

VOICES

TUFTS·HARVARD







VOICES

Asian/Asian-American Literary Magazine

Spring 1980



Introduction

Why this journal? Although we hope the contents can justify itself, we believe that the Asian and Asian American experiences are important enough to share with others. Our works are in both native languages and in English because we wanted to reaffirm our "Old World" heritage as well as our history in America. Many of the pieces deal with the problems we face as a minority in this country along with the emotions coming from the contact between two contrasting cultures, Asian and Western. Yet not only do we assert our uniqueness and ethnicity in this magazine, but also our essential humanity and the need for expression and creativity.

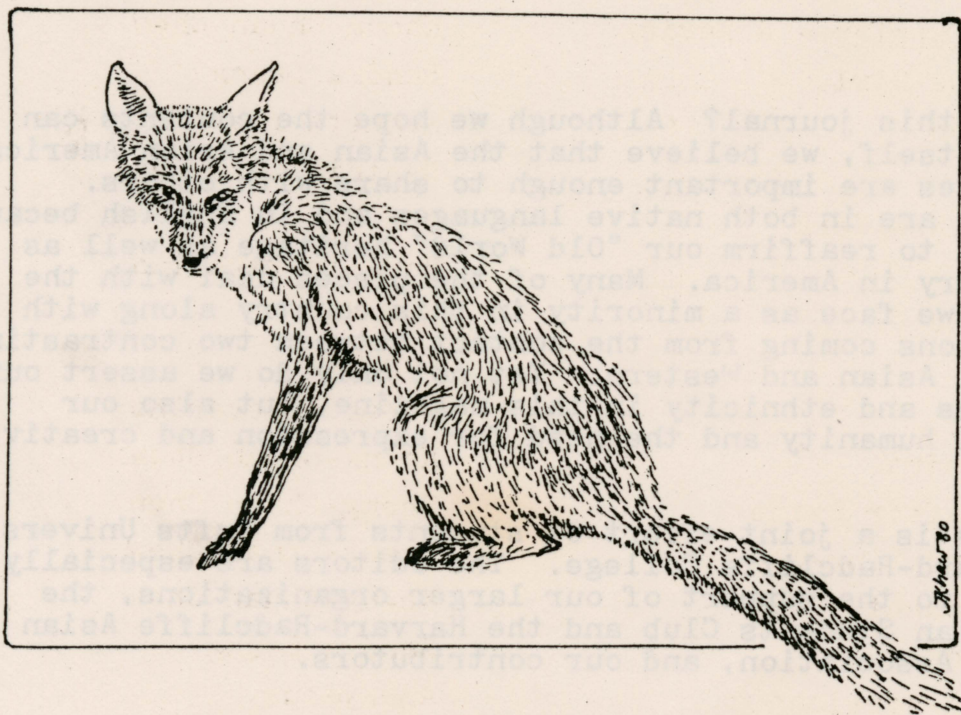
This is a joint effort of students from Tufts University and Harvard-Radcliffe College. The editors are especially grateful to the support of our larger organizations, the Tufts Asian Students Club and the Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Association, and our contributors.

Sandra Leung
Tufts '81

Cynthia Chin-Lee
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George Loring
1881

Cynthia C. Loring
Harvard-Babcock 1880

George Loring

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Art and Photography Credits:

Kenneth Yee p. 39	Steven Pon p. 15
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Front Cover Design: Winston Cho

It was a restful night
As the moon cast soft shadows
Beneath the trees
Memories of far away places
Crept into my dreams

Standing amid rice paddies
With my brothers and sisters
I bent over each new shoot
With visions of a full harvest

Another day
As the stars peeked through treetops
I sat in the courtyard, and smiled
Watching my children dash after fireflies

And the sound of war
Came to my ears
Deafening, terrifying
Heart-breaking

I saw days of pain and endurance
Of hope lost and regained
Of a people working
To make their lives whole

The morning sun struggled
To throw me its embrace through drawn curtains
I woke up with renewed strength
With centuries of history
To impart to the future

Josephine Lok

Art & Asia America

Art in this society, whether visual, musical, or literary, is a commodity. It is bought and sold according to certain standards that have historically been devised by the ruling white majority. There are two basic assumptions about art that we must question: first, that art for its own sake is legitimate; and second, that art is the expression of talented individuals. We, as Asian-American writers and artists must analyze these two assumptions according to our own needs and our own histories.

To me, the point of Asian American literary work is to articulate our experiences, images, ideas, and to define the social context that shapes them. The goal is to create our own culture and our own resources; it is not to be published in the Reader's Digest at some later date. Our expression must be clear and communicative; we must reach people. We must not only challenge our stereotyped and relatively voiceless presence in this country, but we must also consciously develop our own form and content in order to better understand and define our culture, history, and forward movement.

As Lu Hsun wrote:

Fierce-browed, as bold strokes and clear thought draw our work together;

Voices loud, as the mountains sing, knowing we shall rise.
So we plow and plant -- not for the sake of plowing or planting, but because we need to feed ourselves. And it's not as if any of us has a special talent for plowing and planting, rather we do it because we need to eat and want to grow.

Like food, art should be viewed as a resource. Asians, like other Third World people, have systematically been denied access to resources in this society; art is no exception. This is why Asian-American literary expression must directly challenge the two underlying assumptions of American art. In the first place, Asian-American art cannot exist for its own sake because it is rooted in and consciously reflects the social conditions of oppression and struggle that characterize our collective 130-year history. Secondly, and more importantly, we do share a collective history that is independent of questions of talent and individual expression. If Asian-American art is a resource, then the Asian-American people, as a group, are an even more powerful one. And in the end, only writing with a group consciousness will promote the unity we need in order to grow stronger.

Peter Kiang

What my Grandmother-Lies

I kneel here on top of the land where grandmother lies,
Just as she knelt fifty years ago at her bedchamber in
Kwangtung, carefully, we rest our weight on the backs of
our calves. With dignity we hold ourselves still. She is
so young, so brave with fresh pink skin-the color of lino-



The wind grows stronger around me. I raise my hand to
push my hair back just as grandmother pulled hers back into
a neat bun to meet grandfather at the airport. She still
gently caresses each strand. Married women must not let
their hair hang loose. She looks into a mirror for the last
time and touches the tiny wrinkles that have formed around
her eyes. She is only twenty-four.

Where my Grandmother Lies

I kneel here on top of the land where grandmother lies, just as she knelt fifty years ago at her betrothal in Kwangtung. Carefully, we rest our weights on the backs of our calves. With dignity we hold ourselves still. She is so young, so native with fresh pink skin-the color of innocence and life. Her husband, the grandfather I never met, was a stranger she had only known as her intended since age ten. But this made no difference now. He was handsome. His rugged jaw and tanned skin told of his labors in America and his ambition that was bound to bring wealth. She would learn to love him.

In the muffled cries of a new widow at a nearby grave, I hear grandmother's cries in childbirth. With only a midwife to comfort her, she screams out across half the world for grandfather. Her cries pierce the cool night air, searching for grandfather who is huddled by a dying fire in California. His aching muscles after a day of building the railroad forces him to ignore the cries.

Grandmother's pains subside as the child is placed in her arms. She smiles as her own cries are replaced by those of the baby, her first born. But the silence-- the midwife stands over her cautiously as if to bear bad news. Unwillingly, grandmother turns to her. Suspecting the message in her eyes, her eager fingers restrained by fear, grandmother slowly unwraps the crying bundle in her arms. She stops breathing as the horror sets in. A female. In these troubled times, one cannot afford the luxury of daughters. They are useless. Decisions must be made. "I can pinch her nose until she stop breathing," the midwife offers. "I have done it many times, she will not feel a thing." Muffled cries-- grandmother turns away as the midwife takes the baby.

Later that night, restless, grandmother crawls out to the night. The pain overwhelms her as she falls on the open field. She rests there looking up to the endless sky. She shakes an angry fist and curses the heavens for her misfortune. Then she prays again for a son.

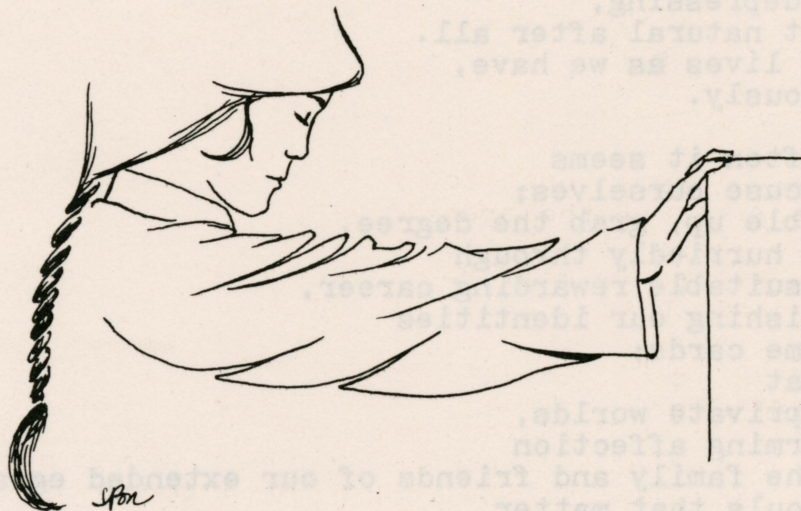
The wind grows stronger around me. I raise my hand to push my hair back just as grandmother pulled hers back into a neat bun to meet grandfather at the seaport. She diligently catches each strand. Married women must not let their hair hang loose. She looks into a mirror for the last time and touches the tiny wrinkles that have formed around her eyes. She is only twenty-four.

In her excitement she quickly turns away from the mirror and picks up a little boy who is playing on the dirt floor. The boy, my father, begins to cry for he does not want to go. Grandmother hushes him, telling him great tales of his father whom he has never seen. Eventually the boy quiets down and walks with grandmother to the port.

A hand touches the back of my neck. I turn quickly to the source of the warmth and see my father, now a grown, aging man. He tells me to rise and bow three times in respect. As I rise, I feel the strain of weight on my back. I think of the number of times grandmother felt the same strain as she rose from the rice paddy. She was forced to work for she had neither seen nor heard from grandfather in three years. She had had to feed her three young sons with her meager wages. She does not mind working though. It passes the time. Every night she sets a bowl for her husband, hoping for his safe return. She promises the gods never to eat beef for the rest of her life if they would return her husband to her.

I feel myself bowing now; once, twice, three times just as grandmother bowed at her husband's empty grave. He was one of the many Chinese men who were killed in a railroad accident. She heard it from the other villagers. Bitter tears run down her wrinkled face. I touch my own to find tears also. For the first time, I am crying for my grandmother. I instinctively reach for the tombstone. It is cold to the touch. I feel silly kneeling here, crying, yet I am unable to stop. We are crying together, grandmother and I, for each other, about each other.

Sandra Leung



The Self & Others

It seems that things remain the same.
People revolt.
And people are crushed.

We know how many starve
Till the conditions for life cease.
It's in the news magazines---the photos
make us depressed.
And we know, it is pain and despair that
turn the lives of masses
through the dust of existence.
It is a sad affair under the stars.

So we voice concern. Donate
often enough.
Or at least sympathize, in a poem.
We don't mean to make things worse.

The sufferings of a world
take on a distance
beyond the lives we afford ourselves,
the everyday concerns,
exigent pleasures.
And inequality begins to seem
less depressing,
almost natural after all.
So we live as we have,
graciously.

Too often it seems
we excuse ourselves;
scramble up, grab the degree,
elbow hurriedly through
some suitable rewarding career,
brandishing our identities
in name cards;
retreat
into private worlds,
performing affection
for the family and friends of our extended egos,
the souls that matter.

And luxury, then,
cushions our ignorance
of people
with the triviality of possessions,
consumes our senses.

Too easily
we dismiss our ideals
as some radical romance of youth;
yet indulge in some measure of
social concern
to keep the intellect presentable;
forge a pathless compromise,
barter the conscience
for the narrow security of status,
for we are sick with the fear
of uprooting ourselves
and learning to live again.

But now
our time has come.
Now it is for us
to strip the system of its pretensions,
its words and its charities---
to find out where we stand,
and whose sad freedom it is.

Anonymous

Wry Scenes from the Collegiate Life

I

Here we toy
With the idea
Of baking pie
With mashed cortex
for filling.
Season well,
And bake till golden brown.

II

Men here think;
They think that they think,
They also think
They have clay feet,
Which they struggle to hide
Under weak knees.
So they do not walk,
But shuffle,
And trip,
Who's remiss?

Betty Kwong

Mutant Port

little island
tiny city
jot of land,
You rear such misery
and yet suffer
fond memories
to spring from your crevices

May I ask
when dull aches will cease
and festering sores heal
after years of trampling,
That you may
forge ahead
and not

drown...
slowly sinking
under the weary weight
of a motley mass
that cries to know
Nation and Country?

Betty Kwong

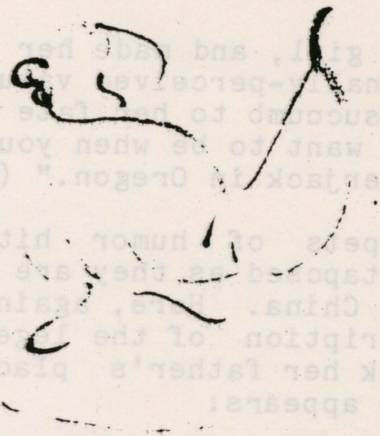
靜夜思

牀前明月光

疑是地上霜

舉頭望明月

低頭思故鄉



Felinda Tam



The Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston

Born and raised in the Chinatown of Stockton, California, there can be few places more unpoetic and drab. Such must have been her exterior life, as a child. Yet this story of a first generation American-Chinese girl growing up is powerful and lyrical, drawing rich myths from memory, evoking from me questions of my cultural roots, a need to reconstitute my focus, dulled by every day living, on a deep aspect of my social identity.

She begins her "Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts" with her mother telling her a story of her aunt, her father's sister, who was driven to suicide by the ignominy of having a fatherless child. She drowned both herself and her baby in the family well in their village in China. She became a non-subject; a shame the family tried to deny by disassociation. In opening her autobiography with this story, Maxine Hong Kingston symbolised the predicament of her sex. A female in Old China was a bane to the family. She would not be able to carry on the family name but would become "a wife and a slave; a daughter-in-law." Others have said, "There's no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls."

The story terrified the little girl, and made her conscious very early of her traditionally-perceived valueless status. She was determined not to succumb to her fate as a woman and when asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up, little girl?" answered, "A lumberjack in Oregon." (p.47)

Throughout the book, such snippets of humor hit the funny bones of the reader, juxtaposed as they are after pages of a story steeped in ancient China. Here, again, in the middle of a beautiful description of the legendary heroine Fa Mu Lan, the girl who took her father's place in battle, the author's sense of humor appears:

The door opened, and an old man and an old woman came out carrying bowls of rice and soup and a leafy branch of peaches.

"Have you eaten rice today, little girl?" they greeted me.

"Yes, I have," I said out of politeness. "Thank you."

("No, I haven't," I would have said in real life, and at the Chinese for lying so much. "I'm starved. Do you have any cookies? I like chocolate chip cookies.")

This is a style of hers that utterly disarms. Sometimes, so well are the juxtapositions placed, an inevitable guffaw explodes. But it is not just funny business.

By weaving back and forth throughout her book tales that come from her family's past in their village, or from legends whose sources are three thousand years of literature and folklore, cultural history revered by peasant and mandarin alike, to the present (her childhood in America), we follow her as she grows up, and "try to understand" as an adult in retrospect, powerfully aware of her ethnic heritage, "what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, to insanities, one family ... from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies."

So as we read, we move from story to story. From her aunt (father's sister); her mother's life as a young woman doctor in China; how her father had left their village in the 1920's, with his father, grandfather, and brothers, leaving to sail for "America, the Gold Mountain," leaving behind behind their women folk so that they would return after having made their fortune overseas; those who stayed abroad -- emigrant people, and the changes they wrought for their descendants, generations unborn.

In the chapter "Shaman," she talks of her mother, Brave Orchid, her life as a student at the To Keung School of Midwifery and how she confronted and vanquished the ghost there with her iron will; how she doctored her village during the Sino-Japanese War, and after 16 years of separation from her husband, rejoined him in 1940 in America, and of course, how she raised the writer, born in that same year.

"At the Western Palace," the fourth chapter, she tells of how her aunt (her mother's sister), a lady in her late 60's when she first came to America from their village in China and later Hong Kong, finally died in the State Mental Hospital, rejected by her emigrant husband-turned-successful-doctor, who although had supported his wife financially for decades, had taken a new life, a new wife in the Beautiful Land (美國).

Of herself, she grew up the quiet Chinese girl, with her siblings, in their family laundry business. Attending both American school and Chinese school in the evenings, she was also schooled by their inimitable and strong-willed mother who told her stories "in this terrible ghost country."

The Laundry, her school, the gray of her concrete and apple-crates environment must have been woefully drab. Yet I am struck by how she had used, even as a child, the

immense colors of her dreams, her passions, the mythical stories that her mother channeled from their past, to vivify the internal world of her imagination: far more complex and far richer, than any brocade.

Her story rings in its authenticity. The older Chinese generation's preoccupations with ghosts; the ways of her mother; stories of the traditional customs of their village, the observations of these customs by the older folk, and their non-verbal transmission to their children; their traditional bigotry toward all other races (thus conferring on stranger the suffix "ghost"); their superstitions:

I remember telling the Hawaiian teacher, "We Chinese can't sing 'land where our fathers died.'" She argued with me about politics, while I meant because of curses.

I am flooded with memories of my own childhood fears, so long forgotten, when she narrated her mother's telling her the story of how she confronted the Sitting Ghosts as a student:

It could be hiding right now in a piece of wood or inside one of your dolls. Perhaps in daylight we accept that bag to be just a bag..."when in reality it is a Bag Ghost."

John Leonard, critic from the New York Times, called the book, amongst other commendations, "anti-nostalgic." I think he meant that it was not fond and sentimental. There is no trace of pretension in all its poetic mastery, neither in her dreams as the Woman Warrior, Fa Mu Lan, or at the end as Ts'ai Yen, the poetess born in AD 175, who sang a "song for the barbarian reed pipe."

Exceedingly witty and funny, her story is not cute. It doesn't try to be; nor does it try to be explanatory--to a Western readership, explaining with footnotes and glossaries, the weird ways of "chinks" among them. This is its strength and its cultural integrity.

Maxine Hong Kingston, who as a little girl, dreaded the fate of girls, grew up: "I went away to college--Berkeley in the 60's--and I studied, and I marched to change the world, but I did not turn into a boy." Her story has vindicated her being a woman; it is a story of heroines, swordswomen.

In the end, Ts'ai Yen "sang about China and her family there. Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger." The Woman Warrior, having pierced us with her sword, the pen, "continue(s) to sort out what's just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just my village, just movies, just living."

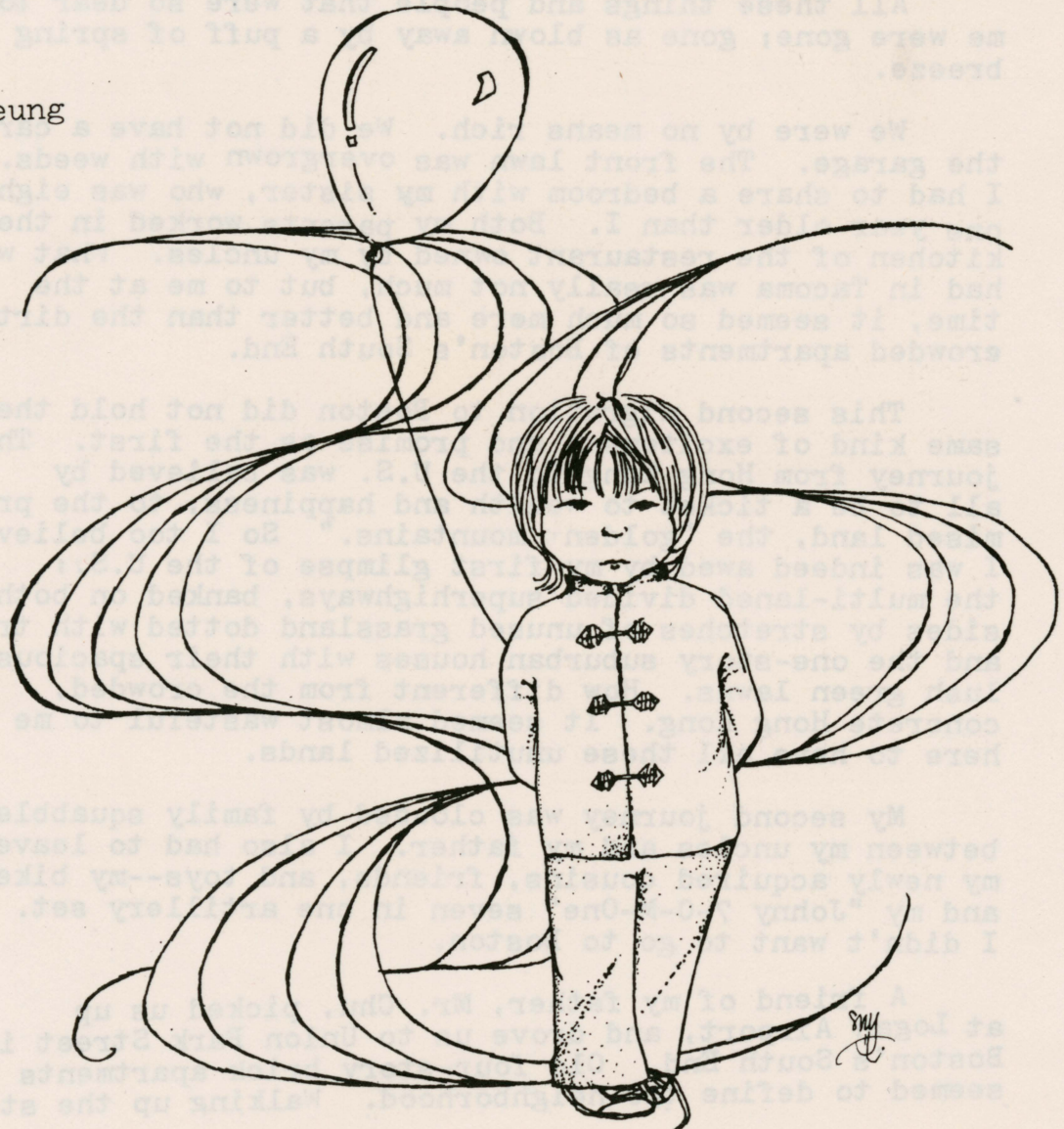
Kheng-Chuan Chew

Nice Chinese Girl

Eyes downcast, a shy smile;
A voice that is barely audible.
Clothes neatly pressed, walk feminine;
An expression blank and simple.
Emotions vacant, tears dry;
Slowly becoming invisible.

Wanting love, needing security;
Screaming desperately inside.
Hating them, hating me;
For making my soul subside.
Imagining you, coming to me;
I need you to confide.

Sandra Leung



Assimilation

A house in the suburbs, with front and back yards, a garage, an attic, and a roomy living room. It had a huge kitchen and a real dining room! To me at that time, it was an incredible amount of luxury. I recently got a new high-riser bike with a bright brown leopard-spot banana seat. It was the "neatest" bike on the block...I can remember playing "king of the mountain" on a huge pile of newly mowed grass; my friend Glen Murphy who taught me how to ride my bike; and his dog-his very own dog!

All these things and people that were so dear to me were gone; gone as blown away by a puff of spring breeze.

We were by no means rich. We did not have a car in the garage. The front lawn was overgrown with weeds. I had to share a bedroom with my sister, who was eight, one year older than I. Both my parents worked in the kitchen of the restaurant owned by my uncles. What we had in Tacoma was really not much, but to me at the time, it seemed so much more and better than the dirty, crowded apartments of Boston's South End.

This second migration to Boston did not hold the same kind of excitement and promise as the first. The journey from Hong Kong to the U.S. was believed by all to be a ticket to wealth and happiness, to the promised land, the "golden mountains." So I too believed. I was indeed awed by my first glimpse of the U.S.: the multi-laned divided superhighways, banked on both sides by stretches of unused grassland dotted with trees, and the one-story suburban houses with their spacious lush green lawns. How different from the crowded, concrete Hong Kong. It seemed almost wasteful to me here to have all these unutilized lands.

My second journey was clouded by family squabbles between my uncles and my father. I also had to leave behind my newly acquired cousins, friends, and toys--my bike and my "Johny 7-0-M-One" seven in one artillery set. I didn't want to go to Boston.

A friend of my father, Mr. Chu, picked us up at Logan Airport, and drove us to Union Park Street in Boston's South End. Old four-story brick apartments seemed to define the neighborhood. Walking up the steps

of one such apartment, I saw a couple of Chinese kids around my age, dressed in dirty T-shirts, looking up at me. For some reason, I was struck by their stare. Or was it their look, their faces...their Chinese faces... I hated them. I hated Boston. I wanted to go back to Tacoma.

That night I cried and begged my mother to take us back to Tacoma. I told her how I hated Boston; I hated the old, gloomy apartment, the bathroom in the hallway...and those dirty Chinese kids. How can we give up everything we had in Tacoma for this! My mother consoled me by saying that we have to give this new home a chance; if I still did not like it here, then we would leave. I begrudgingly accepted that promise with the hope that we would soon be going home.

*

*

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It is difficult for me to imagine myself living in Tacoma, Washington now, in a little house in the suburbs, miles away from the next Asian, in the middle of...Would I still be involved with the Asian movement? Would I be a "banana?" The image of those two Chinese children looking up at me comes back to my mind...

Kenneth Yee



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PERRY V. WONG, MGR.

of one such... a couple of Chinese kids
around my eye. I was struck by their stare.
at me. For some reason, I hated them.
Or was it their faces... their Chinese faces...
I hated them. I wanted to go back to
faces.

That night I begged my mother to take us
back to Taiwan. I hated the old, stony
the old, stony faces in the hall-
way... and those of the kids who
everything we had in Taiwan. My mother
me by saying that we would have a chance
if I still did it, she would leave.
I begrudgingly accepted the offer and the hope
that we would see our friends.

It is difficult to imagine living
in Taiwan. Now, in a little house in the
suburbs, with the best of the middle
of... Would I be involved with the Asian movement?
Would I be a woman? The image of the two Chinese
children looking up at me comes back to my mind...



Belinda Tam



First Snow

It was the winter of 1923. Snowflakes fell from the sky with the quiet regularity of the clock's ticking. Yesterday she had cried to her husband, "Kong-hsiang, there are white locusts all over the streets! What will we do?" He stopped his ironing for a moment to come and reassure her. Those aren't white locusts, they're rain. It's cold in the lofan's land, rain freezes.

She watched the snow calmly now, knowing it would melt in the warmth of her hand if she touched it. Besides that, it made everything quieter. It cushioned the street below where the traffic rumbled by, and it even seemed to soften the shouting of the pedestrians passing by, talking in a language that she could not understand. She called it chicken's talk.

How different this place was from her home, a sunny village in Toishan. Sunny, yes, but she also remembered vividly how warm the servant's quarters could get on a summer night. Though exhausted from doing the heaviest kind of work, she could not sleep. Her body would be aching, and her mind would be plagued with memories of her mother. As she tossed and turned, beads of perspiration mixed with tears rolled down her face.

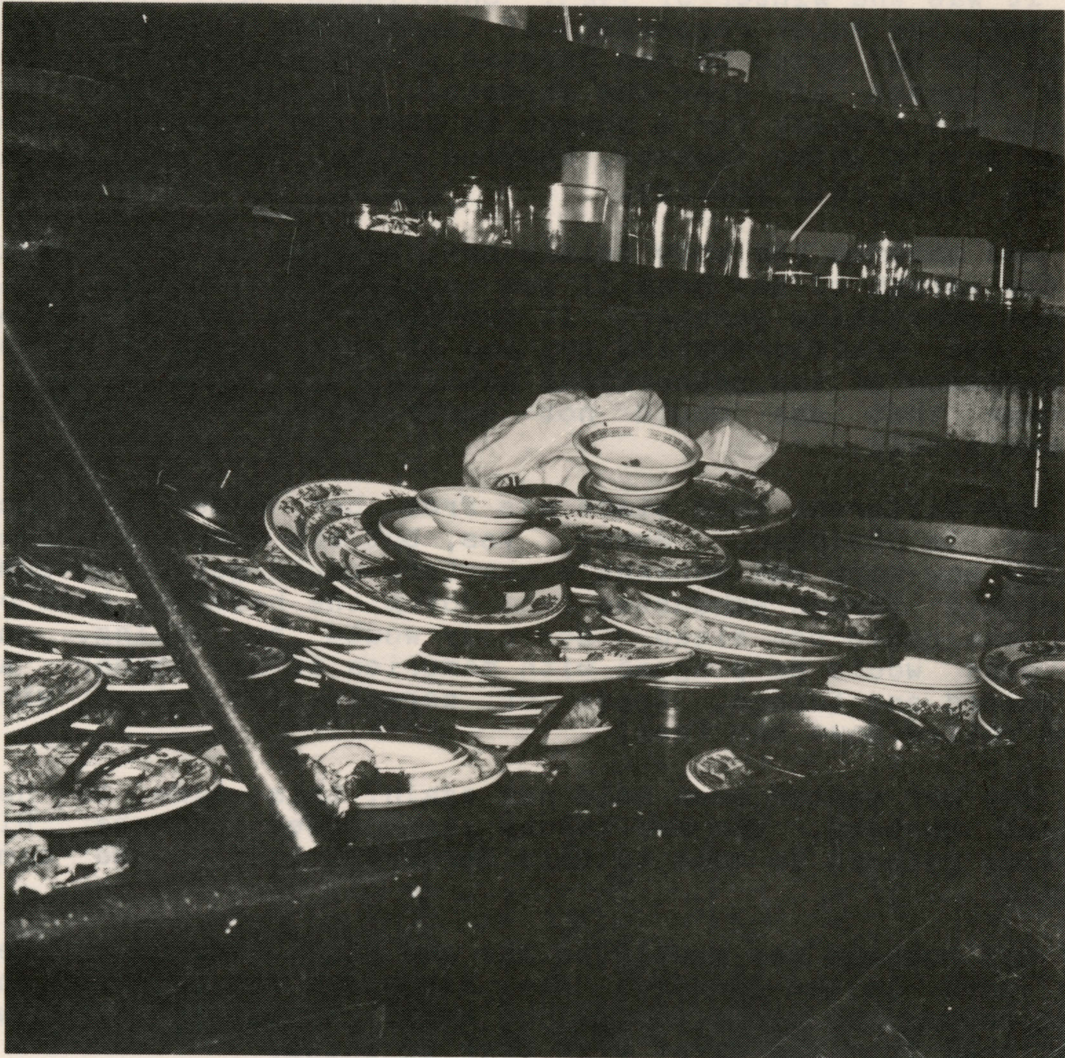
But her master soon sold her again, this time to her present husband, who was twenty years older than she. His own wife refused to come to this barbarian land so she came instead.

Her husband was gentle to her and kind. And he worked very hard in the laundry. Now, since she was pregnant, he often cooked the meals for all of them, including his two grown sons from the first wife back in China.

She continued to look out the window, sometimes, day-dreaming about her life at home and sometimes wondering about life outside these walls. Her world began and ended in this laundry. The glass window was her only view of the city and this country.

Cynthia Chin-Lee

First Show



She continued to look out the window, sometimes day-dreaming about her life at home and sometimes wondering about life outside these walls. Her world began and ended in this laundry. The glass window was her only view of the city and this country.

Cynthia Chin-lee

Chinatown, New York

The humid summer air stifled me as I stepped out of the Grand Street subway station. On my way to Chinatown, I passed by Bowery Street. Bums make the pavement their home here. I could smell their stench as I got close enough for them to ask me for a dime. I nonchalantly threw a quarter at the feet of one of them and headed toward my destination.

A red light at the intersection of Canal and Bowery broke my momentum. I stopped and waited anxiously, surveying the area I was about to enter. As soon as the traffic light for the cars turned red, I ran across to the other side, dodging those cars that hadn't fully stopped. Weaving in and out of the usually crowded Canal Street I heard bits of conversations spoken in a language that most Americans may consider strange, quaint. Turning around the corner onto the less crowded Mott Street, I saw dozens of Chinese restaurants that catered especially to the non-Chinese; restaurants that serve such "exotic" dishes as egg rolls, wonton soup, and moo goo gai pan. Business was slack because the tourists had all gone home...no more Nikons, no more wide-eyed looks, no more flashes.

Going down the block I slammed my palm against the heads of the parking meters, childishly hoping that coins would gush out like the slot machines in Las Vegas. I approached Jung Wah Bookstore, and stepped in and browsed through the latest magazines from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. I tossed 35 cents on the glass counter and walked out with an issue of "Lao Fu Dz," my favorite comic book. I crossed Bayard Street, passed Carvel ice cream and approached the front entrance of Lai Gung Restaurant. My friends were already there waiting for me. They greeted me casually, patting me on the back. The four of us leaned against the glass window and scrutinized the pretty Chinese girls that walked by, making lewd comments. Before long we became bored, with looking and decided to seek other diversions. We roamed Chinatown exploring every new detail. It was now getting dark, but we didn't care because we knew that we had all the time we wanted.

Mon Mui

Kay Ariel

Ariel. Matagal na rin tayong hindi nagkita. Kumus ta na ba? Si Ding nga pala. Kumusta ang pamilya niya? Kahit ngayon na may anak na siya mahirap pa rin maniwala na may asawa na si Ding. Sa kanya siguro ang pinakamalayang inspiritu sa ating lahat. Ewan ko, pare. Tumatanda na siguro tayo.

waaalala mo ba si Diane Riley, ang magandang kanang exchange student na kinartihan ko nang napakatagal? Hindi ba't napakabait niya? at laging nakangiti? Pwera lang pala noong nasa erport siya bago bumalik dito (tumalo, ang luha niya sa balikat ko ng araw na 'yon). Nasa walet ko pa ang st. sko ID niya. Pare, nasa Massachusetts na pala siya. Nag-aaral sa isang kolehiyo dito siguro. Ewan ko. Nakita ko lang siya. Sa estasyon ng subway na malapit dito sa eskwela. Nakita rin niya ako. Tumaba siya, pare. Pero maganda pa rin, marami pa ring hawak na libro, at ang berdeng ribon ay nakatali pa rin sa buhok niya. Pero nagiba rin siya pare eh. Hindi man lang ngumitisi Diane. Siguradong nakilala niya ako. Basta tumalikod na lang at napasama sa masa ng tao. Hinabol ko pero nawala na siya sa loob ng estasyon.

Sana'y hindi ito nakalulungkot sa iyo pare. Dapat nga maka-pagbigay-ligaya; nasa Pilipinas ka kasi: dehin nawawala ang damdamin diyan. Nagugunita lo ang pagtatapos natin sa Ateneo pare. Yinakap mo ako sa prosesiyon at sinabi mo: Pare, tapos na. Tapos na. Umiyak tayong dalawa sa harap ng tatlong libong tao. Huwag ka nang umalis ng Pilipinas pare. Manghihinayang ka lang.

Mayroon akong ibig sabihin sa iyo dati pa. Naalala ko noong sinabi mo sa 'kin na umiyak sa tabi mo se Mel sa funeral ng erpat mo. Nasa likod ako noon. Hindi mo lang ako napansin, pero umiiyak din ako. Huwag ka nang umalis ng Pilipinas pare. Manghihinayang ka lang. Baka makalimutan mo pa kung papano umiyak. Sige pare. Hanggang dito nalang utol mo. Howie.

Horacio Severino

Lowest Grade

I was only six then.
They smirked at my eyes
And laughed at my skin.
I disgusted them,
Frightened them,
Amused them.

I learned to read "Dick and Jane"
Too fast for them; they hated me.

Recess came and I watched them play tag.
Never asked and never asking to join.
Just sat and watched.
Alone.

Were my baseball cards different from theirs?
Didn't mine come with a stick of bubble gum?
I could catch as well as they.
I could run as well as they.
What was it then?
It must have been my baseball cards.

Mon Mui

I'm sure that she would be affectionate and thoughtful toward me. Even when I insist that I'm not hungry, she would love to cook for me. Her firm, but gentle glance would fill me with guilt until I ate all of my vegetables. When I'm crying over my broken toys, she would kiss me on the forehead and tell me that "everything's okay." Before letting me go out on a cold day, she would make me hot chocolate and demand that I dress warmly. I would pretend to protest, knowing that she would bribe me with a big hug. All these things, she would be and do: the grandmother I never had.

Mon Mui

The Shoes

Ever since that day in the chapel I haven't seen him. I wrote him a couple of times but he never replied. I once picked up the phone and then remembered his family never had one. They didn't even have running water in the house. He's not in school like I prayed he would. The last I heard he was a pulot boy at the tennis courts.

Ramil Manalaban was a sixth grader from Marikina I helped prepare for high school a couple of years ago. The public elementary school he went to recommended him for special tutoring because his exceptionally high IQ gave him a chance to get admitted to the excellent science high school a mile or so from his neighborhood. But he was poor. So poor he never wore shoes because he didn't have any. None of his friends did either.

I was appalled at what Ramil had to live in. My socks disappeared into the mud when I sloshed through the squatters' village to get to Ramil's home. I was told later I waded into the community's sewage system. Ramil, his three younger brothers, and his mother lived in a one-room dwelling (it couldn't realistically be called a house) that reeked of unventilated air and the stench that rose from the waste-saturated mud outside. His father was dead. His mother wasn't fond of me.

"Do you realize that Ramil is a gifted child?"

"No. I only know if you encourage him to stay in school you'll rob our family of much needed income."

"But if he doesn't continue into high school you'll all remain in poverty forever."

"And what if he does continue? Does it mean we won't be in poverty anymore?"

"No...Ramil and I can't promise you anything. But Ramil is the only hope you have."

Everyday the summer after my high school graduation, I tutored Ramil in virtually everything I knew. But we worked extra hard to improve his English. He wrote me long letters in vastly improved English when I vacationed in Baguio. He enjoyed discussing the simple nature poems of Coleridge and Wordsworth. He was a good student. I had high hopes for him.

Ramil was always accompanied by a pale five-year old boy named Nonoy who never spoke. Ramil claimed they were

brothers but they didn't at all look alike. Once I asked Nonoy himself, "Kapatid mo ba si Ramil?"; Nonoy merely shook his head. To this day I don't know who he really was. Just Ramil's constant companion the summer after my graduation.

One day I noticed flies gathering around a fresh scab on Ramil's left foot. I was cringing, while he seemed oblivious to the obvious pain he was feeling. He had stepped on a piece of broken glass, he casually informed me. The very next day I bought him a pair of black dress shoes and told him it was an early Christmas gift. I hadn't imagined how delighted he would be. He put the shoes on and for a moment I thought he forgot everything else. With a barefoot Nonoy at his new heels he ran to the dried rice paddies, where his friends were playing, to show the entire world what I gave him. Ramil wore those black shoes everyday. Everytime we met he made sure they were immaculately clean and spit polished to reflect the sunshine and his high spirits. He boasted that he had the most beautiful pair of shoes in the neighborhood. He may also have had the only pair.

When he was finally informed of his admission to the prestigious Marikina Science High School, he was on top of the world. So was I.

Towards the end of the summer, when everyone was readying himself for school, Ramil's silent friend Nonoy died. Ramil didn't tell me. One of his teachers had to.

The public school chapel where Nonoy's body could be viewed for the last time was nearly empty when I entered to pay my last respects. Only a group of children could be seen, kneeling in one of the aisles and saying the rosary in unison. The vigilantes turned towards me when I walked in. The figure of Ramil immediately stood up and stepped out of the aisle as if to greet me. But he didn't. Instead he ran past me, his bare feet slapping the floor in a rapid series of footfalls that I can still hear today as he bolted through the door.

Nonoy lay inside the hastily built wooden casket. His eyes were closed, his hair meticulously combed, and his arms solemnly placed along his sides. He was wearing a neatly pressed shirt and a pair of shoes. They were shiny and black and they were Ramil's.

Horacio Severino

Weather Report

Spring, Boston-Cambridge.

I hesitated

writing a poem to you,

fearing a tendency

(in such matters) for careless romanticisation.

Life lays enough delusions

that I needn't clutter feelings

with unnecessary words.

But I am more glad when with you

than without you,

and I would tell you so.

Instead of writing,

"I awake more often to sunlight these days,

sunlight catching on newly sprouting buds,

and the weather is less lean,

kinder,"

let me say instead,

I like your bangs.

I like the way you take my hand.

I relish your kisses, because they're yours,

And I should tell you so.

But also:

I am unsure of your smile;

you seem to be looking at me from behind your eyes,

and sometimes I feel as if

I am caught in a cautious current

that hasn't decided between

the past season's dormancy

and the leap into Spring.

Unsure, of what is being asked,

and what to offer.

Oh, let me stop writing--

the weather's fine.

It will mature, you think,

towards Summer?

Kheng-Chuan Chew

Cambridge after Exams

It was raining. The skies overcast.
Familiar weather.
The other day I heard distant rumbling.
There must have been some lightning.
This lightning does not seem to learn,
it should not strike at the same place
between my hair and toes.
First, Luisa.
Now, Keiko.
Uncompromising names.
Friends; yes, we could be friends.
Listen my friend, I mean no mockery,
we all need friends,
good friends.
The hell with it, I am tired
of this inclement weather.
For too long
I have not had a friend with whom
I could lie beside in body as in mind
Circumstances, what can you do?
I blame you as I blame the weather:
I don't.

Kheng-Chuan Chew



Belinda Tam

To my Friend Ling-tse

in old, romantic references,
they always speak of the moon and moonlight.
And I used to wonder
Now what has moonlight got to do with love?

Well, I think they must have
inadvertently left out mention of the sea,
or any body of water for that matter.
Because if they included the sea,
I could see what they mean.

Tides, you know.
The moon pulls water.
It disturbs the calmness of the sea.

Maybe water was too obvious,
so they left it out, trying to be subtle.
After all, who doesn't know we're 70% liquid.

Well, let me tell you
that whenever you're near,
my 70% body of water gets
very agitated inside. hey, you know--
it's exciting and it's movement;
it doesn't scare me.
Does it frighten you away?

I really don't know,
you must control the moon or something.

Kheng-Chuan Chew

Pausing Thought

I have wanted you to know
for a long time:
Your eyes
smile intensely
with so much feeling even
your nose quivers
Then you look away, the times when
looking at each other any longer
would be visual coition
too sweet, too frightening
across the table of the smoking room.

I love your eyes
caught just about to shout for the sun.

Once my friend told me
There are two ways to really
know a person's feelings:
 look into her eyes;
 or,
 kiss her.

He made the latter up,
sly friend.
Yet looking into your eyes,
I want to kiss you endlessly,
feel the wet pleasure of your tongue,
breathe in the rhythm of your mouth,
 the smell of your brown hair,
discern your delicate eyelids with my lips;
You the sun of your brown hair,
discern your delicate eyelids with my lips;
You the sun of fire,
fire's warmth.

Kheng-Chuan Chew

Pausing Thought

I have wanted you to know
for a long time
your eyes



Chew-Guan-Kheng

Neighborhood

"Can you get the door please, Jimmy?"

"Do I have to," he mumbled as he threw down his pencil and pushed his chair back.

He slowly began to walk to the other side of the house to the front door. The wooden floor in the hallway was cold against his bare feet. He thought about how convenient it was in the old apartment to answer the doorbell. There was only one room so it didn't take long to get to the door. In this house it seemed to take forever--especially because he had a test the next day, and time seemed very precious.

Jimmy paused for a second before turning the lock on the door to brace himself against the cold. He opened the door to see Mr. Lewis, a neighbor, standing there. He had never spoken to Mr. Lewis or even seen him up close. He thought it peculiar that he should come to the house. Jimmy suspected his visit had something to do with the sheet of paper he was holding that was being wrinkled in the wind.

"Hi, kid. Are your...er...honorables home?" he asked gruffly. His breath created small clouds of smoke against the cold.

"My what?" Jimmy asked incredulously.

"Oh, you know what I mean. Where are your mother and father. I want to talk to them about something important. Listen, can I come in or something. It's freezing out here."

"Sure," Jimmy said reluctantly as he opened the door. "Wait, I'll call them."

As he began the seemingly endless walk back to the kitchen, Jimmy thought about how glad he was that it was Monday. Monday was his father's only day off so he was home. He was probably in the kitchen, supervising his mother's cooking.

"Who was it, Jimmy?" Mrs. Lee asked as he entered the kitchen.

"It's Mr. Lewis from down the street. He wants to talk to you and Dad about something."

"Did he say what?" Mr. Lee asked, looking up from the pot of soup he was stirring.

"No. He just said it was important and he was holding a piece of paper in his hand."

"If it's what I'm afraid of, it's something ugly and I want no part of it," he said as he rinsed his hands in preparation to greet the visitor. "Jimmy, come with us."

Mr. Lewis had made his way into the living room and was walking around examining the Chinese water color that Mrs. Lee had done. "Nice, real nice," he mumbled to himself.

"What can we do for you?" Mr. Lee announced as he entered the room.

"Oh, Mr. Lee. Nice to see you. How are you?" Mr. Lewis said as he extended his right hand.

"What can we do for you?" Mr. Lee repeated.

"Okay, I'll get down to business. Mr. Lee, I don't know if you are aware of this, but a colored family is planning to move into the house across from yours. Yeah, old Mrs. Cantor's house. God rest her soul. Her kids didn't care about this here neighborhood. A group of us care about what happens to the area, and we wrote up this here petition." He shook the paper in his hand, continuing, "to make sure they don't come in. Because you know as well as I do, once they come in, the rest of them will. And before you know it, everywhere you turn, you'll see them coloreds either jitterbuggin' till three in the morning or shooting hoop. We're quiet people. We don't want them here. We mind our own business. We thought we'd let you sign, seeing how you're part of the neighborhood now," he said, handing him the petition.

Mr. Lee took the sheet in his hand and examined it silently. After a few minutes he set it down on the coffee table and turned to Mr. Lewis.

"No, my wife and I will not sign it. Five years ago when we moved into this neighborhood, there was a petition circulated against us. How can you possibly ask us to sign now?" he said firmly.

"Gee, Mr. Lee, that was different. We didn't know anything about you folks then. You people turned out ok. We like you Orientals. You keep your lawn clean and kids quiet. Christ, we wished we had more of you. Those coloreds are different. They rather live off welfare than work."

"You are poisoning your own children, Mr. Lewis, by circulating that petition. We won't. We will welcome that Black family into this neighborhood. We care too much."

"Oh, you people got it all wrong." Mr. Lewis said after a while, scratching his head. "Look," he said as he stood up. "I don't have to take this. If you don't want to sign, say so. If the neighborhood goes down the drain, we know who to point to."

"We said we won't sign," Jimmy said breaking the silence.

"Okay, I'll go. But let me tell you something. You, minorities, are all alike. You're all trouble makers."

"Goodbye, Mr. Lewis. Don't bother coming back," Mrs. Lee said as they watched him walk away. All three turned silent, numbed by what had happened.

Sandy Leung



I Am Korean...-American

Recent events in Afghanistan and the imminent reinstatement of military conscription have compelled me to evaluate my allegiance to the United States, a question which I had considered unimportant for a while. Do I consider myself an American? If so, since when? If not, why not? To answer these questions, I decided to look back on my past nine years in the U.S. to see how I have changed and to predict what I may be changing into.

My family immigrated to this country nine years ago from Korea. Even now I can remember the day of our departure: I remember how my uncle ordered me never to return unless I was prepared to contribute to the Korean people in some way. I was only eleven then, full of imagination and dreams. My innocent conception of the United States was that it was a huge country inhabited by people with blond hair, blue eyes, and long noses -- a land that offered boundless opportunities of upward social mobility and vast material wealth.

To my parents, the immigration meant a partial cessation of life, a departure from the world they had known and loved to a world of uncertainty and unfamiliarity. Their only certainty was that they were prepared to do anything to enable my sisters and me to pursue our education without restraint. To me, the immigration was merely an adventure, a temporary journey to a strange land from which I would someday return as a success.

we only owned a dozen suitcases and enough money to last us a few months. we had no close relatives, not even a close friend in our new city, Los Angeles. we settled into the cheapest apartment we could find: a one-bedroom at \$05 a month. My parents worked six days a week, my father grinding iron and my mother gluing pieces of samples all day long at minimum wage.

we were one of thousands of Korean families in L.A. who were going through similar experiences in the early 70's. All the immigrants faced the common problems of learning a new language, finding a job, coping with social and cultural differences, and adjusting to a different diet and climate. The concept of being a minority was hardest to accept; for the first time in our lives, we were second-class citizens.

During my first six years in the U.S., I never even considered the possibility of willingly risking my life for this country. I was a Korean, a foreigner. Not once did I think of myself as an American. I spent those years trying to get ahead of my classmates. The white kids were my enemies, my rivals, my subordinates -- never my friends. I did not like them and neither did I want them to like me. I only wanted to be respected by them, not necessarily because I deserved it, but because I was Korean. When they were ridiculing me, they were ridiculing Korea; when they were underrating me, they were underrating Korea; when they were ignoring me, they were ignoring Korea. I felt that I always had to show how strong and tough Koreans were; they just had to be taught that they should think twice before antagonizing a Korean!

In my junior year in high school, my attitude toward the whites began to change as I became involved in the student government. The white students were no longer an amorphous, nameless mass that I detested; they were unique individuals. I could not help sympathizing with those who had school and family problems; it was my responsibility to reach out to them in some way. By my senior year, I no longer viewed myself as a foreigner; I was still a Korean, but hyphenated with American. At that time, I was not fully aware that I had begun to perceive myself as a Korean-American. I have only recently realized that it was a radical departure from the attitudes of my first six years.

I laid the thought of returning to Korea aside to deal with the more immediate problem of becoming an American. I realized that many people did not appreciate the fact that I was an Asian in an all-white high school. In the past, this would have angered me, but I was only saddened by their attitudes. I felt pressure to conform to their values and mores since I could never change their narrow-mindedness. How can the problem of racial prejudice, explicit and implicit, be solved? How must I react to it? Should my primary concern be assimilation or differentiation? These three questions did not have easy answers. All I could hope for was that future generations would be more open-minded.

Recently, I have decided to return to Korea as I had promised nine years ago. My only fear is that this decision may turn out to be one of those idealistic, youthful dreams that a man relinquishes or forgets as he grows older. This decision has not changed my attitude toward the American people greatly. My affinity with them will always remain with me, and if I am called to serve in the defense of this country, I will willingly do so.

Anonymous



The line which separates my two worlds is dark and heavy heavy

Like a top I ss
 iii
 nnn

From one side to the other
 dizzy
 undecided
 confused.

As a top must lose momentu... my struggle will become **WORK**

and will fall
 I
 To one side or to the other.

Susan Lee

Contributors

Kheng-Chuan Chew is studying social studies at Harvard and is petitioning for an eighty-three hour day.



Helinda Tam revisited Hong Kong and China this past December.

Sonia Yamada is a Japanese-American who grew up in Japan, Europe, and in various parts of the U.S.

Kenneth Yee came over from Hong Kong at an early age and grew up in Boston Chinatown.

Winston Che is about to graduate summa cum laude in sliding down rainbows.

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Kheng-Chuan Chew is studying social studies at Harvard and is petitioning for an eighty-three hour day.

Cynthia Chin-Lee likes toasted bagels with cream cheese, muppets, playing with Alexander, spring flowers and poetry.

Wai Fung, a student of photography is currently working on a series of landscapes on Hawaii and Boston.

Jenny Ann Khaw, a freshperson at Tufts, lives in Thailand.

Peter Kiang is a senior at Harvard, interested in social change and makes animated films.

Betty Kwong is a pensive native of Hong Kong.

Susan Lee is interested in dance, poetry and other forms of art.

Sandra Leung, raised in Stamford, Connecticut, is seeking "truth, justice and the Asian-American way."

Josephine Lok was born in Hong Kong and has been living in Boston and Cambridge since her family immigrated to the U.S. in 1972.

Mon Mui enjoys playing basketball and attends Tufts University in his spare time.

Steven Pon was born in the sampan at low tide in Portchester, New York. He hopes to become a Renaissance man but unfortunately he's still in the Dark Ages.

Horacio Severino, a Pilipino from Eastern Texas is currently an English and International Relations double-major at Tufts.

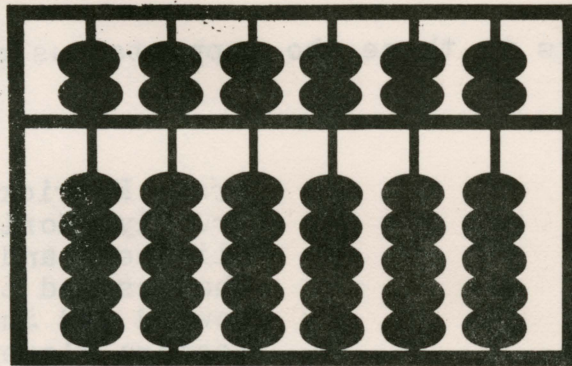
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