to do when their mother was busy testing the tips of bhendi for firmness was to rake their fingers through the basmati rice heaped in sacks. Their fingers released the aroma of the rice and left a fine dust on their hands.

As he was wrapping their groceries, Mr. Nadka would always say, "Such fine children, never giving trouble to mummy." She would look at her older brother, willing him not to laugh at least until the shop keeper had given them a syrupy orange jilebi each from behind the glass shields guarding the golden swirls of sugar. The glass never kept out the flies.

Her smile widened a little with these thoughts and she was silently happy that her mother had sent her these things. But then, there were always the packets of spice, jarring her to the present.

The sharp corners of the little plastic packets poked her accusingly as if they were her mother's voice on the phone. "But you must learn to cook, otherwise how will you survive on your own and when you get married? That American fast food is not good for you. I heard it on the news."

The Indian cookbook her mother had sent her was jammed between copies of the telephone directory and the textbook from her International Relations class. The one time she had tried to use it was a disaster she promised never to repeat. After scouring the white aisles of the local supermarket, searching through the small "ethnic" section for such unheard of things as haldi powder and whole elaichi (which they did not have, she was politely informed by the store clerk who gave her a look that told her exactly what he was thinking), she came home and tried to figure out the mysteries of Indian cooking. Surrounded by the spices she had purchased and those her mother had sent her,

she was not sure what it was that perplexed her more — the variety of the ingredients or the cryptic comments of the cook book: "... use equal quantities of masala no. 1 and masala no. 2 ... (Masalas 1 and 2? And if there ever were exact measurements, they were in metric, so even more confusing) ... only to be added after you bagaar the coarsely diced onions."

The pungent smoke rising from the pan stung her eyes, making them tear. Her phone calls to Fremont that Saturday afternoon were received only by an unrecorded message and a beep on her mother's answering machine. The resulting stew entirely missed any flavor even close to what her mother would have made from the same combination of spices. She served it to her roommates, who eager for a meal, even if badly cooked, said, "Well, it tastes like Indian food ..." and "Open a window, so you can let out the smell."

So, now, whenever her mother sent her these parcels, she would gather the little packets of spice and put them guiltily into a paper bag. She remembered that one trip, as a child, to her mother's village in India, when they visited the dishtikar woman. The old woman said the special prayers to draw out the evil eye and had the little girl blow three times on the chilies used in the ritual. She was filled with a sense of awe and her eyes widened when the woman handed her a bag made from newspaper to hold the chilies. "Tonight, take this to the crossroads by the tinto and leave it there. Don't let anyone see you," she whispered conspiratorially.

Today, when she left her apartment, she took the paper bag filled with things she couldn't throw away, or donate to the Salvation Army — packets of spice, books unread, and clothes too big (added to the mélange so they covered up the spices). She left the bag at the bus stop, making sure no one would see her. Someone would pick it up, she knew. Hopefully, they would have more use for these things than she did. She stepped on to the bus and tried to read the last act of *The Tempest*, which was to be discussed in class today. **G**

"But you must learn to cook, otherwise how will you survive on your own and when you get married? That American fast food is not good for you. I heard it on the news."



groaned.

"Don't be so loud," Dong-yip's mother said. "Grandfather is sleeping."

Once they were inside the house and the door was safely shut, Dong-yip's mother asked her son in a whisper, "How was the meeting?"

"Very enlightening," Dong-yip said.

"Very enlightening? My son is a man now. He even talks like one," she grinned.

"Don't tease me," Dong-yip said.

"All right. But I am so proud to have three generations of strong, Korean patriots in my home," she said as she tenderly slid her hand through Dong-yip's hair, removing it from his face.

"Is there any rice left?" asked Dong-yip, patting his stomach. Although he tried to act grown up around his friends and his father, he acted like a little boy around his mother because he knew that that was what she responded to.

"You've eaten enough for one day. It's time you went to bed. You have to get up early tomorrow."

Dong-yip trudged reluctantly to the room he shared with his grandfather. Grandfather snored softly as Dong-yip took off his clothes and laid them in a neat pile next to the door. The dim light from the kerosene lamp cast Dong-yip's shadow on the wall. It made the sturdy boy look like a full-grown man.

Dong-yip tried not to look at his grandfather sleeping. Whenever he did so, Grandfather seemed to sense it and stir in his sleep. He loved his grandfather. The way he fought the Japanese fearlessly in his youth. The way he would tell Dong-yip stories of Korean bravery. He got into bed and pulled the covers up to his eyes. He thought that there was only one thing he loved more than his country, and that was sleep. Sleep was where all his dreams of grandeur could come true; he wasn't a kid anymore in his dreams.

The next morning Dong-yip was awoken by his grandfather. Grandfather gently held Dong-yip's foot and whispered his name. It was five o'clock in the morning.

"Dong-yip," Grandfather said. "It is time to get up."

"Already? I haven't slept a wink."

"Yes, I noticed that you didn't sleep much. You were probably thinking about the meeting last night."

"It was wonderful, Grandfather. You should have been there."

"I am too old. I have served my country well. Now it is your turn. Your and your father's turn."

Grandfather pulled the thick blankets to one side and lifted his young grandson out of bed. Dong-yip rubbed his eyes with his fists and shivered from the cold air in the room. He could see that it was still dark out. It probably wouldn't get light for another hour.

"You get dressed," Grandfather said. "I will fix breakfast."

Grandfather limped out of the room holding his left hip. He was beaten by Japanese soldiers twenty five years ago during the March First Movement for attending a pro-Korea rally, where he and a few friends stood up to the oncoming Japanese battalion while all the other participants fled. He never quite got over his injuries. As Grandfather made his way out of the room, Dong-yip dutifully folded up the blankets and put them in the standing closet. In the closet next to the blankets lay Grandfather's personal belongings. There was his frayed Western Bible written in Korean, his polished gold pocket watch, and his small bronze replica of Yi Sun-shin's Turtle Boat. Dong-yip fingered the gold pocket watch and flipped through the Bible. He came to a passage in Romans. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and render unto God that which is His." Dong-yip wondered what the passage meant. Who was this Caesar anyway?

"Dong-yip!" Grandfather called. "Come and eat."

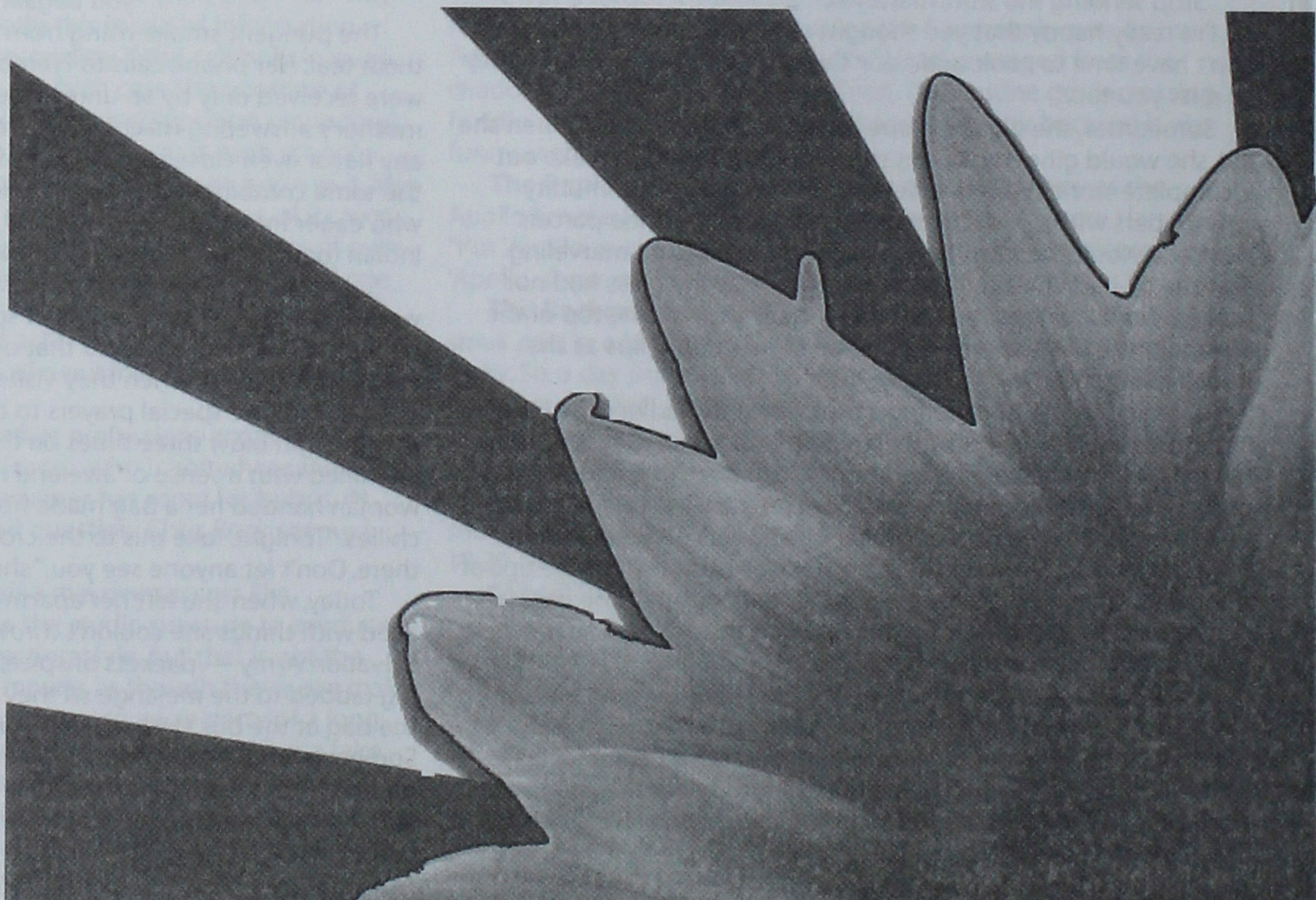
Dong-yip quickly put the small Bible into his pocket. His family would scold him if they found out that he took the Bible. They would tell him that it's dangerous to walk around with a Western Bible written in Korean. If the Japanese found it, they would throw both Grandfather and Father in prison. But Dong-yip decided to take it anyway. Grandfather wouldn't know it was missing; he never looked at his things anymore. Dong-yip just wanted to show it to Hyuk-soo. Hyuk-soo revered Dong-yip. This would be just another example of Dong-yip's audacity.

Dong-yip ate a meal of rice, fish and kimchee. Dong-yip didn't particularly like this meal, but he ate it without complaint. A good patriot realized that times were hard. And like all good patriots, Dong-yip gladly accepted whatever the family had.

"Are Mother and Father gone?" Dong-yip asked.

"Yes, they left at three o'clock this morning," Grandfather said tiredly, holding his left hand, which had a tendency to shake uncontrollably.

"Did they go to the docks?" Dong-yip asked, looking at his grandfather's hands.





"Yes."

"I hate it when they have to go to the docks."

"Yes. Yes. I hate the Japanese too. I don't understand why they must make parents go work in the In-chon harbor at three o'clock in the morning and why they must make nine-year-old schoolboys wake up at five o'clock in the morning to go up to the Sorak-san mountains."

Grandfather sighed and closed his eyes. Dong-yip watched him while he ate. Grandfather's boyish tuft of hair hung over his wrinkled face.

Grandfather opened his eyes and looked at his young grandson. It was a kindly look, but one full of pain. Dong-yip looked away because he thought his grandfather might start crying.

After breakfast, Grandfather fixed Dong-yip a lunch of rice and fish, while Dong-yip ran to the bedroom to grab his coat and hat. Dong-yip paused in front of the closet and thought about putting the Bible back. No, I will take it, he thought. No one was ever admired for cowardice. When Dong-yip returned, Grandfather handed him the tin lunch container wrapped in a scarf.

"I don't think I can walk with you to your school," Grandfather said. "My hip hurts too much this morning. Will you make it to school all right?"

"Yes, Grandfather. You stay here and rest. I will be fine."

Grandfather saw Dong-yip to the door of their small wooden house. Ddang-ddang ran excitedly to the front gate. Dong-yip waved good-bye to his grandfather. He made sure that the dog didn't get out and closed the gate behind him. On the walk, Dong-yip dreamed of war. Clouds hung in the air like bursts of anti-aircraft gunfire. And chickens and roosters squawked on the road like fleeing refugees. Dong-yip clutched his tin lunch container close to his chest as though it were a top-secret document. The Bible clapped against his thigh as he walked.

Dong-yip told himself that he must not let anyone see the Bible but Hyuk-soo. Hyuk-soo would surely be amazed, he thought. Dong-yip remembered the time when he posted a poster of the leader of

the Korean provisional government in the bathroom of the school. Hyuk-soo couldn't stop talking about it for a month. He privately told everyone in the class about it.

When he got to school, his schoolmates were running around in a game of tag. His schoolteacher greeted him in Japanese, to which Dong-yip replied in Korean. The schoolteacher gave him a stern disapproving look. But with his sparkling eyes and easy smile, Dong-yip knew that the schoolteacher wasn't too angry with him.

Dong-yip looked around for Hyuk-soo. He saw the small, nervous boy sitting beneath a tree drawing in his sketchbook.

"What are you drawing?" Dong-yip asked.

"Oh. Hi. I'm drawing the Korean flag," Hyuk-soo said.

"You better not let the Japanese see it."

"I won't."

"I have something to show you."

"What is it?"

Dong-yip looked around for the Japanese soldiers before pulling out the small Bible.

"Is that a book?" Hyuk-soo asked.

"It's a Western Bible written in Korean," Dong-yip whispered proudly.

"Wherever did you get it?" Hyuk-soo asked excitedly.

"It's my grandfather's."

"Does he know you took it?"

"Of course he knows. My grandfather is a fearless man. And so am I. That's why I took it."

"Gosh, that's very dangerous."

"My family is very brave."

"You better not let the Japanese see it. They surely won't tolerate anything written in Korean let alone a Western Bible. We're supposed to be Japanese now."

"Yes, I'll be very careful."

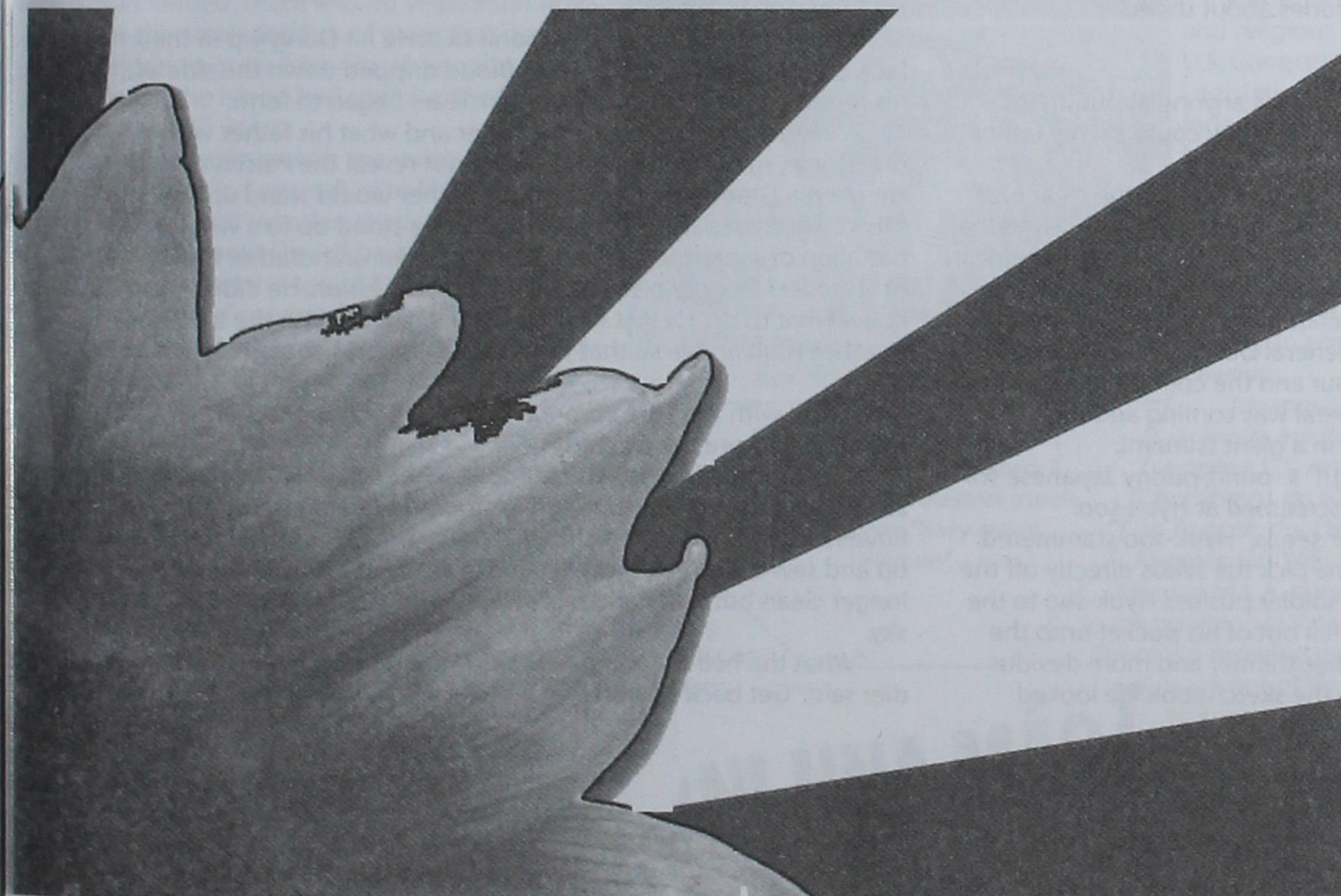
The schoolteacher called all the students over to the bus. Hyuk-soo and Dong-yip walked over with Hyuk-soo walking in front.

Dong-yip could see clearly over the top of Hyuk-soo's head, which shined in the sunlight.

Apparently, Hyuk-soo hadn't washed his hair in a few days. Water was scarce; the Japanese even rationed the number of baths they could take. The schoolteacher began calling out the Japanese names of all the students. As each student's name was called, they boarded the bus. Dong-yip and Hyuk-soo were the last to board the bus. The bus reeked of gasoline and was covered in a gray soot. When the bus driver started the engine, Dong-yip was surprised it didn't explode.

The bus ride was quiet. All the school children learned to be silent when they were around the Japanese. Dong-yip fingered the Bible in his pocket.

Dong-yip thought about the meeting last night. His father didn't say much.





**PATRIOT, cont. from page 31**

He hardly spoke at all. But he had a powerful presence. Whenever he did speak, everyone listened. All the men in the Patriot's circle valued his opinion. Dong-yip felt proud to be his son. People everywhere welcomed him for being Ahn Chang-ho's son.

When they got to the sunflower patch, the schoolteacher ordered them all out of the bus. A Japanese corporal with a hard cruel face gave them instructions on how to pick the sunflower seeds.

"Pick up only the ones that have fallen to the ground," he said. "Be careful not to crush them. And don't ever pick the seeds off the sunflowers. This task is very important. We need the oil of the sunflower seeds for the war effort. You students will be a great help in the defeat of the Americans."

Dong-yip and all his classmates gave a half-hearted "Bonzai!" Gray cloth bags were passed around, and the students were separated into pairs. Dong-yip and Hyuk-soo were paired together.

As they were picking, they began talking.

"Guess where I went last night?" Dong-yip said. He just couldn't keep it to himself any longer.

"Where?"

"I went to a meeting of the Patriot's circle."

"Did you really? How did you get to go there?"

"My father's a member."

"Gosh, no one ever gets to go to those meetings. Most people don't even know who's in it. They've only heard stories about them."

"That's right."

"You're so lucky!"

"But you have to promise not to tell anyone about it. Not even Wang-youn. If anyone found out, they could kill my father."

"Okay. I won't say a word."

Dong-yip wiped his brow and looked up into the clear blue sky. He noticed a clean white streak of smoke in the sky. His father told him that whenever he saw such a streak it was the American B-29 bomber. The B-29 flew so high up in the air that the Japanese Zero's and the anti-aircraft guns couldn't reach them. His father also told him about General Douglas MacArthur. Dong-yip began dreaming of MacArthur and the coming redemption of his nation. The American General was coming and the Japanese would be swept away in a giant tsunami.

"What the hell are you doing?!" a round, pudgy Japanese soldier with a small, bristly goatee screamed at Hyuk-soo.

"I was only picking sunflower seeds," Hyuk-soo stammered.

"The corporal told you not to pick the seeds directly off the sunflower, you damn idiot." The soldier pushed Hyuk-soo to the ground. Hyuk-soo's sketchbook fell out of his pocket unto the ground. A second Japanese soldier, thinner and more devious looking than the first, picked up the sketchbook. He looked through it.

"What's this?" the second Japanese soldier asked in a shrill voice. "Is this the Korean flag?"

"It's only a drawing," Hyuk-soo pleaded.

"I'm going to get the corporal and the school teacher."

"It's only ..." Dong-yip began.

"What did you say, you little shit?" the first soldier asked meanly.

"Nothing," Dong-yip mumbled.

"That's what I thought."

Hyuk-soo began to cry. Dong-yip put his hand in his pocket and clutched the Bible close to him. He didn't want the Japanese soldier to see it. He wanted to scream. He turned red with fear and anger. He wanted to tell the Japanese soldier that the Patriot's circle was gaining power and MacArthur was coming. He wanted to flash the Western Bible written in Korean in the soldier's face. He wanted to comfort his friend.

The corporal and schoolteacher came running up. The corporal opened the sketchbook and flipped through it. He came to the page with the Korea flag.

"What the hell are you teaching your students?!" the corporal bellowed.

"I'm very sorry," the schoolteacher said meekly.

"Is this the way good Japanese students act?"

"That's the way good Korean patriots act," Dong-yip said decisively.

"Shut-up!" the Japanese corporal said. He hit Dong-yip in the face. Dong-yip fell to the ground. Blood dripped down the side of his mouth. Dong-yip stood up again. Tears began to form.

Dong-yip thought about his father and what his father would do. He was sure that his father would not reveal the Patriot's circle. Maybe Grandfather would. Grandfather would stand up to this cowardly Japanese corporal just as he stood up to a whole battalion of Japanese soldiers. Did that make Grandfather braver or stupider? Dong-yip struggled with the question. He didn't know what to do. He just wanted to fly in the air with the B-29 bomber. High above so that the Japanese planes couldn't reach him.

"Come with me," the corporal said to the schoolteacher. "I'm taking you to see my captain."

The corporal dragged the schoolteacher away. Hyuk-soo fell to the ground and wept. Dong-yip stood there among the sunflowers watching him. Tears flowed freely now. Dong-yip looked up and saw the streak of white smoke in the sky, which was no longer clean but puffy and fast disappearing in the blue, blue sky.

"What the hell are you two doing?" the round Japanese soldier said. "Get back to work!" **G**

Dong-yip began dreaming of MacArthur and the coming redemption of his nation. The American General was coming and the Japanese would be swept away in a giant tsunami.



# bombs away

Getting the US Military out of Vieques

Story and photos by ERNESTO VIGOREAUX

**O**n my second trip to Vieques last October, I was determined to break into Camp Garcia, the U.S. Navy's restricted live-bombing range on the eastern sector. I wanted to see for myself the environmental destruction the Navy had left behind during its war games on this small Puerto Rican island that it had transformed into a military training ground.

By way of a small yacht owned by a defiant fisherman who sails beyond the "restricted" perimeter to deliver supplies to the protest camps, I entered the military occupied zone. With me were members of the Puerto Rican Alliance of Los Angeles and comrades in Comité '98 Por Un Puerto Rico Libre ('98 Committee for a Free Puerto Rico) from Berkeley.

We hiked for about five miles, crossing abandoned military jeeps, tanks, warplanes, and trucks. Ponds of chemically polluted water, light blue and white, bubbled in the sun. Large craters showed where bombs had landed. There was no vegetation but for the small patches of grass that had begun to grow from the six months of peace the island had seen for the first time in over 60 years.

Suddenly, amidst the miles of empty bombshells, I saw a Puerto Rican flag flying from a small wooden shack that had the words "Monte David" painted on. As we approached the top of Mt. David, we saw military helicopters fly close above as a soldier aimed a camera at us. We smiled and waved ... our middle fingers back at him.

I had heard about Mt. David through a comrade who had begun camping out there, day in, day out. On April 19, 1999, a target practice "accident" killed David Sanes Rodriguez and injured four others. Outraged, protesters formed camps on the bombing-range, acting as human shields to prevent further bombing exercises from taking place. They placed a large cross at the site of Rodriguez's death, naming the area Mount David in his memory.

Vieques came into the hands of the U.S. Navy in the 1940's, when Congress legalized the Navy's takeover of the eastern and western sections of the island, leaving the civilian

population a small zone in the center. Expropriated families were assigned plots in a bulldozed cane field and had to sign a statement recognizing the Navy's right to take back the lot in 48 hours if necessary. The population dropped from approximately 40,000 to 9,500 people.

The Navy now occupies 75 percent of Vieques and 13 percent of the island of Puerto Rico. Military occupation continues to result in the forcible removal of the native population, the devastation the island's agricultural base and contamination of the environment.

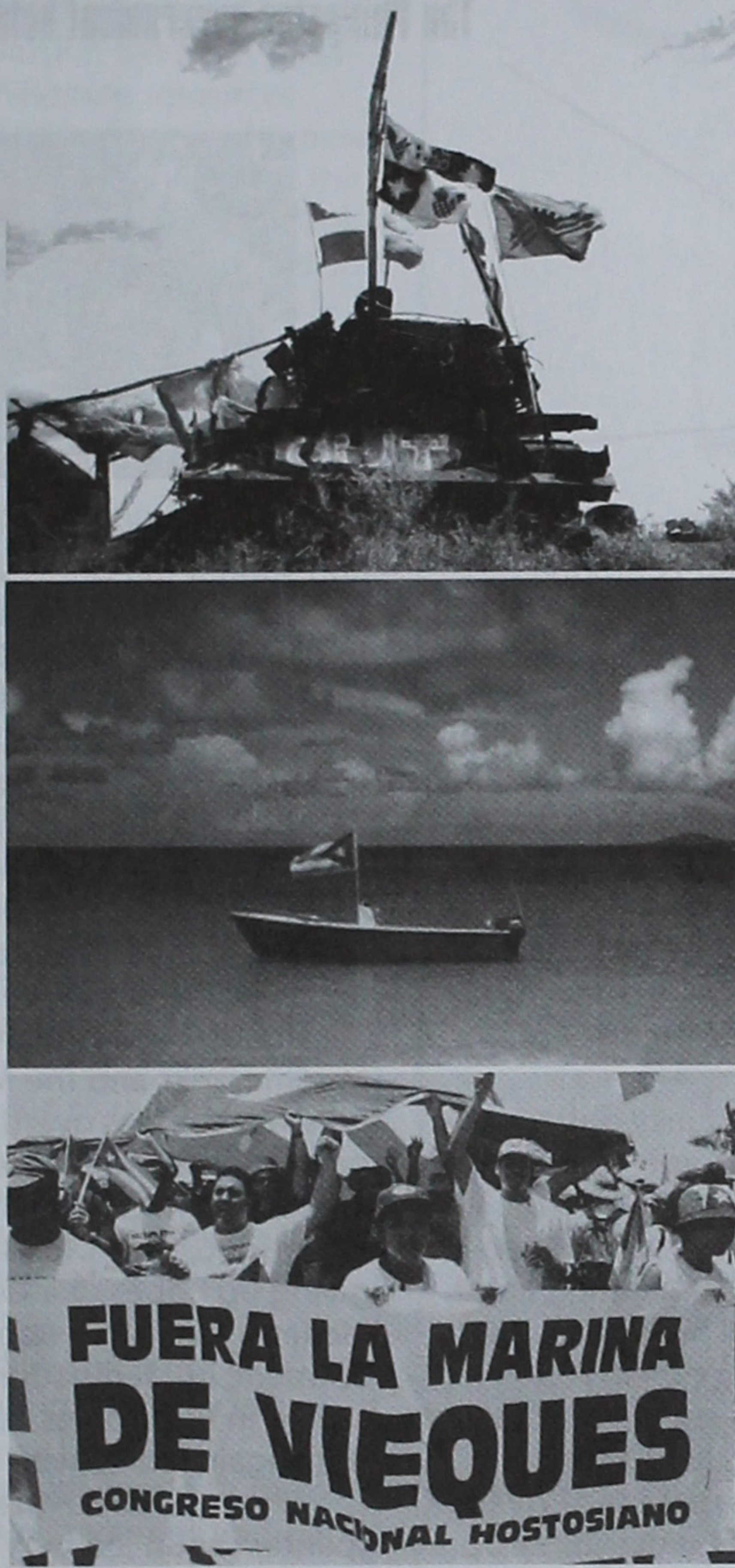
The people of Vieques and all of Puerto Rico are fighting back. In spite of the dangers of exposure to radiation and aerobic biological chemicals like Agent Orange, or malnourishment from the scarcity of food and water, people organized protests behind the gates of the Navy's restricted areas. They succeeded in halting the bombings on Vieques for over a year, until the U.S. government forcibly and violently removed protesters this May.

Among those arrested were community and religious leaders, two members of the U.S. Congress, members of the Puerto Rican Legislature, leaders of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, students, union members and artists.

Activists have also been mobilizing throughout the United States and internationally. Last month members of Puerto Rico-based groups Amigo/as Del Mar and Amigo/as De Vieques entered the Statue of Liberty to protest the U.S. Navy occupation of Vieques.

Japanese, Korean, and Puerto Rican activists are developing common strategies to oppose U.S. military exercises, occupation, and bombings on their native lands. During the DNC in August, the Okinawa Peace Network of Los Angeles, GABRIELA-L.A., and the Puerto Rican Alliance of L.A. marched together to call for an end to the bombing in Vieques, and all overseas militarization. There is a growing global consensus to get the "U.S. Navy out of Vieques" once and for all. The time to act is now ... *Pa'lante Siempre!* (forward always!)

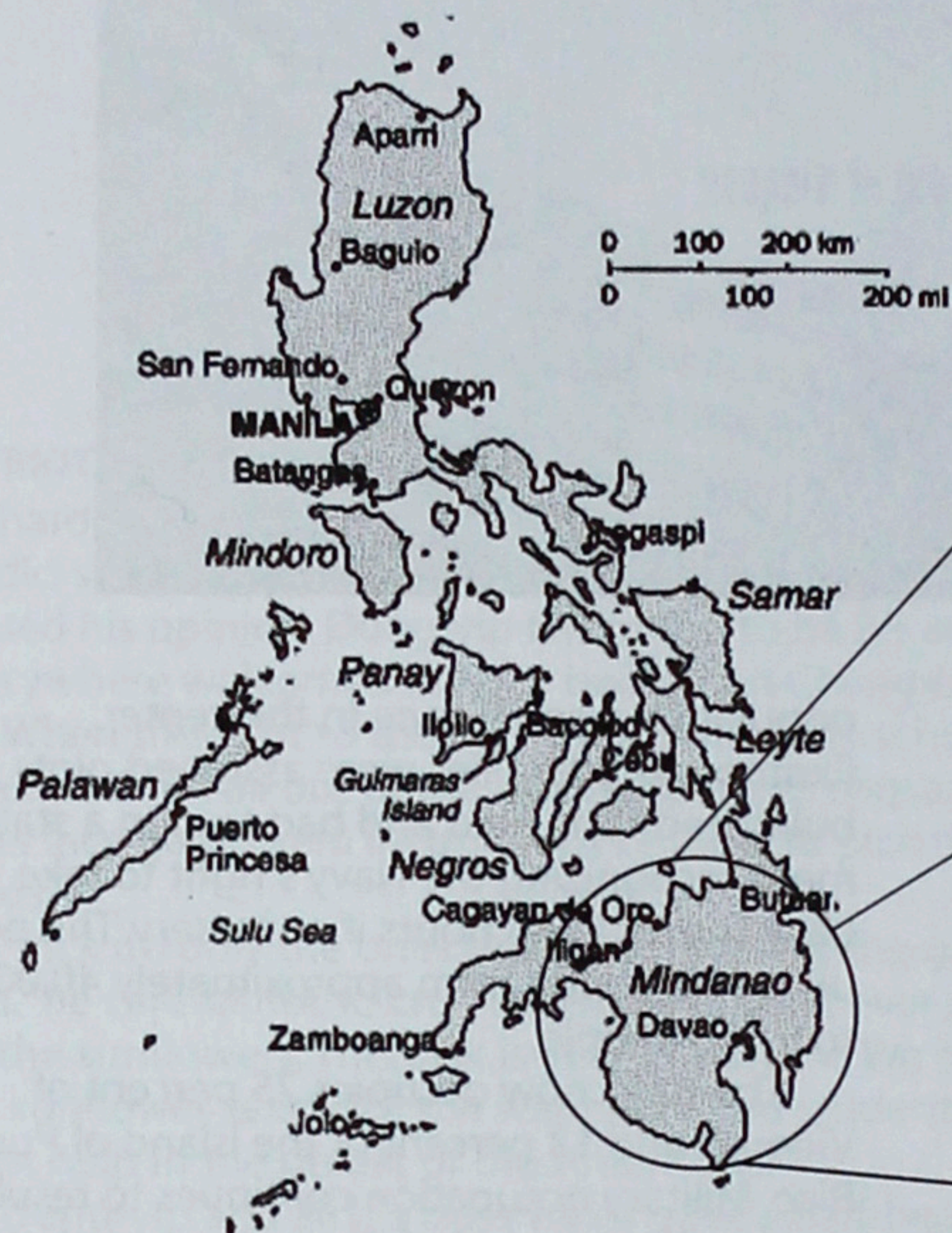
To learn more about the struggle in Vieques, visit: [www.viequeslibre.org](http://www.viequeslibre.org) or e-mail the Puerto Rican Alliance of Los Angeles at: [pr.alliance@puertorico.com](mailto:pr.alliance@puertorico.com) **G**



From the top: 1. US flags with skulls for states; 2. Mt. David; 3. anti-US boat; 4. protesters march with banner: "Navy out of Vieques"

**NI UNA MÁS!**

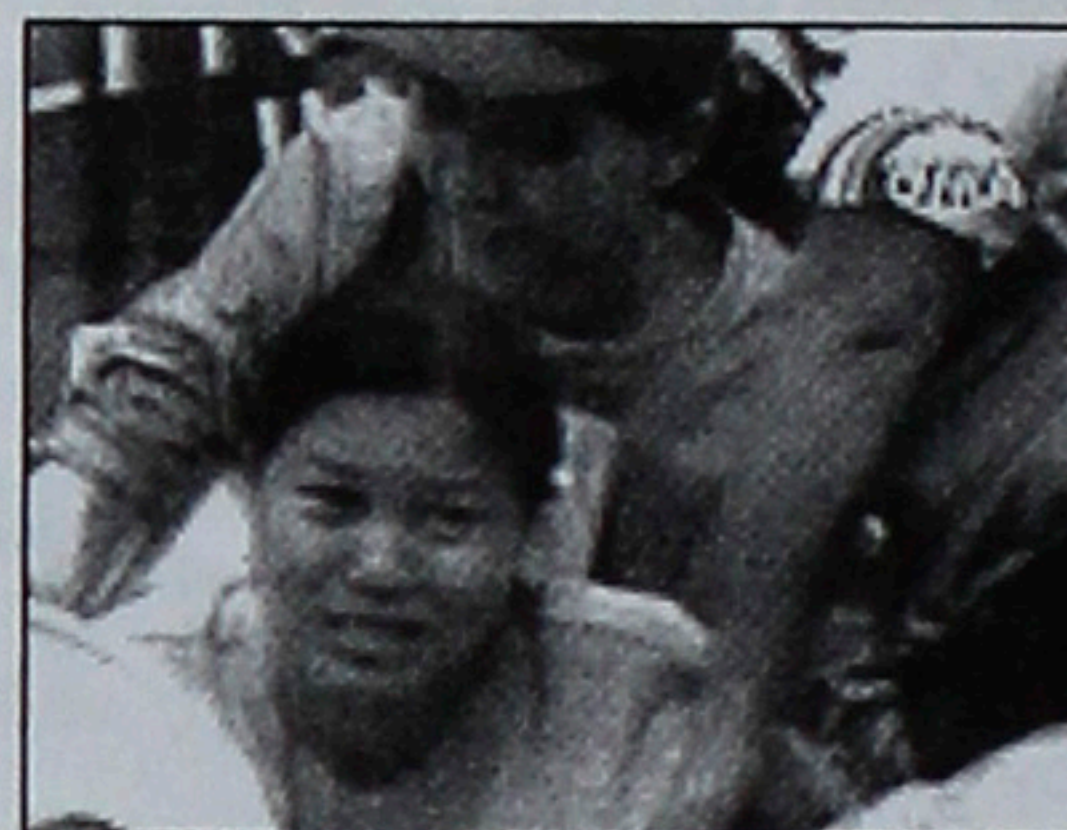




# War in Mindanao

The Philippine government holds its own jihad against its Muslim population.

By ARTURO GARCIA and JEFF LIU



**F**oreign hostages, kidnapping for ransom, Muslim fundamentalists, terrorists, secession, revolution. These terms, among others, are being thrown around in the latest media hype surrounding the current events on the island of Mindanao, Philippines.

Last year on April 23, a Muslim extremist group known as Abu Sayyaf seized 21 foreign and Filipino hostages at a resort in neighboring Malaysia and took them to their island outpost on Jolo, Philippines. On July 1, with attention focused on their jungle hide-out, Abu Sayyaf members kidnapped a group of 12 Filipino evangelists who arrived in Jolo to pray for the hostages.

Their demands were quite outrageous: millions of dollars in ransom and the release of three people currently serving time in US jails, one of whom was involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York.

The Philippine government's response was equally outrageous. They began an all-out assault on the Abu Sayyaf captors in Jolo as well as the group's headquarters in neighboring Basilan island. And in May, the Philippine Army broke a fragile 1997 ceasefire agreement with another rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and began attacking their checkpoints in central Mindanao, the largest island of the Philippines' southern provinces.

At press time, the official death toll on Jolo is seven rebels killed and 20 captured, with four civilian deaths and seven soldiers wounded. But without independent monitors, hundreds of civilians are feared dead as the army continues its relentless bombing. Up to 14,000 are displaced from the fighting. Relief workers have called for a moratorium on the campaign to bring in needed medical supplies and food to civilians, but government officials replied that a halt would compromise recent military gains.

What was once a kidnapping has now escalated into outright war on the country's six million Muslim minority, most of whom reside in the south.

The Moros, who converted to Islam in the 14th century, have resisted outside rule for centuries. In the *cordilleras* where the indigenous people kept their independence and culture intact, they defied Spanish Catholic rule and even early American colonialism.

Still, land grabbing by Christians from the north and economic exploitation by large corporations were exacerbated by government neglect. Public services like housing, schools, education and health care were lacking, and the Moros naturally began to feel discriminated against by Manila and the Catholic majority.

In 1967, the Mindanao Independence Movement was formed and sought freedom from Manila. Led by old leaders, bureaucrat politicians and feudal lords, they were easily pacified and bribed. But in 1971, a new leadership of young, militant Muslims formed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MNLF advocated for an independent Bangsa Moro Nation and declared their struggle against "Filipino colonialism" by the Manila government.

The government's reply was to intensify its military presence in Mindanao. The war in Mindanao escalated until 1977, when the MNLF and President/dictator Ferdinand Marcos called a truce in the Tripoli Agreement of 1976. The government did not comply, however, the cease-fire collapsed and the war resumed.

The US-backed Marcos regime used the cease-fire to divide the Muslim ranks and the MNLF suffered heavy losses as a result. When Pres. Marcos was overthrown in 1986, the MNLF gained prominence again and the new Aquino administration negotiated a cease-fire, which lasted until 1992.

In 1996, the MNLF signed a peace treaty with the government, giving up hopes of independence for autonomy. Former MNLF leaders were given appointments to the Mindanao regional government, but legislation guaranteeing autonomous rule have been stalled in Philippines Congress. Not surprisingly, many Muslims are once again fed up with the government's failure to keep their word.

When the MNLF made peace with the Manila government, a splinter group led by Muslim fundamentalist Abuljarak Janjalani, broke off and named themselves the Abu Sayyaf (Father of the Swordsmen). They filled in the power vacuum the MNLF left in the southwest area of Mindanao, the islands of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

This small group of more or less 200 armed bandits became notorious for their religious intolerance, terrorist activities against both Christians and Muslims, not to mention kidnapping for ransom.

Some believe that the Abu Sayyaf are mere thieves using Islamic fundamentalism to cloak their self-serving intentions. In the recent crisis, it was reported that a Libyan negotiator had brokered a deal in which the Abu Sayyaf were given \$15 million for the release of the hostages. Libyan officials have denied paying any ransom, but revealed that the deal includes several million dollars in development aid.

Others suspect that the Abu Sayyaf is actually tied to the Philippine military and the US Central Intelligence Agency. By trying to incite a religious war, their hostage-taking and terrorist activities are excuses for the Philippine army to

Continued on the next page



**MINDANAO, continued from page 34**

break a peace accord and begin attacking the south's most prominent Muslim resistance group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, based primarily in central, northwest and southwest Mindanao, advocates for self-determination and full independence. Led by MNLF founder and religious leader Hashim Salamat, the resistance group was formed in 1979 and is estimated to have 15,000 fighters. In recent years, there has been an increase in their ranks due to growing resentment against the Manila government and former MNLF leaders for "selling out."

As the events in the south spiral out of control, the president's fight-while-we-negotiate-style has only fueled the fire for more civil unrest. And his campaign to crush the Muslim militants is taking a toll, not only on the people, but also Philippine resources.

Four out of seven army divisions—over half its forces—are now deployed in Mindanao. The military spent US\$27 million in just the first four months of the siege and suffered more than 940 casualties. And damage to the local economy is estimated to be over \$20 million.

Yet Pres. Estrada is ready to commit more to the effort, including some 7,000 paramilitary units. Many have been specially designated to act as personal security guards for the island's largest plantations, including Dole-Stanfilco in General Santos City, Balabagan and Agri-Corp. in Lanao del Sur.

As the government escalates the war effort, its motives are increasingly being called into question. In particular are the president's efforts to play to foreign interests. Since being elected in 1998, Pres. Estrada has said on numerous occasions that he wishes to amend the constitution and allow foreign ownership of land again.

Without having resolved the region's problems, the US-backed Estrada regime has already allotted \$2.1 billion for Mindanao development projects next year. Many of these are infrastructure projects, not agriculture initiatives, which will benefit foreign investors more than locals. The budget plan runs counter to a campaign promise the president made in which he declared that the southern Philippines will be the nation's "premier food basket."

Meanwhile, the island remains an impoverished region that has been ravaged by years of war. According to government reports, over 900,000 civilians have fled their homes due to recent fighting and more than 120,000 people have perished in the 30-year rebellion.

In the larger scheme of things, the Mindanao crisis is only a reflection of the intense militarization all over the Philippines. In Luzon, Bicol, Bohol and Negros, there are increasing accounts of forced evacuation, torture, massacres, bombings, looting and human rights violations dastardly committed by the army. By all accounts, Pres. Estrada and the military are doing a terrible job of maintaining a unified Philippines.

After months of fumbled negotiations interspersed with relentless assaults by the Philippine army, most of the hostages abducted by the Abu Sayyaf were freed or managed to escape. One Filipino diving instructor, an American tourist and three Malaysians are believed to still be in captivity.

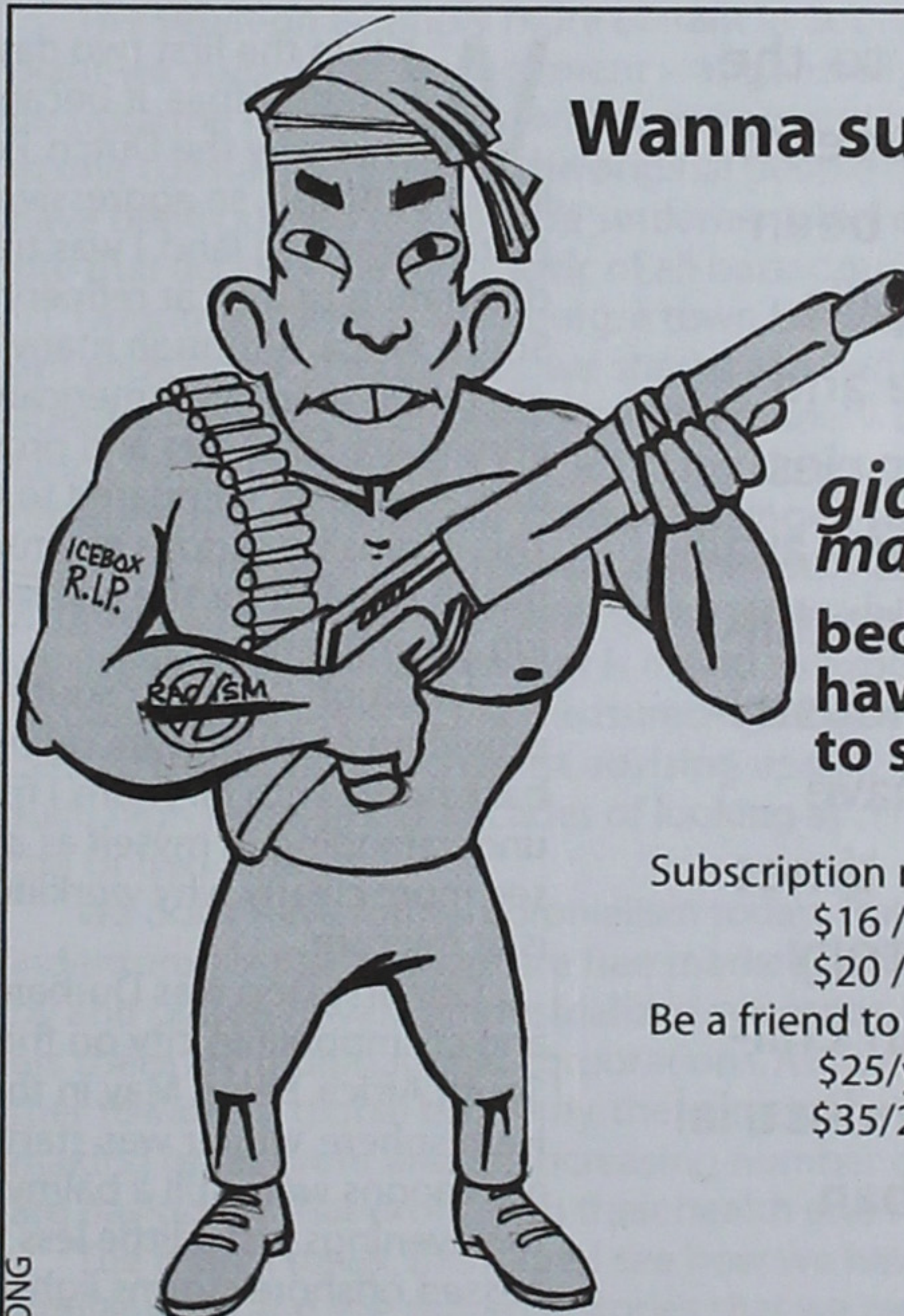
Jean-Jacques Le Garrec, one of two French photographers kidnapped in April, criticized the army attacks after his release. He told BBC News, "This action has legitimized the Abu Sayyaf movement, which finds itself struggling against a power that bombs its civilian population."

To add further insult to injuries, the U.S. Congress recently approved \$135 million in aid to counter such terrorist threats. Now, US military equipment and training is being used to kill more Filipinos in Mindanao. **G**

*Arturo Garcia is coordinator of the Philippine Peasant Support Network (PESANTE)-USA, a Los Angeles-based advocacy group for peasants in the Philippines.*



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Art: RICKMOND WONG



# Colonial Cousins

## South Asians in South Africa and America

Story and photos by SHIPRA BANSAL



In addition to the refineries, residents have recently been exposed to spills from chlorine and pesticide factories. The few studies available show that children in the industrialized areas have three to four times more respiratory problems than children in less industrial parts of Durban.

Within the first two days of landing in South Africa, it became very clear to me why the Dutch, Portuguese, and later the British, so aggressively fought to occupy this amazing land. I was traveling as part of a delegation to look at refinery operations in South Africa. Although many of the companies operating there are American, their operations abroad are far dirtier and prone to more accidental releases compared to the ones at home. This is causing serious environmental and health impacts for the communities surrounding the refineries.

Although I went to South Africa intent on providing assistance on refinery issues, I came back home with far more. I found a greater understanding of myself as a South Asian and see more clearly why working for social justice is at my core.

Our first stop was Durban, a semi-tropical and cosmopolitan city on the East Coast of South Africa. Being May in the Southern Hemisphere, winter was starting to set in; the afternoons were still a balmy 74 degrees and the evenings just a little less than that. We witnessed offshore storms light up the night sky and the ocean below. In the mornings we watched for dolphins that often come up to shore and play with surfers. To natives, this was nothing special. To me, however, this was a par-

adise I had imagined long destroyed by industrial interests.

Away from the shore, Durban has a darker side. After the end of apartheid in 1994, the new government worked hard to make South Africa a major player in the world's markets. Durban is routinely touted as South Africa's greatest hope for economic growth. It is considered an ideal spot, because it has one of the largest ports in the Southern Hemisphere and is home to an expansive industrial zone. Even two of South Africa's four refineries are located in Durban.

Residents pay heavily for this. Major accidents at the SAPREF (owned jointly by Shell and British Petroleum) and Engen (owned by Malaysian Petronas) refineries are commonplace. Even during our stay there, both refineries had accidental releases that literally blackened the skies. In addition to the refineries, residents have recently been exposed to spills from chlorine and pesticide factories. The sparse studies that are available show that children in the industrialized areas have three to four times more respiratory problems than children in less industrial parts of Durban.

The people of Durban are fighting back with limited success. Unlike in America, the regulations are relaxed and enforcement is almost non-existent. Furthermore, communities don't

SOUTH AFRICA, continued on the next page





'When I opened the closets in my closed room, I smelled **rotten eggs**, the characteristic odor of hydrogen sulfide, a common and toxic emission from refinery operations.'

#### SOUTH AFRICA, continued from page 36

have as many tools to fight for a cleaner environment. In the United States, there are "right-to-know" laws that provide at least some basic information on factory operations. In South Africa, however, industry owners have the freedom to keep almost all emissions information to themselves and therefore claim that the community doesn't base its claims on any valid data.

I was particularly interested in the lives of Black Africans and South Asian immigrants living in South Africa. Durban is home to the largest Indian population outside of India. It makes sense when one takes a look at the history of South Africa. During colonization, the British government needed a large supply of labor to work the lucrative sugar plantations. From 1830 to about 1910, well over a million Indians were imported as indentured laborers, a status one step above slavery. In exchange for the hope of financial success, immigrants left their families to assist the British Empire in South Africa. These immigrants finally settled in, starting their own families and creating new identities in their adopted land.

During the years of apartheid, all Indians in South Africa were given very limited rights and had no political voice at regional and national levels. They could not associate with whites in public, were forced to live in specific areas reserved for Indians and were not able to own property. This was true even for descendants not born into indenture.

While the powers given to Indian immigrants were meager, they were substantial compared to those given to Black Africans who had no voting powers. Additionally, Blacks had to carry a passbook at all times that identified them and had to be presented on demand. They were required to be in their homes by 9 p.m., at which time a loud siren would go off. If caught disobeying any of these rules, they were sent to jail, possibly beaten or worse.

This "divide and conquer" technique, that created competition between disenfranchised groups, was successful. Although some Indian immigrants saw the similarity in the situation between themselves and Black Africans, a greater number took the few privileges they had as a mark of superiority. They often differentiated their plight from that of Blacks and unwittingly bought into the system set up by their colonizers.

Even today, six years after the end of apartheid, the lines of power are clearly visible in society. In general, Indian immigrants have made a decent standard of living. Because of their lack of land and other resources, however, self-sufficiency has been harder to achieve for many Black Africans. This was particularly glaring when we visited several Indian homes that all had black servants.

Going to South Africa made visible to me the integral role that South Asians and other people of color play in aiding or breaking racist structures. One of the culminating points for me during the trip was my visit to the Pietermaritzburg train station, located about 25 miles from Durban. Here, Mahatma Gandhi was thrown off a train for being a "colored" even though he had a first-class

ticket in his hand. Like Rosa Parks, he demanded to sit in a seat for which he had bought a ticket. Like Rosa, he was treated as a second-class citizen.

Years later, he wrote that this moment of blatant racism eventually drove him to galvanize an entire country against injustice. After the train incident he spent over two decades fighting for rights in South Africa and developing his philosophy of non-violence.

Although the situation faced by Indian immigrants in South Africa and South Asian immigrants in America may seem different, they are quite similar. Like our South African counterparts, initial South Asian immigration to the US was for indentured labor. This was much smaller in numbers than in South Africa, and has been a fact subsumed by the recent mass immigration of mostly middle and upper class South Asians in the mid 1960's. This difference has given many of us in America the false notion that our circumstances are ultimately different than that of other minority groups such as Latinos or Blacks.

The situation is simply more blatant in South Africa. At every plant we visited, the management was generally white and lived far from the industrial sites, while workers and locals were colored. In one coastal town where the original people of Africa, the Koisans, have been pushed to a hillside settlement, there is a leaking landfill site that accepts the most toxic of all hazardous wastes.

During our visit to Sasolburg, a town built around the petroleum and chemical industries, we stayed at a bed and breakfast about a mile and a half away from the refinery. Even at this distance, when I opened the closets in my closed room, I smelled rotten eggs, the characteristic odor of hydrogen sulfide, a common and toxic emission from refinery operations. People in the Black Zamdela community surrounding the industrial area complain of weak eyesight, a symptom that is linked to exposure to hydrogen sulfide. During the visit, we measured hydrogen sulfide levels adjacent to the refinery. A chemist advising us said she had never seen such high levels in her decades of looking at refinery operations in the United States.

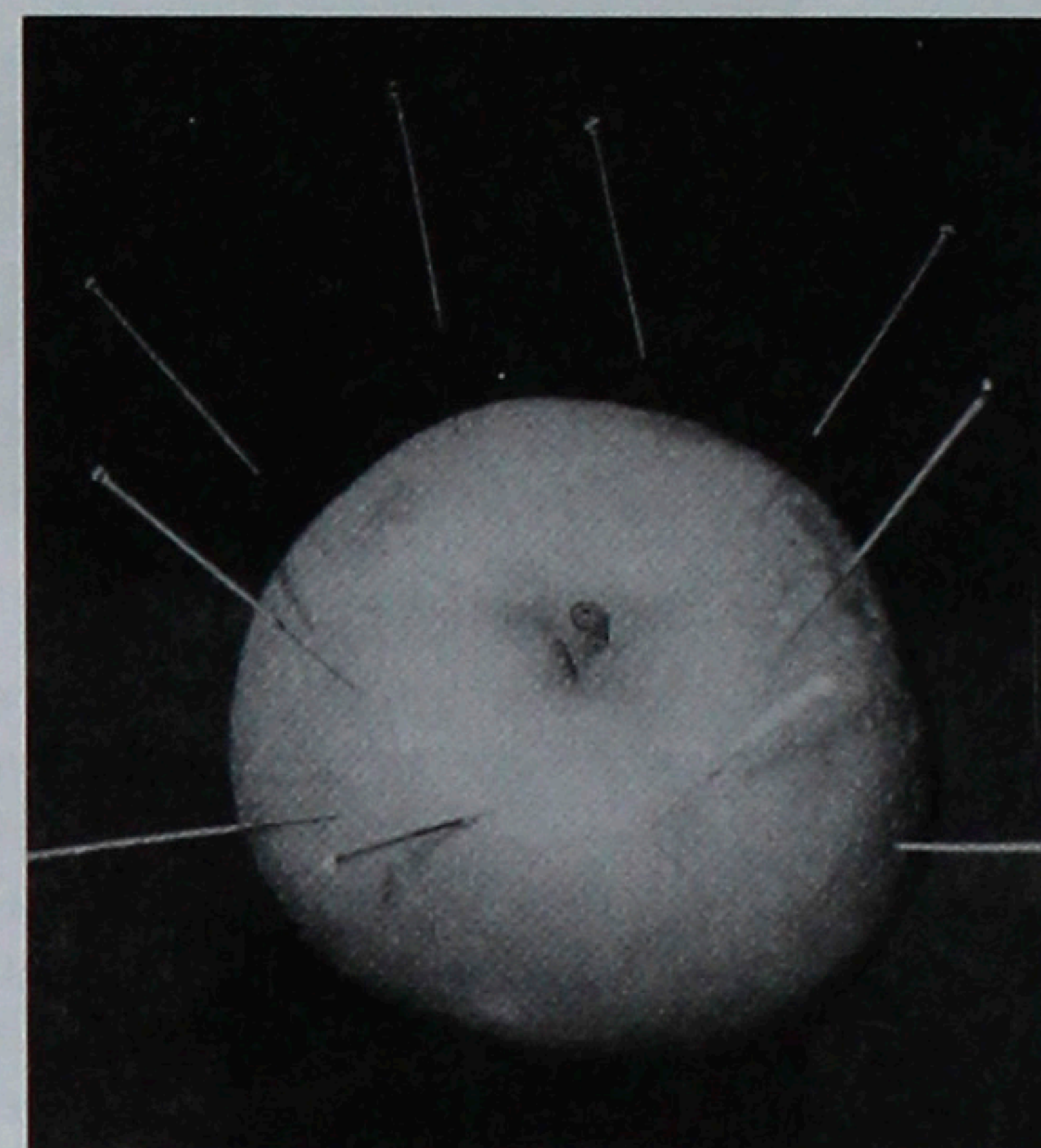
We don't have formal colonialism today. But instead of slaves or indentured servants, there are free market systems with rules made by and biased towards industrialized countries. Instead of colonizers there are multinational corporations. As the world moves further towards a global economy, there are a few on the top who are making great profit and an increasing number on the bottom who are paying for that profit with their health and hard labor.

The more I travel, the more I see how we have all suffered in similar ways and the shared histories that we represent. Living in Los Angeles, I may not get stopped by the cops every time I'm out driving on the streets. But I know what it means for others when they are and how that relates to me. When I fight for justice for them, I'm fighting for myself and on behalf of all my ancestors who just wanted to have a fair chance at life. **G**



# asian miracle cures

By ALEX DONG KO



**G**randma's magic poultice and mom's heal-all tea .... Why do we continue to use the bizarre remedies that we grew up with? Did they really work when we were kids? If dad's special stomachache cure had been sent to a lab of trained scientists, what (if any) healing properties would they find?

Many of us stood in front of mom, our bodies fevered and clammy, and drank the oil-black herbal medicine without even knowing what it was. Or we ate a spoonful of elixir X, the horrible taste inflicting a suffering greater than any illness. Suffering, it seemed, was part of the healing process.

White kids grew up taking Vicks and Tylenol. With neat packaging, a complete listing of active ingredients, and smiling TV moms giving spoonfuls of syrup to their sniffing TV sons, you can see why Dimetap is "trusted by mothers everywhere."

This is not to say that my mom didn't give me Alka-Seltzer. It was available in the supermarket and didn't need to be specially made. It popped and fizzed and after I drank it I felt better (I couldn't explain why it worked and it tasted rotten).

While Benadryl has the FDA backing its legitimacy as alleviating pesky hay fever, all that my uncle's soothing tea has is generations of familial endorsement. Then again there are the ridiculous ads for various products from the "exotic Orient," their very Asian "otherness" guaranteeing their effectiveness.

A lifetime of proper pro-corporate and pro-assimilation propaganda fosters an insistent skepticism and even derision for the often unexplained and unflinchingly non-Western aspects of our native cultures. Too often, because these home remedies contain remnants of our backward agrarian past, it becomes disturbingly easy to discount the real healing magic created by the concerned hands of a loved one. For heartburn, I often think of TUMS before anything my dad ever made me. While standing in the cold remedies aisle in a badly lit Vons, my ambivalence is created. But at home, I still take a deep breath and down whatever home-brewed concoction I am handed. The doubts are discarded and I simply trust those magic hands.

But sometimes, the remedies are strange and funny. Take my father's penchant for devouring anything purported to increase vitality. Read further and learn of the healing wisdom of our ancestors, as told by members of the community.

## Jar of White Pickles and Horchata

At the age of seven, I was convinced our house hid secrets and oddities. After investigating the horde of junk in our garage, I eventually found my way to the disorganized closets in the house. What could they possibly keep there?

I began to sneak into their closet when they were out at work or busy in the kitchen (I won't divulge the carnal secrets that I found hidden amongst the clothes and mortgage papers, which both totally confused and intrigued me). On the first journey, I found a large, kim-chee jar sitting on the top shelf of the closet. The white-lidded jar was half filled with a cloudy, milky-white liquid reminiscent of horchata. Floating in this murky soup were what looked like several albino pickles.

My seven-year-old mind was a storm of questions — What is that stuff? I hurried to get my desk chair, my heart thumping at high-speed. A bullet train of anxious thoughts hurtled through my mind. Hurry up ... they are going to be here ... you are going to be in trouble ... what am I doing? I placed the chair in the closet and reached out for the jar. I gently shook it making the albino pickles bob up and down and disturbing the snow-white sediment at the bottom. "Whoa." I quickly placed the jar back on the shelf, looked around to see if anything was out of place, grabbed the chair and went to my room.

My father will do almost anything if he's convinced that it's good for his health. Growing up, I saw him drink bowls of tar-black, nauseatingly bitter herbal elixirs. When I started college, he bought himself a cup-like massager with a compartment for herbal mixtures. The massager would heat up the herbs and emit a vile smelling smoke. He would buy little wax balls filled with herbal medicine. Peeling back a small golden seal, he would drink the medicine even when he was in perfect health. He would come back from the acupuncturist with strange bruises and burn marks. Recently, I was helping my father around the house. I asked him about a sharp pain that he had mentioned was bothering his right shoulder. He had seen his acupuncturist for it.

"How was the visit? Does your shoulder feel better?"

He took off his shirt and revealed a crimson, baseball sized bruise. He had been stuck and bled. My father rotated his shoulder

**Continued on the next page**



a few times, laughed and said, "I think it's feeling a lot better."

Returning to the albino pickles, a month after discovering them, I went into my parent's closet again only to find the awe-inspiring jar gone. I asked my mother about the jar and what became of its mysterious contents. She laughed at my question and answered, "Your dad ate them."

I couldn't believe it! "What were they?" I inquired. She laughed again and asked me if I remembered a guest we had several months ago. I did recall that a good friend of my father's had stayed with us for a week. He was a sailor who worked for a Korean importing company. Before docking in the United States, he had traveled through Russia where he bought a few gifts for my father. These included bottles of Russian vodka and a half dozen seal penises.

"Your dad pickled the seal penises in the vodka."

"Why? What? Dad ate seal penises? Why?"

"Because his friend said it was medicine. It's something from Asian folk medicine. Your father thinks it was going to be good for him."

When I asked what seal penises were good for, she laughed and cryptically said, "It good for making a man strong."

I then vaguely remembered seeing, several months prior, my boxer clad father methodically pouring vodka into a jar. Little did I know then what he was preparing. Later that day, when my father got home from work, I immediately interrogated him.

"Yes, I ate them. It's very good for you. It makes you strong. It's really hard to come by that kind of medicine."

"But what did it taste like?"

"It tasted like medicine. You don't take medicine for how it tastes."

"Why did you take it?"

Like my mother, my father skirted mentioning the aphrodisiac qualities of the concoction and said instead, "It good for a man. You are too young to have any."

#### Recipe for Pickled Seal Penises

1. Obtain a half dozen dried seal penises.
  2. Place in a large jar.
  3. Fill with 2 bottles of premium Russian vodka.
  4. Let jar sit in a cool, dry place for at least 90 days.
- The penises should rehydrate and the vodka will turn milky white. Eat one penis a week. Drink a shot of the vodka as needed.

#### Su To Panko — Vinegar and Flour

"This remedy works. I was going to tell the Lakers about it when Kobe twisted his ankle. For sprains, twisted ankles, jammed fingers and the like, this remedy has ALWAYS worked to take away the inflammation, swollenness, and pain OVERNIGHT. I don't know why, but it does work. My mom calls it su to panko, or vinegar and flour in Japanese" — Lloyd Kajikawa.

##### Recipe for Su To Panko

1. Make a paste of flour, vinegar and an egg white. The paste has to be thick enough to spread, like peanut butter.
2. Spread the mixture on gauze or an old t-shirt and wrap it

around the afflicted area. Wrap with another cloth or tape, but not too tightly.

3. Let this remedy work its magic while you sleep, and in the morning, voila! Pain, swelling, etc. are all gone.

#### Magic Mud Pear for the Common Cold

"My mom says she's had these when she was younger and they've worked. I haven't, so I can't tell you if they work or not" — Joanne Kim.

#### Recipe for an Asian Mud Pear

1. Cut off the top of a pear (like a lid) and empty out the core.
2. Pour honey inside. Replace the top of the pear
3. Mix clean soil (preferably from the mountains) with water to make clay.
4. Pad the pear with this clay.
5. Put the pear over a low open flame (like on top of your gas range.)
6. The clay should harden (like in making ceramics) and the honey and pear meat inside should liquefy.
7. Let cool and drink.

#### Warding off the Evil Eye

"*Such a Long Journey*, a movie about a Parsi family, reminded me of certain faith healing traditions in Indian culture. A religious-ethnic minority of Persian descent, Parsis have lived in India for centuries. It was interesting to see certain cross-cultural patterns in how the family deals with the 'evil eye' that were reminiscent of my own childhood spent in Goa.

"In *Journey*, lemons are used to draw out the evil eye affecting a young Parsi boy who in adolescent belligerence refuses to allow his parents

to decide his future for him. A faith healer advises the mother of a 'cure.' The healer instructs the mother to rotate lemons around her son, squeeze out the juice, and give it to someone to drink, causing the evil eye to pass on to the other person.

"In Goa, a similar tradition is employed in Catholic and Hindu households. Dry red chilies are used along with prayers to safeguard young children from the effects of the evil eye. This ceremony is called 'disht' and is a lot of fun to be at the center of, because of the attention bestowed upon you and the mystery that surrounds the process.

Depending on how powerful the ailment is, the dishitkar either burns the chilies or leaves them at a crossroads to have the ailment pass on to someone else. Personally, I preferred the chili burning, because it was a treat to hear them explode in the fire — supposedly, the louder the pop, the greater the destruction done to the evil eye. The taking of disht is considered a familial tradition, with powers passed down generally through generations of women" — Benedito.

##### Disht Recipe

1. Find nearest female relative or friend with powers to perform disht.
2. Burn or leave chili peppers at a crossroads to pass ailment onto someone else.
4. Listen for sounds of the chilies burning in fire. If disht was successful, loud popping should be heard.

*Feeling  
sick?  
tired?  
sad?  
Eat this!*



# A New World Order?

## US Militarism in Okinawa

By AYAKO HAGIHARA

・オキナワの基地・

・基地の中のオキナワ・

With a red ribbon around her wrist, Yuko Yamauchi, an American citizen studying in Okinawa, Japan, shook hands with President Bill Clinton last July during his visit to Okinawa for the Group of Eight (G8) Summit. Just hours earlier, the ribbon tied her in solidarity with 25,000 Okinawans calling for an end to U.S. militarism in their backyard.

"It's part of the Human Chain Around Kadena organized by the Red Card Movement, a campaign that refers to the power of a soccer referee who can flash a red card to eject a player for poor conduct," explained Yamauchi. "The Movement encourages Okinawans to take power in demanding the removal of the U.S. bases. I kept the ribbon and wore it to Clinton's speech."

The G8 meeting, held last July in Okinawa, is an annual meeting of the heads of state of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, to discuss major developments in world affairs and strategize around issues such as global currency and trade.

Why would an affair of worldwide scale be held on a miniscule island off the southern tip of Japan? This was the perfect opportunity for the United States to prove to the world, even after a 55-year history of military raping, killing and robbing, that making Okinawa one of the main outposts for U.S. military operations in the Pacific is beneficial for Japan and the world.

For thousands of years, the Ryukyu Kingdom, a territory of over 71 islands south of Japan and east of Taiwan, was a sovereign nation until Japan conquered it. During WWII and for 27 years afterward, the United States colonized Okinawa and continued the trend of obliterating indigenous cultural traditions and belief systems. Even after the 1972 reversion of Okinawa to Japan, the military continued its unwelcome stay.

"In a public speech in 1998, [then U.S. Secretary of Defense] William Cohen explicitly stated that the military's role in the new century was to protect capital markets around the world," said Martha Matsuoka, a member of Okinawa



"Old man in the field and plane crash"

But it's not only all living things in the sea and mountains that are so surprised. All of the people working in their villages, in their fields and their homes are also so surprised! Maybe a plane will crash in a field right alongside an old man farming there! And sometimes, airplanes flying in the sky even crash into each other. And other airplanes crash into the ground. They crash in places that are not even military bases. These crashes take the lives of the people living there! We know that this has happened in the past.



Peace Network in Los Angeles. "He said it openly and clearly, leaving no guessing about what the role of the U.S. military is in Asia."

The presence of U.S. bases has had devastating consequences on the women and children in the area. On Sept. 4, 1995, a 12-year-old girl was abducted by three U.S. military personnel, raped, dumped out of the car and left by the side of a road. Her assailants had rented the car inside the base, purchased duct tape and condoms and left the base with the purpose of abducting a woman and raping her.

The incident was one in a long history of violence against women in Okinawa. Since 1972, almost 5,000 reported crimes were committed by U.S. military personnel, 509 of which were particularly brutal. Perpetrators with U.S. military status are granted immunity from local laws and courts.

No less offensive is the effect of military bases on the surrounding environment. Bases store fuel, solvents and other chemicals as well as weapons, including defoliants like Agent Orange and depleted uranium-tipped bullets. At White Beach, a docking area for nuclear submarines, regional health statistics show comparatively high rates of leukemia in children and other cancers in adults.

The presence of U.S. military bases in Okinawa have also quelled economic development by appropriating much-needed land. Forty-two years after the land was appropriated, the Antiwar Landowners Association made a fervent plea: "This land is filled with the daily lives and the memories of our ancestors .... The very presence in Okinawa of you, the U.S. military, tramples upon and destroys our daily lives, our livelihood and our sense of pride .... Stop using our land to wreak suffering upon both the peoples of Asia and the people of Okinawa!"

U.S. citizens are a crucial part of the struggle for self-determination and true global security. Domestic campaigns are demanding reductions in military, money that could go to funding socially beneficial programs like education, health care and housing.

Last June, just before the G8 meeting, the East Asia-U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism convened in Okinawa the International Women's Summit to Redefine Security. "We conclude that military security is a contradiction in terms," the Network stated. "The present militarized international security system is maintained at the expense of the natural environment, the economic and social needs of many people and fundamental human rights. This is a price we refuse to pay." **G**



**You've said you have that feeling that you're waiting for the shot that kills you or 25 to life. You can't shake that feeling?**

**R:** No, no I can't. I know the only way is to totally stay out of the gang. That's something I cannot do. I tell my homeboys, you know what, you guys are fucked up. I don't know why I don't leave you guys. But you guys are all I have. I don't have any other friends besides them since I was 16 years old. My boys is all I know, all I've ever known.

**Are you still religious?**

**R:** I pray to God and I pray to him every night. Since I was 16 years old, I haven't missed a prayer. Every night before I go to sleep, I say the Lord's prayer. All my life God's given me so many chances .... I don't know why I don't listen to him. I think it's 'cuz I'm hardheaded.

**What do you expect in the future?**

**R:** I don't expect nothing. I just expect to enjoy life, work. Right now I have a job and my mom's really proud of me. I'm just happy to be out here... But in other ways, I'm just like oh man, got in a fight, fuck, man. Sometimes, I'm in situations where I'm like, man what the hell am I doing? It scares the shit out of me, going to jail, but in the heat of the moment I don't think about nothing. If someone pisses me off and he hits me in the club, if I have a knife, I'm gonna kill him. If I have a gun I'm gonna shoot him in the parking lot. I don't care if there's a cop there. If you hesitate, that guy's gonna do you up. That's the jail mentality. Even my homeboys tell me, why are you always trying to prove yourself to the world?

**What are you proving?**

**R:** That I'm still tough, that I don't back down on nobody. There's so many times when we were out-numbered, when guys pulled out guns on us, and we do crazy stuff, why we do that for? I don't know. Trust me I'm scared shitless, I'm so scared sometimes when we get in those situations, but I'm like, fuck it, I ain't backing down from no man... Everyone's scared, it's just who hides it better. That's the thing with gangs, who can hide their fear better, who can call each other's bluff. My hand's in my jacket, pretending I got a gun, call my bluff. Do I got a gun or do I not? One of these days I'll be trying to call somebody's bluff, and he ain't gonna be bluffing on me, you know what I mean.

**What do you think of these kids getting locked up younger and younger?**

**R:** Watch, soon there ain't gonna be no age limit. In jail, we say it's politics. Everyone lives by politics. Even in jail—I'm Asian, I ain't supposed to eat after a black guy, because we call it politics. How come I can't eat after this guy, why? There ain't nothing wrong with him, it's politics. In the state prison there's politics, and in the real world there's politics. Both sides of politics suck.

**But isn't it natural for people to want you locked up if there's a chance you're gonna be out there robbing them?**

**R:** The way I see it, in the '90s, shooting somebody, robbing somebody, it's nothing crazy. The way you were raised up is the way you see life. If you were raised in a suburb, a white area where no crime happens, then when something happens, it's like oh my God. But if you were raised around crime all the time, it's nothing. If they were to step down into our shoes, and be raised the way we were raised, it's not crazy no more. It's typical.

**Why do you keep getting into trouble?**

**R:** Just the dumbest reasons why we get into fights. This was my

latest fight, we were at Club SoHo and we're leaving the parking lot. There's a lot of people in front of my friend's car—this kid, he's no gangster, he was like a college kid. I'm like, ah forget it. He ain't nobody, he ain't a thug. And all of a sudden, he said, what the fuck man—bitch. And that's one thing, in jail you do not call nobody a bitch. We got in a fight right there. I been in a lot of fights, man. And I know I don't start 'em, I just finish 'em off.

In junior high, I thought smoking, being in a gang was crazy. My mom reminds me to this day, when I was in junior high I was scared at the sight of my own blood, let alone beat somebody up. I played basketball, I went to church. We ain't got no dad, my mom gambled.... I had real low self-esteem about myself, real low self-esteem.

**Because why — did you feel like nobody loved you?**

**R:** I had that mentality, my dad wasn't around, nobody was showing me the way, my mom was never around. You know, honestly, that's why I always try to prove myself—because I want so much for everyone to respect me and love me and show me attention. Being a gangster, that's the only way I know how to get recognized. Yeah Randy took the first punch, you know what I mean, Randy took off on him first. I'm just waiting to outgrow it, but I don't know when.

**What would it take for you to outgrow the gang life?**

**R:** Recently I just figured this out, you can't make nobody love you. You can't make nobody respect you. They do it on their own.

I turn 23 this month. I tell myself all the time, grow up, grow up, grow up. But I can't shake it. It's not about the thug lifestyle. It's the lifestyle of be honest to everyone. Be who I am, not backing down from no one. Using your head. Have loyalty to your friends. Whatever you say, if you say you're gonna do it, do it. If you're gonna talk bad about them, go beat them up, go do something. That's how I am.

**Do you think you got a second chance?**

**R:** I got three, four, five chances. Not from the system, from God. I was supposed to leave today at four o'clock for work and I got this new p.o. and she's threatening me. I said, I can't see you I got to work tomorrow. (She said) if you don't come in tomorrow, I'm issuing a warrant for your arrest. This system has never done me right, period. These p.o.'s don't help you get back in society. They just give you a hard time.

A few days after, I got word that Randy's parole officer had him arrested for a parole violation — from months before. He'd been stopped by a cop as he left a club where a fight broke out. He ended up doing four months.

With some difficulty I managed to get in touch with Randy that summer in his hometown of Rosemead. The past four months had been harder than his five years the first time, he said. With no job or money, he'd sold his car and was now sharing a room with his 19 year-old brother in their mom's house. He had decided to get citizenship, to avoid a stay in the INS detention center should he get busted again.


"Have you changed at all from this experience?" I asked. "Are you just gonna keep doing the same things, but try to do them smarter?"

Randy thought a moment, shaking his head, "Yeah, yeah, in a way that's what I'm trying to do. But there's never a smart way to do something dumb. Right? I know that." **G**





# Who can stop the rain?

of wet t-shirts and space exploration *de Costa Rica*? 

By ERIC C. WAT

Subject: updates: stupid American men!

Hi guys,

Let me first say that nothing I'm about to tell you had spoiled the fun I had this weekend.

**W**ater-rafting is absolutely amazing. There's no way to have seen what I saw of Costa Rica without doing it. If I had to leave tomorrow — which's not going to happen — this trip would've been worth it.

But I have to tell you this because I haven't been able to share it with anyone else here. You know, I've been warned about the machismo culture here in Costa Rica. And sure, I've witnessed or heard some of it, even though it was never directed at me. But it's really sad that the most sexist experiences I've had the misfortune of claiming as part of my Costa Rican journey came from our American brethrens.

It all took place at the rapids. Our guide (a local) was a crazy man who took us on the wildest rapids and made us tip over three times on purpose, which is great! On the other hand, he's also quite sexist.

At the beginning of our four-hour trip, we commented to him that his job must be amazing, doing this everyday. (We were already mesmerized by the whole experience five minutes into it.) Maybe because we had an all-male crew, this came out of his mouth, something to the effect that everyday is like a wet t-shirt contest, referring to the female clients who would inevitably, like the male ones, get wet, thus giving him quite a happy show everyday.

Well, after that, it was open season ... for the entire four hours. It's like an alpha-male competition. I had to endure among other things, a debate about the shape of perfect breasts and an exchange of lewd names in Spanish and English that refer to the female sex.

Inside I was livid. But I was wearing a PFD (Personal Flotation Device). So I'm thinking maybe this is not one of those times in my life that I have complete control over my destiny. And maybe I should just stay quiet.

Then PFD became BFD. The man next to me, a Korean American from Santa Ana, CA, who is, mind you, a high school teacher, started talking about how "Californication" by the Red

Hot Chili Peppers is about "fucking California girls."

That was the beginning of the last straw. First of all, it's not true. Second of all, I had spent some time with him during breakfast and gotten to know him a little bit and liked him. I had even considered exchanging numbers at the end of our trip. I considered his gaffe a betrayal.

So I turned to him and gave him a mean look. "No, it's not about fucking anyone. Have you heard the lyrics?" He didn't answer me.

Then five minutes later, the man in front of me, a white law student from USC, in an attempt to impress our guide/lothario, said that in the United States you can shout "Show us your tits," at American women (with a smile to show you're joking presumably — or that you're an idiot), and the women would not consider it an offense. He and his friends have done it before.

I told him, "I don't know what part of the U.S. you're talking about, but I don't know any female friend of mine who would smile at that comment." I even made sure I used my broken Spanish to repeat the last part so the guide wouldn't get the wrong impression about what's acceptable in the United States.

A minute later, we passed by some wild cows on the shore. I don't know what possessed me, but I shouted in this mock-brutish voice, "Hey, show us your tits!" I just wanted to mock him and make him hear how stupid it actually sounds. (I wanted to say, "I don't think even cows like it." But that would be comparing women to wild cows. Ugh! The things he made me do! Being overboard suddenly didn't seem so bad.)

Anyway, as my tarot card reader predicted, I met "a gorgeous blonde." It was at a dancing class. She's from Germany, Ingrid is her name. She can dance salsa and merengue real well!

I didn't have the pleasure to partner with her, but we talked before the class and we, along with other folks, went to the U.S.-Costa Rica soccer match today. Maybe because I've had no

WATEVAH, continued on page 46





Photos: ERIC C. WAT

**WATEVAH, continued from page 45**

sexual interest in any man I've met in the last two weeks, I'm really drawn to her.

She looks like Gwyneth Paltrow, but prettier, wilder, and without all the annoying ingenue B.S. In fact, she's so pretty that she changed my mind to think Gwyneth Paltrow is not that bad.

BTW, Costa Rica won. 2-1. Which is why I'm still alive to write you this evening. Until next time.

Eric

**Date: Sat, 12 Aug 03:09:58 GMT**

**Subject: updates: who can stop the rain?**

Hi,

I spent the last week in the beaches of Tortuguero and the small town of Fortuna, continuing my quest to accumulate as many "firsts" as I can before leaving the kingdom of twentysomething-hood. I saw the lava flow of a volcano; I rode a horse; I swam beneath a waterfall; I saw a green turtle lay more than 100 eggs in the cover of night and then disappear into the ocean again.

My encounters with so much nature has been both mind-boggling and unsettling. After all, I'm a city slicker. The ontological implication of such a different reality — the word **amoral** keeps coming to my mind — is not something I want to fathom until I get back to my life in LA. But it sure is overwhelming.

Originally, I had planned the last leg of my adventures in Montezuma, a small beach town on the Pacific coast. Then I got to thinking .... Do I really need to see another beach? I've seen a lot of water already: beaches on both coasts, rafting down rapids, river safari, hot springs, waterfalls, swimming pools ... and lots of rain.

Worse than being a city boy is being a city boy from L.A. I can't recall the last day when there wasn't any precipitation. In one month, I have gone through two umbrellas. Just the other day, it was pouring as we descended from a volcano. It soaked my bag and completely ruined my last pack of cigarettes and matches. That was the sign. Rain was my enemy!

Since I cannot convince God to change the seasons for my travel convenience I am appealing to a higher power: my quickly vanishing bank account. I'm spending a small fortune to get out of Costa Rica for a few days and spend them in ... sunny Cuba. (Watch the Vengeful One send a hurricane my way.)

That's right: four days and three nights this close ( ) to Fidel.

Actually, it's more like three days, unless you count sitting in a plane part of the Cuban experience. Those communists sure know how to market their vacation packages.

After Cuba, I will be back in LA shortly. I do miss LA and all of you. There are moments when I want to take the next flight back. Whenever I feel homesick, I turn to a passage from the short story "The Third and Final Continent" by Jhumpa Lahiri that I had copied down and brought with me.

The story is about an Indian man, born and raised in India, educated in England, who eventually worked and started a family in America. He entered this country the same day the astronauts landed on the moon. In his first year here, he was very lonesome; his only friend was his senile landlady. Thirty years later, he offers this reflection of his life to his son:

**"Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination."**

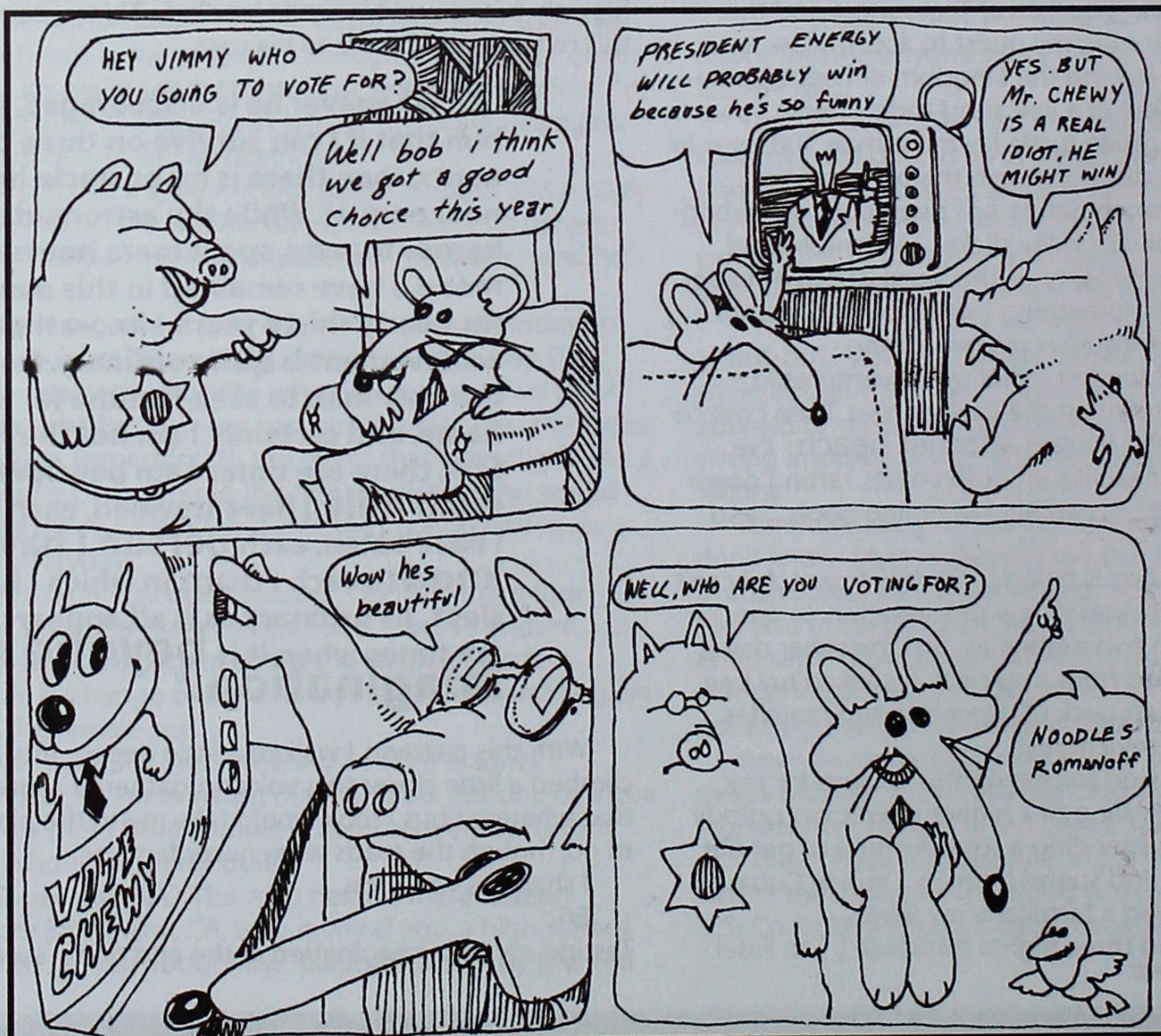
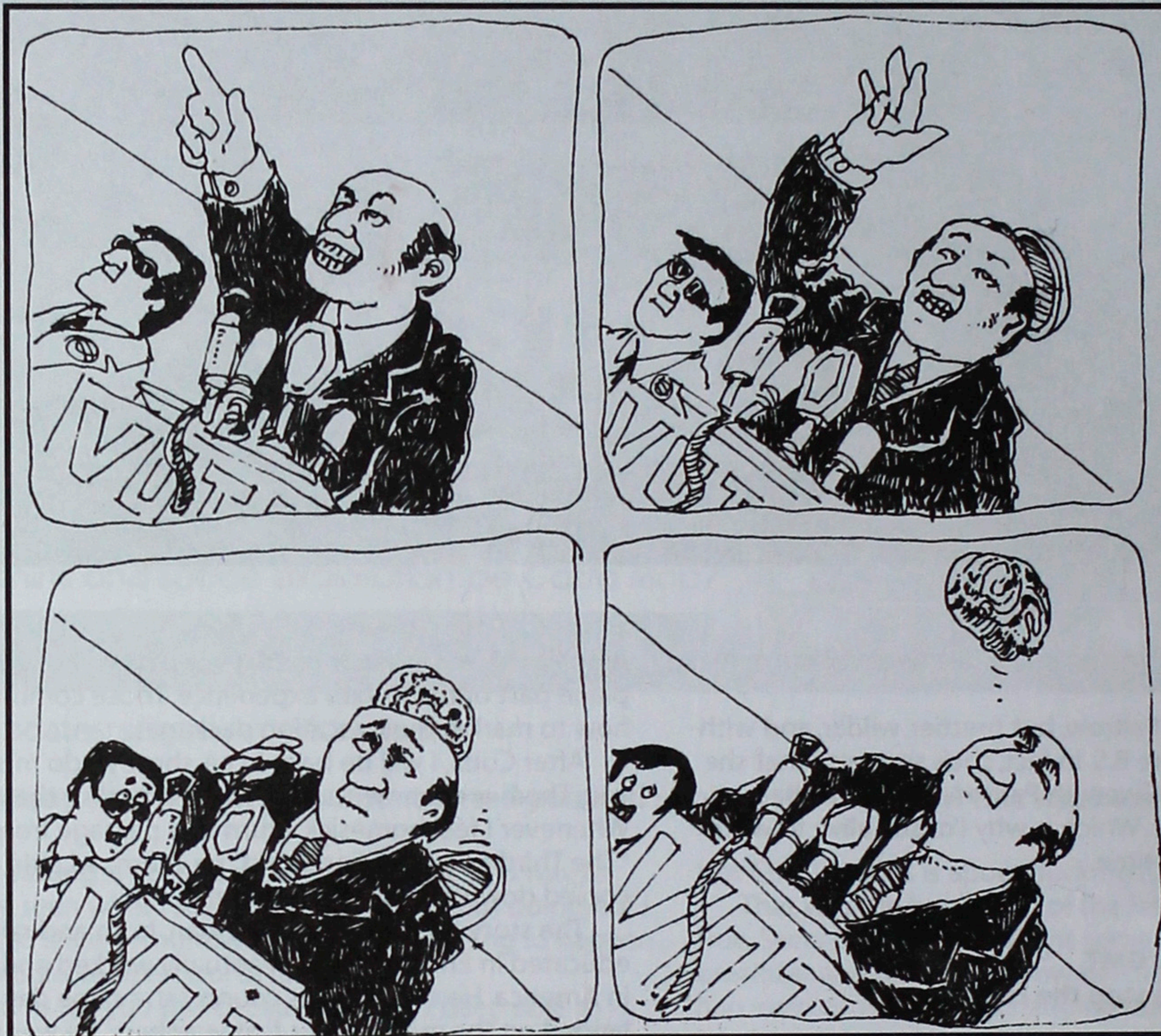
With this passage, I walked a little deeper into a rainforest, climbed a little closer to a volcano, gathered a little more faith that whatever bus I took would take me to the places I was meant to go, though the roads were never familiar.

I shall see you soon.

Eric

Testing my own imagination at the end of my second continent **G**







# taking it back

and throwin' it at 'cha



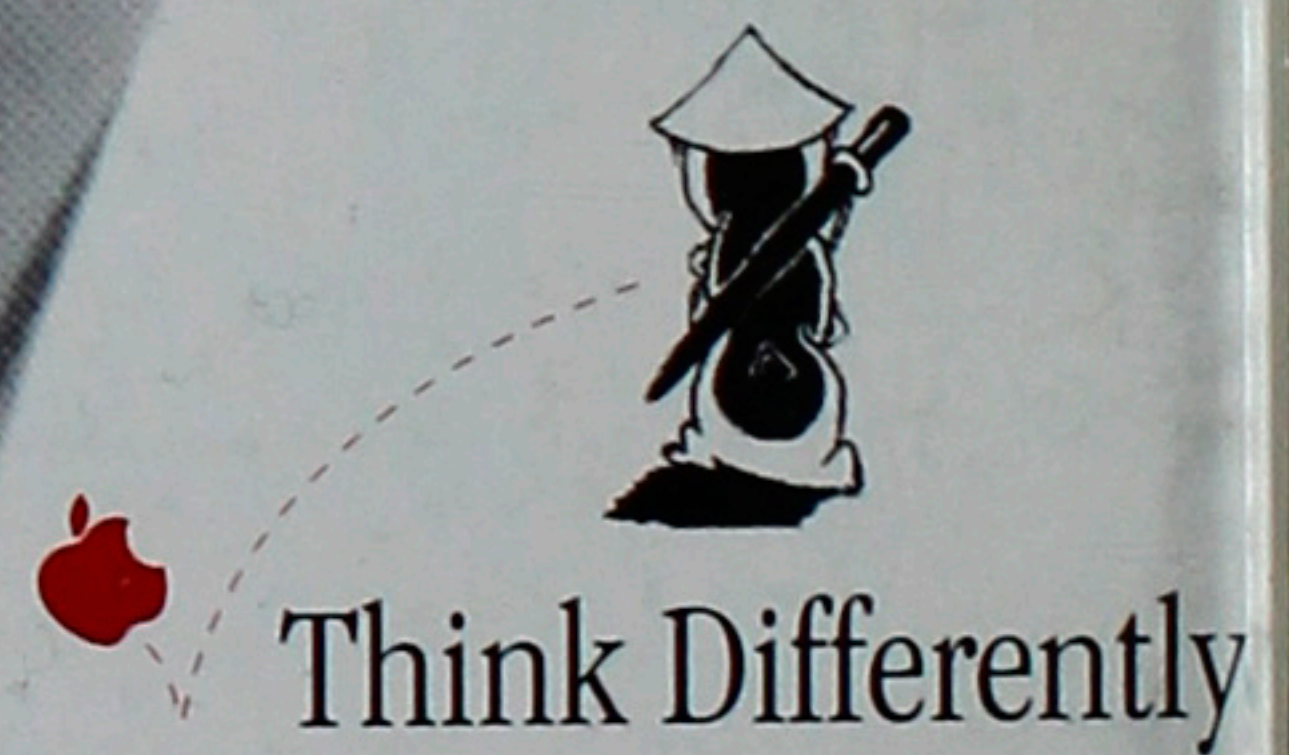
Illustrated by KEU CHA

## the hate that flash animation produced

Oh, dear. Wongie, our newly adopted mascot, is up to his old houseboy tricks again. The Wongsta was last seen responding to his employer and creator who innocently suggested he step to it in the kitchen. "These days even your oriental help is so sensitive," Miss Icebox observes. "All I said was, 'Chop, chop.' This doesn't look like it's working out. Sorry, Wongie. You're fired!"



# Dual Processors.



Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs  
at the "Educate to Liberate" Conference,  
May 16, 1998 at UCLA.