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**SPRING 1989
VOLUME IX**

Dedicated to
Dean Elizabeth Ahn Toupin
who has been tirelessly committed
to enhancing the quality of life
of students at Tufts University
and of Asian Americans everywhere.

Voices is a publication of the *Tufts Asian Students Club*.

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Hello and welcome to the 1989 issue of *Voices*!

Voices is produced annually through the efforts of the Asian American community at Tufts. Though funded largely by the Tufts Community Union Senate, we would like to thank the following for their generous contributions to this year's issue:

African American Center
Chinese Culture Club
Dean of Students Office
Korean Students Association
Women's Center
Department of Anthropology and Sociology

Asian American Center
College of Engineering
Department of American Studies
Office of Equal Opportunity

Voices serves as a medium through which all members of the Tufts community can express their views on political, social, and cultural issues affecting Asians and Asian Americans. Comprised of essays, articles, fiction, poetry, and artwork, not only does it serve as a forum for Asian American issues within the Asian American student population, but it also reaches out to the larger Tufts community as well, breaking silence and "giving voice" to the Asian American experience.

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Voices'* editorial board, the Asian Students Club, or any of the sponsors. Any questions/responses to issues or perspectives represented here are welcome and should be directed to: The Editor, *Voices*, Asian House, Medford Campus.

This year's contributions are wonderfully varied, ranging from poetry reflecting the self-affirmation of Asian American identity to a student's true story about hardships encountered in attempting to flee his homeland and an essay dealing with the objectification of Asian women during the Viet Nam War. So READ!! We hope you enjoy this year's issue. Perhaps, if we're lucky, you will be motivated to contribute to next year's publication!

Cindy Fong Therese On Chin Tang
Editors of *Voices*, 1989

Cover illustration by Kiyomi Yatsuhashi, J'88.

Special thanks to Benson Chen, A'92 for his art work, continuous throughout *Voices* and to Dave Hyeon Shin, A'90, for the generous use of his computer.

Baba

They used to ask me,
"Baba, was it like now?"
Was Snoopy fighting the Red Baron?

I didn't tell them that
Snoopy is not Chinese;
That my first childhood images
Were not of chopsticks
Catching chopsuey,
Or a new-used tricycle,

But of sister paraded
Around in a high hat of shame
By the Japanese soldiers.
They gave her to a firing squad;
She was then shot scared by
Rifles without bullets.

I didn't tell them
My neighbors were buried
Up to their necks in tragic dirt.
Their heads trying to avoid
The gleaming vultures.
Vultures had no appall.

I didn't tell
Of our exodus to Taiwan
A fleeing from the Communists.
The masses in flight were
Hardly bourgeois and
Barely functioning.

There my education began with begging:
I borrowed to learn,
I paid the Navy for college,
I learned to be seasick.

I went to a doctor who said,
"You have tuberculosis, you
Can't go to America."
After paying him to tell me this
Every three months for a year,
I learned that he was a liar.

I won't tell them I entered
America with a single dollar;
Becoming a busboy for my Ph.D.
My wife remembers counting
Quarters from my nightly tips.
I still quiet pennies.

Now my sons have grown,
Not only tall but warm.
I overheard one say to a friend,
"Baba always tips well."

Yet they ask me,
"Baba, show us life's miseries."
They make me proud.

Ken Yang, A'91



Out in the Garden

Susan Chung, J'90

Dedicated to Kay H. Tan, in appreciation for sharing her memories.

I was on the snow-topped peak of the Himalayas. As the cool air traveled up through the tunnels formed from my bell-bottomed shorts, that damp triangle resting in the small of my back shrank and disappeared. Fatigued from the summer's mugginess I took long draws of the fresh, thin air while imagining the blues and whites of icicles; until a ferocious wave of Singapore heat blew my tent apart. I quickly gathered again the thick, plump emerald leaves which grew long from the young tree and stretched them over my head--together in one huge crest. Using my feet to burden the leaf tips, I sat in the moist dirt relaxing my back against the sweating bark. My eight year old body fit naturally within that arch, that half-shell of an almond.

Light thuds grew louder as they approached my secret paradise. My Ah-ma was taking her daily walk through the community garden; her thick bamboo cane marking each step along the hardened earth pathway. I remained motionless waiting for the sounds to grow faint. Just as I was about to leap from my cover to surprise, her wooden crutch poked carefully through between the curtain of leaves, sending a sliver of daylight across my shoulder. As though encased in mud, I followed Ah-ma with my eyes as she squinted and moved cautiously toward the opening. Her soft gray eyes grew wide with humor when she recognized the silhouette of my choppy head of hair. Playing her usual game, she exclaimed, "Ah, there seems to be a new wild animal in the garden. Oh, it looks very dangerous. I hope it won't eat me. Black spines on its head. Kind of looks like Chu-Li but more black and ug..." I quickly released the captive leaves and ran smiling into the arms of Ah-ma.

"Grandma, you always find me!" I burst out, trying to appear resentful but grinning too. She offered her little shrug of the shoulders and then presented me her quivering hand. She never said Come walk with me; she just gave her hand. When I had linked my fingers into

her warm smooth palm, she began her tale. During those times we walked alone, Ah-ma brought to life the history not printed in my schoolbooks. From her, I understood my tradition.

We neared the southern border where the soil was worn and the weeds ancient. She pointed towards a patch of tall grass where stood a large bent boulder with a smaller rock resting on it. She spoke of how, during a legendary war, a wife had relentlessly waited for the husband's return; so long a time that she and the baby she carried on her back both turned to stone. Ah-ma swept her hand across the small sleeping rock and sighed. I reached up to touch the rock, too, but did not understand.

We walked towards home, but then paused at Mrs. Chen's newest addition to the garden, sky blue lilacs. Ah-ma gingerly placed her nose above the petals--sipping the fragrance quietly. Trying to imitate her but inhaling too forcefully, I filled my nostrils with pollen instead, choking and swallowing the plant taste. While she chuckled inside with her tiny lips pressed closely together to suppress the enormous laughter, she gently wrapped her handkerchief over my nose and I blew. Afterwards, I opened the white, cotton handkerchief.

"THAT much came from my nose!" I cried out.

"...must tell you about your nose," Ah-ma whispered acting as though she had just said nothing.

I said, "What about nose?" and was about to place my finger on her nose when, at that moment, Ah-ma's dentures loosened and made a loud "CLack" in her mouth. With surprised faces, we glanced at each other once and were soon exhausting ourselves with laughter.

Ah-ma started towards home while I lingered a few minutes to choose the ripest flowers for her silver-streaked braid. Only a few yards away I could see the red-tiled roof of our house. When I skipped towards her, Ah-ma was hunched over her cane coughing silently into her hand. Then it seemed to get too full, and through her fingers flowed the sickness. My cries of "Ah-ma is hurt...is dying!" were quickly heard by my brother, Teddy, the first to arrive, with Ma and Pa trailing after him. Teddy carefully lifted Ah-ma's arms to encircle his neck and raised her close to his chest like a newborn. With her hand massaging Ah-ma's

forehead, Ma tried to soothe Ah-ma's headache while Pa, his right hand carrying Ah-ma's legs, directed Teddy's every step with the other. My hand clung uselessly to Ah-ma's white linen dress as we, sewn together, approached home.

In her bed, with the rose pillowcases and sheets, she seemed much better despite all the pain from the yellow sickness, later explained to me as cancer. I just wanted to see her face wrinkle up as it did when she smiled. Ma suggested I make Ah-ma's favorite brew, jasmine tea with cream and a spoonful of rhinoceros horn. With a serious face, I grabbed the rhinoceros horn and Pa's pocket knife from the medicine cabinet and ran into the garden.

That day it was ninety-eight degrees and Ma ordered me to sit under the apple tree near the Watt family's house. After too many curious bees, I was forced to the bitter melon patch with its vine-weaved roof. On the way, I passed Mr. Shuh-Ren, seated on his wicker chair reading a newspaper. I bowed politely but hurriedly. He smiled anyway and waved a hand to say "hello". Once under the dangling melons, I scraped Pa's knife hard against the black petrified surface of the horn. Fine, heavy dust soon consumed the air around me. After fifteen minutes of grinding metal against horn, I only had half a teaspoon. I took a moment to relax my arms, and that was when I heard the buzz of the neighbor's radio. A report was speculating the Japan's chances against the British navy and their powerful guns. Then a big band tune popular in America played loudly with the rhythm accompanied by the sway of the melons. I ignored the urge to tap to the beat. All I cared about was making the brew for Grandma. And so, when the emergency siren went off, I continued working at the horn.

From the radio, a British commander's voice broke the music, warning all citizens to stay indoors because the Japanese were flying over Singapore. I heard the distant slamming of doors and windows from the houses bordering the garden, but took no notice. I scraped with as much force as my little fingers could press into the knife. I was concentrating so hard that when I rested a second, the scrape-like sound which came from behind me sent my head flying against the bitter melon above. I glanced back and saw nothing unusual about the snowy-colored blossoms until I saw something blink. A white creature no bigger than a kitten was staring as I stared. I let the horn and

knife drop carefully and, still squatting, inched myself closer to what looked like a white, cherry-eyed squirrel. I cooed for it to be patient until I could grab it. Just as I was reaching an arm's length distance, I heard Pa call out my name. He had been looking for me since the siren started, thirty minutes ago. I looked up at him and then to the empty space in front of me. Where did it go? Before I could react, Pa grabbed me at the waist and half-carried me home. He had heard a plane's engine.

After a night full of bass drum echoes from the navy guns, Teddy and I walked into the garden to recover the rhinoceros horn. We reached the melon patch, or at least what remained of it. Buried under all the rubble was the horn, shot into pieces. As we returned home, we met several neighbors lamenting over Mr. Shuh-Ren. His wife had found him still in the garden, his arms and body sagging in the wicker chair. His chest, puffed and red, spilled with the organs shot apart.

A month after Mr. Shuh-Ren's death, my family wept over our loss. Ah-ma had died peacefully and, after the fall of Singapore to Japan, we were thankful that she had not lived to see it. The Japanese were converting everything and everyone. Their language, their ideology, their plans became unwillfully ours. When school resumed, I wore not my colorful clothes which Ma made for me, but these bland gray uniforms with buttoned jackets. We practiced Japanese *hiragana* and learned the proper meanings to what I thought were once Chinese characters. On the day of my ninth birthday, a stiff messenger came to our door and announced that, in order to build a roadway, our community garden was to be destroyed. The night before that day, I went into the garden for the last time and wandered under the moonlight among my second home. One of my neighbors, Mrs. Tan, was still at work evacuating her prized yellow roses into red clay pots. On her back slept her daughter, Kay, bundled in quilt. Reminded, I returned to the rock and rubbed its surface lightly like Ah-ma had done. I understood then my Ah-ma. I replanted the ground at the base of the rock with a bunch of flowers I had collected on my way. At first the ground was tough and dead, but eventually velvet soil emerged as my tears mixed with the dirt. I walked away feeling that above, Ah-ma was proud of me.



San Phou
'89 Hanoi

Sopenny

I.

It is 4:30 in the morning.

The taxis,
the buses,
and the motorcycles,
are already in motion.

People do not
await the
break of dawn
in Sin City.

There is
too much
MONEY
to be made.

Such is the life in Bangkok.

One girl,
barely fourteen,
quietly collects
her belongings.

As she tiptoes
out of
the sleazy
motel room,
careful not to make a sound,
she feels for the lump in her pocket.

Is it all there?

She dares not count.
Once out on the street,
she creeps into
a dark corner
and counts the cash.

Exhilarated -
she knows it will last,
at least throughout the week.

For her the night's work has just
ended.

8:00 PM

Once again the cycle begins.

Painted,
preity,
young girls
walk the streets
and scope the bars,
in search of a rich customer.

'You want a girlfriend?'
'Let me love you tonight'
'Very cheap'

The transaction takes place.

Five American dollars,
two deutsch marks,
three pounds,
the currency is
insignificant.

Cold, hard, cash
for
 warm,
 soft,
 flesh.

II.

When his tour is over,
a G.I. marries a Thai girl
and takes her back to the States.

Her friends say,
'You are so lucky'
'Do not forget your friends'
'Keep in touch.'

After she recovers from the jet lag,
he takes her to meet his parents.

They smile tightly -
but she does not notice
she is much too excited.

Americanized
she learns
to bake apple pie,
drive a car,
gets a perm,
too many things to do.
Soon
she begins to smell
the liquor on his breath.
Late nights become
days.

'Where have you been?'

'Mind your own business
you slant-eyed bitch!'
he swears
as he slaps her.

As the years pass
she becomes immune
to the snide remarks.

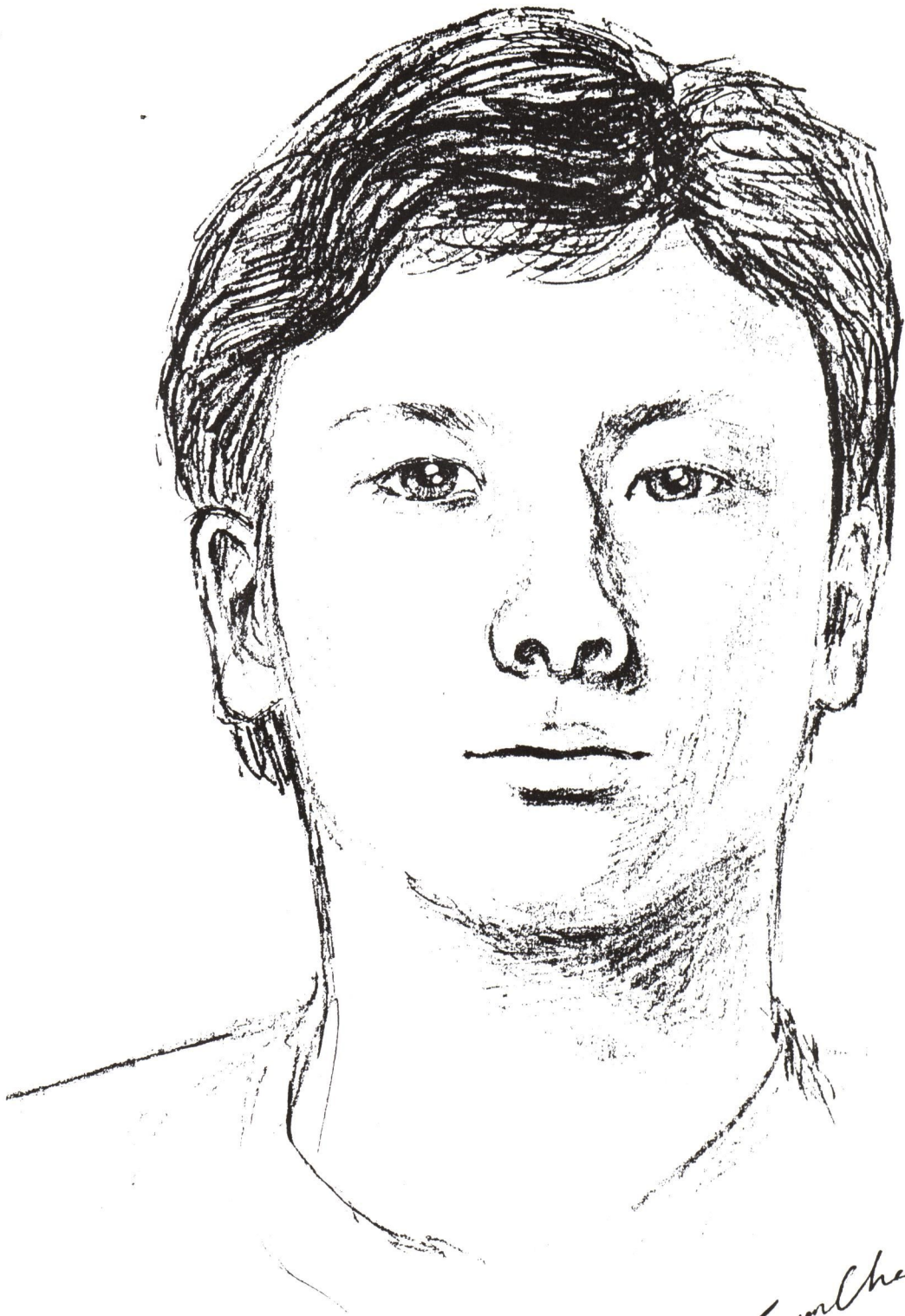
After all,
she is lucky to be here -
the Golden Mountain -
the land of opportunity.

She writes to her friends back home.

'We have an apartment with a swimming pool.'
'a color T.V.'
'a new car.'

Her friends back home sigh,
'Ah, she is so lucky.'

Panamai Banchongmanie, J'92



Senon Chen '88

Chin-hairs

"Let's pluck out the chin-hairs," she said,
extracting a yellow spool of thread from
her box of sewing implements, a tangle of colors
thin like confused veins.
Tearing a length shoulder-wide between the edges of her teeth,
she removed the stray fibers from her mouth
by pressing her thumb quickly against her tongue.
"Hold your chin up," to my brother, who slouched in a
kitchen chair, basketball shoes splayed out,
braced against marbelized linoleum. "Sit straight."
Twice she wrapped the thread around two fingers of each hand,
the middle and the ring, tightly so her skin,
loose and translucent with age, ended in purple bulbs
at the tips.
With care, she looped a bright circle aorund a single hair
on the cliff of his chin. Her half-raised arms
jerked bluntly in opposite directions, a motion
like the clean split of the winter melon
Cut that evening in the steamy kitchen, while outside
the greens darkened and grew, overpowering the sloped
driveway, rising in cracks of the cement porch,
plugging the rusted gutters made brittle by rain.
The pores of the earth breathed.
The core of a winter melon was sliced away
from its rind in the same moment.
Seen for the first time, there is a luminosity
of green and white.

Therese On, J '89

That Girl

Nathaniel Velarde, A'92

Whenever my parents spoke of leaving the Philippines for a new life in America, they used terms such as "fortunate", "a godsend", and even the term "escaped". The United States was even compared to the "promised land". I never understood why they spoke that way about their homeland. I was receiving conflicting signals from them. One was: "You should be proud that you are Filipino". The other was: "You are so, so lucky that we left the Philippines". Even at eight years old, the first signal was easy enough to understand. However, I never really did comprehend the meaning of the second, until a ten-year-old girl explained it to me in the clearest of terms.

Although the rain had ended twenty minutes earlier, a thick mat of dark clouds stubbornly remained over the city. As my family and I emerged from the shopping center, we could see mist rising from the previously heated asphalt. My small cousins, who were naturally intrigued by this phenomenon, besieged my parents with a barrage of questions. Their discordant chorus of inquiries suddenly ended when their little noses captured the pungent odor of hot dogs, which were being pedaled by a colorfully-dressed street vendor. Their eyes brightened as their bottomless stomachs grew more impatient with each enticing sniff. Their questions concerning the mist were replaced by shameless requests for money. With the aid of the magic word "please", my cousins' requests were immediately granted. Now, with their booty in hand, they scampered toward the unsuspecting vendor; the dull thud of their shoes striking the pavement tracked their progress. As I watched them race toward the vendor, I felt someone pulling

at my shirt. When I saw who was tugging at my shirt, I found myself unable to move. The sight of a small girl had cast an immobilizing spell on me. She was short and young, with a disheveled mass of black hair resting upon her tiny head. Although she had an attractive face, it was dirty and gaunt. Her eyes, which lacked the luster of my cousins', were anchored deep in their sockets. My eyes, which escaped the paralysis, saw her tattered clothes and shoeless feet. With a look of pride on her face, she reached out her hand and asked me for money. Her voice released me from her spell, and I clumsily reached into my pockets and fulfilled her request. She responded with a hurried but sincere "Thank you", then scampered away; the sharp sound of her bare feet striking the pavement tracked her progress. To my disappointment, she disappeared into the rising mist, before I could say, "You're welcome".

That was my first experience with poverty since living in America had sheltered me from seeing it except in big cities and on TV. Accepting the fact that poverty is a reality was the greatest challenge that I have ever faced. I never thought that it could affect me. That girl represented the reality of poverty and the hunger and pain that unfortunately accompanies it. Her destitution made it very clear to me how lucky I was to be living in the States. The term Filipino American took on a new meaning. It now meant more than just being "different", or being a Filipino with an American citizenship; it meant the difference between poverty and prosperity. The haunting memory of that girl will serve as a constant reminder that I have an obligation to help those left behind.

radical

The first stroke is like
an upside down teardrop,
with a downward force
and a quick lift;
the second stroke is
similar to the first,
just right below it;
then finally, the third stroke,
a little further down
than the second one was
from the first because
with a downward force,
immediately follows a quick
upward leap off the paper -
pattering off a wet rock
some 3,000 years ago
where a young woman sat
under the lowering sky
breathing in small gasps
shaking drops from her cheeks,
to her self unknown,
knowing only the rain

Anita Chang, J'89

Haiku

A once luscious rose
Preserved, pressed between pages,
Crumbles to the touch

An old wrinkled face
Stares at the yellowed photos -
The images of youth

Vivian Benoit, J'91



Asian Americans: Community and Unity

Chin Tang, A'90

Is there an Asian American community and what defines it? What purpose does it serve, if any? What impact does the community make? At the last ECASU conference, a workshop by the Yale Asian American Students Association focused on this concept of "Asian American community".

Peter Kiang, a sociology professor at UMass - Boston, provided a sociological perspective of community. The various ways to look at community from this particular standpoint are as follows:

1. as a physical location or a spatial entity
2. as population in terms of demographics
3. as a set of social norms/values
4. as a functional system - services provided, mobilization, etc.
5. as a social system - interrelations, socialization process, social control
6. as a distribution of power

When these criteria are applied to Asians in America, different aspects are presented by each guideline, each of which are accurate and not mutually exclusive. For example, number one is ideal for describing Chinatown and number four conjures up images of Asian student organizations, such as the Korean Student Association. Unfortunately, these guidelines often follow along ethnic lines, such as Korean communities or South Indian communities, etc.

The reason why such divisions occur is because of the diversity of the Asian population in America. The characteristics that often hold these communities together revolve around language and cultural values (number three). As a result of differing cultural values and experiences, these communities do not interact with each other. Each community has its own

priorities as dictated by the values and experiences of its members. For example, the Vietnamese community has a set of values and priorities far different from that of the Japanese American community. This in itself is not a bad phenomenon.

Unfortunately, this provides an obstacle towards establishing an Asian American community along the third guideline, which is the most dominating factor that determines community. The concept of an Asian American community must often transcend the factors that frequently separate the Asian American community.

The Asian American community needs to focus on elements that are common to Asians in America, namely the Asian American experience. This experience does not necessarily follow cultural lines, but rather racial lines. Issues such as racism, identity, bicultural exposure and alienation, education, and ethnic pride are common to the Asian experience in America. These are the issues that an Asian American community needs to focus on. No ethnic Asian group has been spared the effect of these forces. If a group can form around a political agenda that centers around the Asian American experience, then such a community will exist, as indeed, it does.

This Asian American community encompasses all Asian Americans, regardless of ethnic origins. However, not all members of the community actively participate for a variety of reasons. One is the lack of identifying oneself as being Asian American. Another is priorities. One of the most contentious reasons is the fear of the loss of ethnic identity. Different ethnic groups are afraid that their distinct ethnicity will be absorbed by a larger group, that their set of values and social norms will be neglected in favor of a set for the larger group. This isn't the case though. Ethnic communities form around language and culture that determine the set of social norms and values for that particular ethnic group. The Asian American community focuses on a political agenda that is distinct from the cultural agenda that determines values.

The purposes of an Asian American community are very clear. It exists to provide a

united effort to combat obstacles for Asians in America and to form a social system that fosters interaction among Asian Americans. The Asian American community is like any other community as defined by Peter Kiang's six points, except that the spatial identity is the United States and it follows a political agenda. In addition, similar experiences, collectively

known as the Asian American experience, rather than a set of social norms and values, hold the community together.

It cannot be denied that there is an Asian American community and that it is national, although each sub-community, whether along ethnic, class, or geographic lines, has its own unique traits.



Me.

What is me?
This question repeats itself in my conflicting mind.
I search for what I enjoy doing.
I search for what I believe in.
I search for something to see in the mirror.
I search for substance.
Reflections of images that society has put upon me.

What is me?
I have asked myself millions of times.
I am Asian American.
I am Pro-choice.
I am what you want me to be.
I say "Yes sir, Yes ma'am."
Reflections of what You see in me.

What is me?
What is me?
I find comfort amongst the friends I want to be.
I yearn to become them; Filling my jigsaw puzzle.
I am guilty of self-denial.
Reflections of emptiness. I am invisible in my own eyes.
What is Me?

"You are aware, sensitive, intelligent, fun-loving, cute..."
I wish I could take a compliment.
I wish I could close my eyes and see who I am.
I wish I could give myself life.
Reflections of 18 years of memories, dreams, and nightmares

What is me?
The pain I feel when I ask myself.
Do I deserve such gratitude for living?

No.

No one deserves to have such insecurity!
Suicide is like the ocean, it washes my sand away.
Each Day my friends bring sand to refill my soul.
I find more and more love and understanding.
I find that I can replenish my own sand.

It is time for me to be selfish.
Not with words alone,
But with actions and growth.
For 18 years I have been society.
Now I am reborn.
What is me?
I am free,
I am me.

Kane Lee, A'92

Escaping from China

King Lam, A'91

From the years of 1966 to 1980, China had special laws against civilians escaping to Hong Kong, the British colony. In that time, the country had a very low standard of living. The only way for civilians in my region to find a better living life was by escaping to Hong Kong, which afforded a higher standard of living and better chance for life.

There were a few ways to do it; burying oneself in a train with chicken, cows, or pigs; swimming across the Tung Pin Jau Island; and sailing across the ocean. I knew little about the first one because my hometown, Pan Sang, was not close to the railroad. Moreover, people were not allowed to travel freely from town to town, and even speaking about the subject was prohibited by law. I only heard from adults that it was extremely dangerous, since the train moved fast, and that escapees had to jump quickly from the train. Otherwise, they could have died inside the cargo from lack of any fresh air and from the smell of manure from pigs and cows.

The other two routes were the most popular ones, because Hong Kong, surrounded with water, was close to the mainland. The distance between the mainland and Hong Kong was far, but it was possible for good swimmers to get to the New Territories. Sailing directly there was usually about 25 miles.

Although the civilians who swam across the ocean were very good swimmers, they needed equipment to be able to do it. Equipment was absolutely illegal to have. If you owned any kind of swimming equipment, you would be treated as a criminal. The only place that you could buy such equipment was the capital, Guangzhou. But it was hard to get permission to go there.

Another barrier for the swimmers was that they needed to travel eight miles to the shore and stay there overnight but could hardly get a pass from the local communist party. They had

to report to the party of the village where they were going to sleep. If they went to obtain travel registration they were afraid that the local communists would watch them. The registrar asked many questions about their reasons for leaving. For instance, if you wanted to visit your relatives elsewhere, you had to show them letters which were mailed from the relatives. Otherwise, you were going to have trouble.

Punishments were varied. The lightest you could get was a warning and placement on the blacklist. If you were placed on the blacklist, the party would send someone in your village to watch every action you took. The worst penalty was imprisonment and deportation to a working camp.

Acquiring the swimming equipment was hard, but trying to get a boat was even harder. Also, the seashore was like a combat zone. The free patrol gunboats and guards along the coastline made it even harder for those trying to escape.

There were not many boats because once a boat was stolen, it would never come back again. Additionally, a boat wasn't easy to build because it cost about 1,000 yuen, and good wood was hard to obtain. A thousand yuen was a lot of money. People who worked in the good positions such as manager in a store, made about thirty yuen a month. The poor farmers only made about 3 yuen a month. Even if one could find a boat, it was hard to find a trustworthy sailor who knew the direction at night, and had the skill and the willingness to go along the way. Most importantly, it was hard to find one who could keep your secret; in fact, many sailors knew the way but if they left, they were never stupid enough to return. Others were afraid that they could get caught and if they were satisfied with their lives, they didn't want to jeopardize them for the dangerous voyage.

The weather had a significant effect on both swimming and sailing. The ocean waves breathed up, sucked down, and then boiled back in the wind, which was a great disadvantage for the voyagers. These waves could slow the boat speed and require more energy to move the boat. The waves would also make

swimmers get dizzy, and they couldn't get help in the darkness, since the Chinese patrol boat crossed the shore frequently. Success was more likely in calm, deep darkness, and in rainy weather. Rain blocked the army's searchlights and the sounds that the escapees made.

Swimming also depended on the temperature of the water. If the water of the ocean was lower than sixty degrees Fahrenheit, in three hours they could become icemen in the freezing sea.

Another danger for the swimmers was the presence of sharks in the ocean. The reason for this was that the sharks were attracted to the warmer water during the summer and fall, and to the shallow areas where they could find food. As is common knowledge, sharks are sensitive to blood. If swimmers wanted to escape, they had to cross the mountains and fields at night without using any lights. Not only did the swimmers have to be very careful about not getting any scratches on their bodies, but they also had to be careful when they crossed the guard zone. If the army chased them, they would get wounded easily. If they swam, the sharks would probably have a good supper.

Although some swimmers could break through those two gateways, they still had to face the last one: landing. They were like people who didn't eat for three days and had to run for twenty miles. They were hungry from staying in the water for so long. Moreover, their muscles ached often, especially their legs, so that they couldn't walk. Afterwards, this caused some of the swimmers to die or to be more easily caught by the Hong Kong police.

The most common danger for sailors was the overturning of their boats in the ocean. It wasn't difficult for this to occur because the boats were small, and they spent about eight hours in the sea. But fierce waves made the sailors feel like they were riding horses. Once they got tired, they could neither fall on to the ground nor float to heaven, but had to be swallowed by the seething ocean.

The size of a boat to a swimmer in the ocean is like comparing the size of an elephant to a turtle. Obviously, the patrol boats spotted the boat more easily than the swimmer's head. In many cases, when the Chinese Army sighted a boat, they warned the sailors abruptly. Sailors had two choices: one was to play the death game and to keep sailing, and the other was to stop the boat and give up. If the patrolers saw that the boat was still trying to escape, they would open fire on the sailors just as I heard they did to 22 people near the bay. The next morning, the water was still red near the boat. I was covering my eyes with my hands, and crying.

Giving up wasn't a good choice either; sailors would be punished more severely than swimmers if they both got caught. Sailors were taken to every village to be beaten and humiliated in front of the public assembly. They had to stay at least three years in the horrendous jail. No matter how old or how young they were, they had to pay triple the fine. The leader(s) of the sailors had to go to the gruesome, dark jail for one year and eleven years in another kind of jail. Swimmers' range of punishment was between one half year or three years long, besides going to a few villages for the same public beating and humiliation. I was one of eleven lucky people who didn't get caught when trying to escape by boat.

As I look back at my experience when I escaped, a chill strikes my head. I still remember the bullets whizzing over our heads and our feet. I still remember the dead bodies on the seashore with horribly, swollen stomachs and the smell of dead fish that I saw while I was going fishing. I still remember my brother and sister-in-law and the baby inside her that I lost to the sea. I still remember Chan Peng, my best friend, who sat next to me in class for three years. He lost his life while trying to escape early in the morning. The shocking noise of the shooting woke up everyone, even the dead sky.



Hashi faux pas

Only that cherry tree which blossoms alone,
Flowers blending white
Into the weightless clouds against the knotted branches,
A migrant amidst the stodgy old maples choked with ivy,
Only that flesh can be hewn into
Elongated splinters of twenty centimeters,
Sculpted into slender rods which
Follow the soft grain of the wood,
Then lacquered to an icy obsidian sheen.

With these simple parallel lines,
Suited best for delicate manipulations --
Coaxing away the last grain of rice
Clinging to the conical side of a porcelain bowl,
Or plucking a single flailing tendril from a bubbling pasta pot --
One cannot consume a filet mignon.
Hashi may be used to prepare that plate of pasta,
But are not welcome at its table
Among the lacy white drape and linen napkins.

Their modest form and gentle manner are favored less
Than is the trident spear with its
Gleaming metallic tines
Wounding their prey with a furtive thrust.
Frowns on faces would wax and wane
If one were to sit down with *hashi* at the lavish banquet table;
The simple narrow shape
Is strangely iridescent under
The glare of ashen white faces.

Thomas M. Hirata, A'89

Hashi: the Japanese word for chopsticks

Untitled

They say I think too much.
They say I analyze too much.
They say I worry too much.

They say I take things too seriously.
They say I take things too deeply.
They say I take things too personally.

They say I'm too sensitive.
They say I'm too emotional.
They say I'm too heavy-hearted.

They say
They say
They say

I say they say too much.

Amy S. Lee, J' 89



Why A Chorus Line?

Chin Tang, A'90

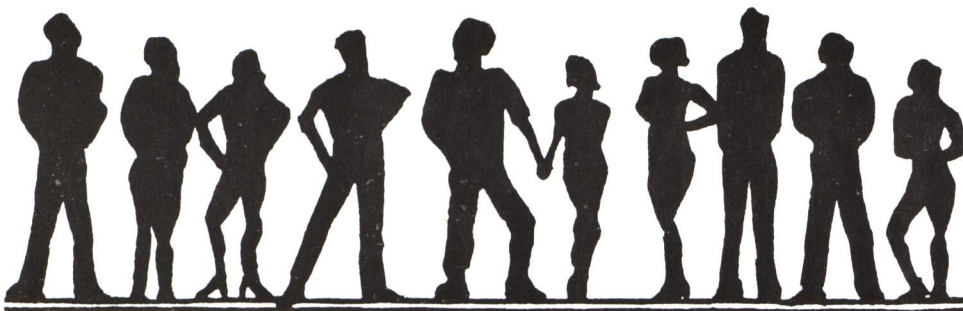
In March, The Asian Students Club, along with many other campus organizations, sponsored an all-Asian production of *A Chorus Line*. Both the East Coast premiere of an all-Asian production, as well as the world-wide premiere of an amateur production of this renowned musical, it was a landmark event for Asian Americans.

It is important that we reflect on why this event is such a milestone. In the not too distant past, our Asian heritage conspired with American society to keep us from expressing ourselves in the arts. Our parents, like other immigrant parents before them, steered us towards *safe* careers while American society built up this mythical image of Asians as all brains, no creative and artistic talent. At the same time, Asians were typecast into undesirable roles, far from mainstream America.

Why choose *A Chorus Line*? Shouldn't Asian Americans make a statement about our own lives through our own words, through scripts that reflect our own experiences? We do, but, in this particular case, we didn't plan to tell you how we've lived; we planned to tell you how we intend to live.

As Asian Americans acculturate further into American society, we will not be limited to the Charlie Chan or gangster roles that American filmmaking has set aside for us in the past. Our literature will not constantly be put on the back shelf and marked "ethnic". There may be a best-seller by an Asian American recounting experiences on the Space Shuttle instead of in China, or about a fictional life in a small town instead of a small village. There may be an Asian American James Bond or Superman. There may be an Asian American Ansel Adams.

Today, we see Asian Americans in all aspects of American society, but it hasn't gone far enough, especially in the arts. Even though this generation has witnessed the greatest effort to include *everyone* in American society, stereotypes and generational conflicts still haunt us. We are still pioneers, exploring and mapping the opportunities that are available. So, while our parents may have said NO when we wanted to explore the arts, we plan to tell our children to go ahead.



A CHORUS LINE

Super-Race

Twisted contorted scowling
This monstrosity will only grow
Isolated obstinate fighting
Chasing its tail
It will tire

They look more like us than most
So why the ugliness?
Unwind and relax those tight knots
Before all realize our smiles
Are not genuine

Anonymous



Dulce et decorum est:

Ken Chow, A'91

A scene from Vietnam

The platoon had not seen any action for a few days and the men were already starting to sink into their somber moods again. Sometimes the waiting could be just as brutal as the battle. Sitting back against the trees or anything else that would support them, each man picked a space of nothingness to stare at.

When the soldiers had first arrived in Vietnam, I thought they were larger than life; each wore a confident smile inflated by the American flag, which said that all would be well. Looking at each man now, I formed a mental "before and after" synopsis. The "night and day" cliché would not even be adequate to describe the contrast. All the feelings they had known were reduced to that lifeless stare which now blanketed every man's face. Yet that blank stare represented something more. It represented boys who had put their faith in an ideal, only to find out that no right or wrong existed. It represented boys who had been taught to cause that suffering. But most tragically, it represented boys who didn't care anymore. All of the emotions they had been capable of feeling were drained and then re-drained to the point that all that remained was the hardened exterior of their bodies. Their actions had become perfunctory. They would still fight, kill, and die for the Uncle Sam ideology, but not because of a blind patriotism anymore; now it was because they had no other choice.

I thought of the battle adage, "Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori" - "How fitting and sweet it is to die for the father country". Then I thought of the poem by Wilfred Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est", which denounces the saying. An idealist versus a realist. Who was right? I looked over at Smith. Nineteen years old from Brooklyn, his father had died when he was ten. For him, the war meant that he might never be able to support his mother and sister again. He lay against a log scraping at the rust on his gun. "Smitty", I said. The eyes rose from their oblivious stare, searching for the voice which had addressed him. Finally, they

focused on me. "Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori?" I asked. The eyes became reflective, then helpless. "Sir?" he asked, in a tone which, translated, was a plea not to play language games with his already shattered young nerves. Shaking my head, I said, "Never mind", then whispered to myself, "I didn't think so".

The silent reverie was broken that night when our platoon received orders to move up Charlie Hill, in order to reinforce some troops already engaged with the VC. Gearing up like an old machine badly in need of grease, the platoon moved out towards the hill.

Before we even traveled a quarter of the distance, we encountered some snipers. Normally, they just shot over our heads to keep our nerves unsteady. But for some reason, this time the bullets were coming very, very close. There were about four of them around us in the jungle. It got so bad that we had to come to a complete standstill, huddled in the dark. The situation infuriated me, as it had many times before. Here we were, our platoon outnumbering the snipers by more than ten to one, yet they held us at bay like cornered sheep. If only it weren't so dark, so damn dark, I thought. It was impossible to distinguish the movement of the snipers from the wind rustling the leaves. The random pot shots continued, each one getting seemingly closer. We put some shots into the trees, but both sides knew the uselessness of that. "A shot in the dark," I whispered cynically.

Perhaps at that moment more than ever I saw the idiocy of America being in the war. We farm boys and city kids, grown up on baseball, walks in the park, and Sunday dinners, were fighting against guerillas who were born into the Vietnam struggle in underground tunnels. While we were learning to catch a pop-fly or how to act with guests, the VC were learning to load a rifle and move sleekly through the jungle. While we had never seen a war fought on U.S. soil, the VC had a history of constant struggle with intruders. You didn't have to be a general or a president to figure out the chan-

ces of us beating a culture like theirs, which was one based on war, sacrifice, and endurance. Yet there we were, fighting their war on their turf. Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori.

The snipers finally stopped, probably to regroup with their main force somewhere. Cautiously, we moved on. Still, we could not reach the hill without another incident. Going down an embankment, an unseen trip-wire exploded, completely throwing one of my men into the nearby bushes. Taking one look at him, I recognized the condition I had seen so many times before. He was alive, but his body was so torn apart that no medical miracle would enable him to lead a normal life again. How long would we have to fight against a phantom enemy that we could not see? Watching him being put on the stretcher as a helicopter was called in to evacuate him, I thought of the irony of the situation. Here was a boy giving his life for an ideology, a political belief. And yet, as he lay on the cold ground, his body torn apart, where was that political belief and what difference did it make to him now? I couldn't get the phrase out of my head. Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori. Bullshit.

We got to Charley Hill two hours late. To our amazement, the troops were sitting around, smoking cigarettes and talking.

"What the hell's going on here?" I demanded. "Where's Charlie?"

"Split," said a soldier lying back against his helmet, "A while ago. We kicked some butt."

Immediately I realized what that meant. The entire trip had been for nothing. Zero. We might as well have never moved. It was so out-

rageous and yet at the same time so typical. I felt the eyes of my troops upon me, asking, pleading for an explanation or justification which they knew would never come. The soldier's lax tone irritated me. That we had made the trip and lost a man for nothing irritated me. That no one had contacted us irritated me. But what could I do? I did what every other soldier in my platoon and probably in Vietnam did many, many times: I accepted a personal loss, not to the enemy, but to the war as a whole. I let my hatred of the war move up yet another notch on a scale which had to be constantly enlarged.

The worst part about it was that I knew the next day I would have to do it all over again, and would continue doing it for many more long days. My troops had lost all confidence. I had lost all confidence. How could I justify the war to them when I couldn't even justify it to myself? I would spend many hours trying to figure out why we were in Vietnam, but would come up with no reasonable answer. Perhaps America could not come up with one either, and that is why it would try so hard to forget the war later on. Being able to forget about the war was a luxury given to later generations, though, and not to my platoon and the others in Vietnam.

That night, as my troops slept in the cold trenches, I thought about the last lines: 'My friend, you would not tell with such high zest to children ardent for some desperate glory, the old lie: Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori.' "Indeed not," I said, leaning back to sleep, "Indeed not."

Letters

Letters almost every day from her.
I press my thumb and forefinger on either side of the envelopes
and feel the warmth through the paper
of my own fingertips.
I skim the nervous handwriting which I have half-inherited.
She is in transit between an appointment and the post office.
No time for philosophy today.
I am relieved.

I can picture her on another evening
measuring out each sheet of stationary
from the tight stack in the kitchen drawer.
The letterhead awkwardly boasts of a motel chain or auto repair shop.
This is her indulgence, The Fine Art of Correspondence.
She does not believe in buying paper
just for writing.
Almost frivolous -
writing, communication.

These letters begin innocently but I can tell she is inspired.
I fidget, reading my future in declarative sentences
not of my hand or of my imagination.
She takes for granted that, as a writer, I read her
with a sympathetic eye although
she has never called me a writer
in her own words.
"It's your own talent," she bestows as a consolation
for it being worth nothing
except for composing very nice Christmas cards and thank-you notes.
Her supplication suffocates, her eloquence assaults me
yet I read on, entranced.
I realize I am not the only one with talent.

As I complete the last page of her letter,
the final chapter of her piece,
grammatically flawless arguments, molded
into smoothly transitioned paragraphs of poignant metaphor,
stir from their secret place and rise to my defense.
Now is my chance to respond like a writer.
I compose a letter in my head.

I never write back. Not the letter
that will change everything.
For now she is correct in her judgement of me.
But when I am a writer, my first letter will be addressed
to her and the world.
Instead, I drop the letter into the round can
next to my desk full of letters to be emptied
next trash day,
and save all my grammatically flawless arguments, molded
into smoothly transitioned paragraphs of poignant metaphor,
for my next composition
in English class.

Nocturnal

Unrest inside
I couldn't sleep
At 3:30 AM
Whose hands were steadier?
We were three naerok people
Indifferent to slumber
The cards were warped and folded
But I managed a three-level mansion
"Beat that"
"My parents are so competitive"
I envisioned his mother's Mercedes
In the garage of my mansion

A minister's child
Cannot understand
A doctor's child
But unluckily we
Three were naerok
The engineer's child
Beat me with
A three-level castle
Only because
When he ran out of cards
I destroyed my silly mansion
And gave him mine

Anonymous



Diversity

Keith So, A'89

When I was in high school, I was surrounded by minorities - Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc.. Not that my school had no Whites, for there were many Italians, Irish, and other Caucasians as well. But there was definitely a greater heterogeneity - or at least a greater tolerance of heterogeneity - among the student body.

During my four years at Tufts, I underwent a subtle, but noticeable, change of attitude. Surrounded by symbols of a prestigious, traditional college - quad-shaped lawns, ivy on the buildings - as well as by fraternities, late-night parties, rock music blasting from 150-watt stereos, I became very sheltered and isolated from the rest of the world. I became accustomed to the daily routine of college life - morning showers, prepared meals, studying, and extracurricular activities. My whole life centered on "life in college".

But my whole perspective on the world was slightly disillusioned. I grew *unaccustomed* to the different colors and ethnicities of people in the world outside of college. I noticed that most of my professors and classmates were white. There was less of the "great American melting pot" here at Tufts. The local community of Medford did not exactly enhance my exposure to ethnic diversity, either. Sure, there are far more clubs of different ethnicities in college than in an average high school. But does that mean that a student learns more about diversity?

I am not here to poke fun at the "majority" or at the policies of the Student Admissions

Board. I think that Admissions is trying really hard to "diversify" its student body, especially due to pressure from minority groups and coalitions on campus. However, when the dean of students says to perspective students:

"Most of us grow up in homogeneous communities in which difference is often viewed with suspicion and sometimes with hostility. We at Tufts are of different nationalities, different racial and ethnic backgrounds, different gender and sexual orientation. Coming to college erases neither our identity nor our prejudices and, instead, reveals our need for self-examination - to see how we may learn from our differences and eliminate our biases," *Pachyderm* (1988). I am not quite sure whether the dean realizes what a Tufts graduate truly learns, if he/she in fact does learn, about diversity.

Perhaps some students do learn, and I think that it's great if we learn more about Asian culture, or if we learn more about African history, or if we learn more about Latin America, or if we learn European history or study abroad. And I think it's even more exceptional for students to learn about homosexuality. But for other students, I'm not sure whether their exposure to "different nationalities, different racial and ethnic backgrounds, different gender and sexual orientation" is truly enhanced by our so-called foreign language, culture and distribution requirements. Is all our education coming just from the books and the teachers? Are we personally experiencing diversity as we call it?



G.I. Joe and China Doll: Rape, Racism, Prostitution, Misogyny, the Military, and Asian Women in the Viet Nam War

Thomas M. Hirata, A'89

"Good" military training and discipline are integral parts of any war; dehumanization of the enemy and indoctrination into the military structure are essential components of this training. Such was the case for the war in Viet Nam. Woven into the fabric of the military training of unwilling draftees was systematic racism - dehumanization and objectification of the Asian enemy, "gooks" they were called. Enmeshed within the military structure and discipline was the objectification of women, and of women's sexuality. Where these two meet, Asian women exist, trapped between misogyny and racism.

In order to override the societal taboo against murder, dehumanization must be employed in order to train (brainwash) soldiers to kill the enemy. By devaluing the humanity of the enemy, the opposing forces cease to be people and become, in this instance, "gooks." They are removed from any human context. One soldier recalled his introduction to the enemy:

The only thing they told us about the Viet Cong was they were gooks. They were to be killed. Nobody sits around and gives you their historical and cultural background. They're the enemy. Kill, kill, kill. That's what we got in practice. (Wallace, 1984 pp. 5-6)

A "kill," therefore, was a desirable goal for the soldiers. Some GI's kept track of their "kills" by cutting an ear off and stringing it through their dogtags, as a hunter might hang a set of antlers. (Wallace, p. 24)

Nationalism was also a useful tool in military training. The deaths of other Americans served as a rallying point: "What we were hearing was Viet Nameese [sic] was killing Americans. I felt that if people were killing Americans, we should fight them." (Wallace, p. 6) Another soldier expressed an in-

tense desire for vengeance on behalf of their fallen comrades. "... I remember praying to the Lord to let me see some VC -- anybody -- jump out on the trail."

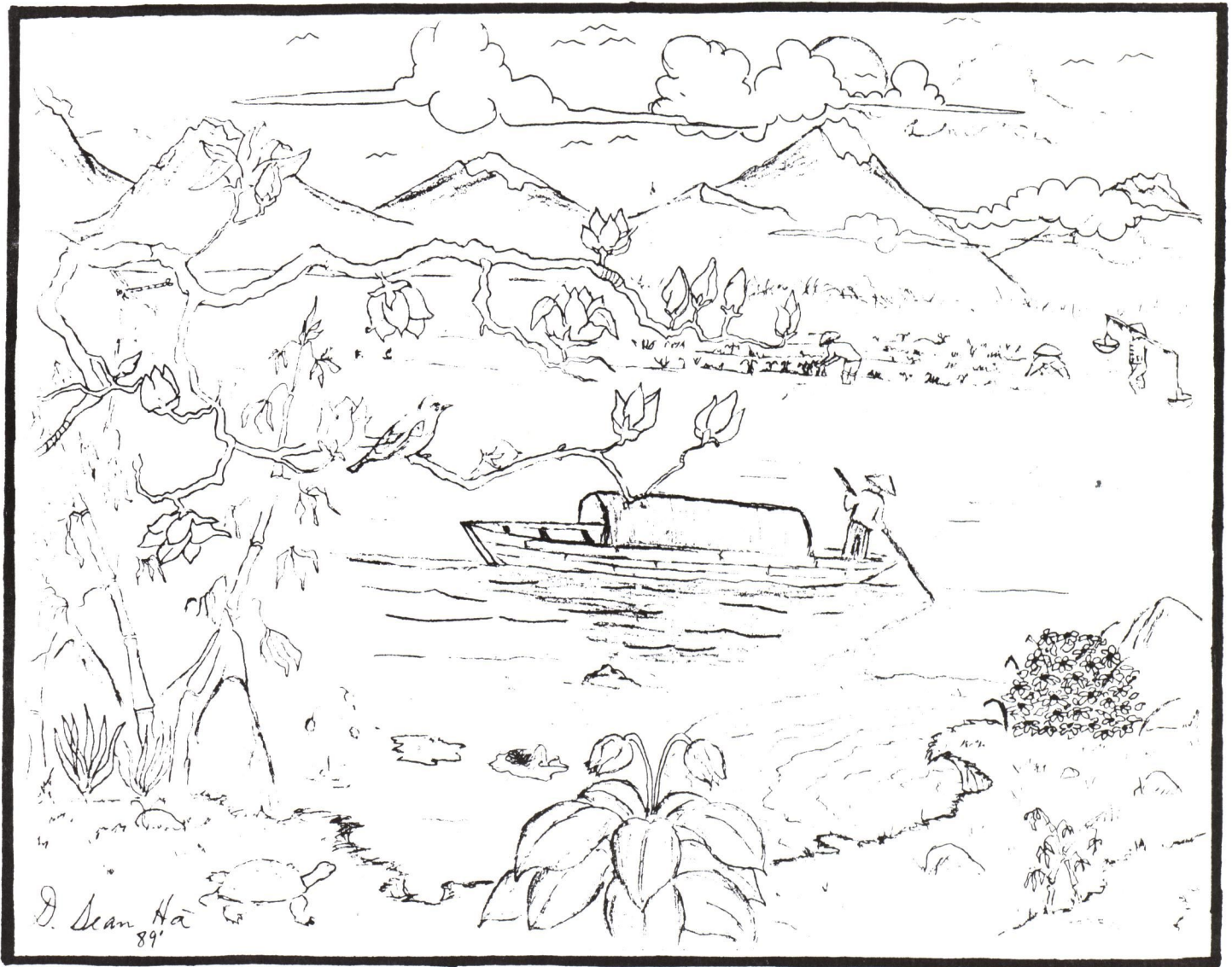
Wherever nationalism is called, racism is not far behind. Nationalism is always a situation of "us" and "them." As such, who "they" are must be defined in some way, and race is a convenient method of doing so. PFC Reginald Edwards (in Wallace) described his bootcamp training in guerrilla warfare, and the use of race to define the enemy:

When I got there they were doing Cuban stuff. Cuba was the aggressor. It was easy to do Cuba because you had a lot of Mexicans.... We even had Cuban targets. Targets you shoot at. So then they changed the silhouettes to Vietnamese. Everything to Vietnam. Getting people ready for those little gooks. And, of course, if there were any Hawaiians and Asian-Americans in the unit, they played the role of aggressors in the war games. (p. 5)

From the beginning, therefore, GIs were shown that race is *intrinsic* to the enemy; being of a different race is what *defined* the enemy.

The combined result of racist dehumanization of the enemy is clearly evident in SP4 Richard Ford's account of the "game" of "Guts." A North Viet Nameese man was tortured and mutilated to death by a group of American soldiers, while others looked on in disgust. (Wallace, pp.45-46) Ford's graphic description of the butchering of a live person shows how little these soldiers valued the life of the enemy.

In a similar vein, the position of Asian women is the result of several factors, including dehumanization of Asians in general (as noted above), attitudes toward women and prostitution as expressed by the military structure, and historical racist stereotypes of Asian women in particular.



Through propaganda, movies, and, later, television, Americans had been fed a steady diet of degrading stereotypes of Asians for almost a century before the first US troops landed in Viet Nam. Asians in general were seen in the late Nineteenth century as "coolie" laborers, mechanical beings without feeling. They were also depicted, alternately, as servile and submissive or as inscrutable and conniving. Not coincidentally, the same diametrically opposed characterizations are made of prostitutes, hence the powerful stereotypes of the Suzy Wong and the Geisha Girl -- sexual, enticing things with which to have sex with.

The military, as a primary conduit of male power in a male dominated society, has sought to perpetuate traditional concepts of "masculinity" as a means of manipulating its troops. A prominent motif in this definition of masculinity is male sexuality -- an underlying assumption that to be a "real man," and hence a truly effective soldier, a soldier required outlets for his "natural sex drive." (Enloe, 1983) However, such outlets are scarce in the predominantly male armed services. Thus, the military hierarchy has sought to provide such services for its troops in the form of prostitution. Although the military does not participate directly in the provision of prostitutes, its supervision of the health of these women (solely to preserve the health of American GIs) is certain complicity. SP5 Harold Bryant described the prostitutes in a shantytown outside a base:

Another good thing about the girls in Sin City was that the medical personnel in the camp would always go and check 'em once a week. And if they got disease, they'd get shots and wouldn't be able to work until they were clear. Nobody used rubbers because all the girls in Sin City were clean. (Wallace, p. 26)

Moreover, not only were the bases ringed with satellite brothels and massage parlors, but the military permitted such activities on post: "Prostitutes were made officially welcome to US bases in Vietnam as 'local national guests'." (Enloe, p. 33)

Being in an all male environment also resulted in sexual depravation for the

(heterosexual) soldiers; the officers were well aware of this, and used it, too, as a means of conditioning the GIs to hate the enemy, vis a vis enforced sexual repression. One man recalled his experience in Marine boot-camp, where the drill instructors began lessons with sexual jokes "usually having to do with prostitutes they had seen in Japan or in other parts of Asia..." Moreover, he said:

The attitude of the Asian woman being a doll, a useful toy or something to play with usually came out in these jokes, and how they were not quite as human as white women. For instance, a real common example was how the instructor would talk about how Asian women's vaginas weren't like a white woman's, but rather they were slanted, like their eyes. (Yoshimura, 1971; in Tachiki, et. al., 1971 p.27)

Comments like these perpetuate the stereotype that all Asian women are prostitutes; this quote typifies simultaneously the dehumanization of Asians as well as the objectification of women. These two strategies, employed in a systematic manner, effectively transformed the minds of soldiers into racist murderers and violent rapists. Evelyn Yoshimura wrote, "The image of a people with slanted eyes and slanted vaginas enhances the feeling that Asians are other than human, and therefore much easier to kill." (p. 28)

Cynthia Enloe observed that all of the Viet Nameese women were subject to the label of "prostitute" because they were Asian women (p. 33). For the soldiers, however, the objectification of Viet Nameese women merged racism, prostitution and rape. By virtue of their race, Asian women were dolls and toys, mere things to be bought, sold and played with. From prostitution, Enloe argued, the link to rape is very simple: that which can be bought can also be stolen, taken without payment or consent, and/or by force. She cited an interview with a veteran: "You don't want a prostitute. You've got an M-16. What do you need to pay a lady for? You go down to the village and you take what you want." (Baker, 1982 p. 321)

In fact, the force by which women were raped was merely an extension of the soldiers'

assigned duty. American troops were to conquer Viet Nam. They were to defeat the enemy using their weapons and overcome the gooks with their strength. Viet Nameese women, as women, were whores to be raped; as gooks, they were to be conquered, as a part of their nation. Rape thus becomes one of the spoils of war. Returning to PFC Edwards, he recalled the capture of two women. "Then these guys who was driving the Amtrac come in there and start unzippin' their pants as if they gonna screw the women.... They said, 'We do this all the time.'" (Wallace, p. 8)

Perhaps the ultimate example of objectification of Asian women lies in occurrences of necrophilia.

I noticed one of the white guys take his pants down and just start having sex. That kind of freaked me out, 'cause I thought the broad was dead.... the brother asked the dude what was wrong with him, why did he fuck a dead womar. And he said he just wanted to get his rocks off. (Wallace, p. 27)

That the woman was dead was of little consequence to this GI. She was only a tool for his own gratification. The life of Asian women meant so little to him that they are of no greater value alive than dead.

A related form of misogyny, many soldiers talked about being a "double veteran." "Having sex with a woman and then killing her made one a double veteran." (Baker, pp. 208-209) Again, here the only value for the Viet Nameese women is for sex. Only two things can be gotten (taken) from them -- sex and their lives. The domination of Viet Nameese women in this way justifies the soldiers' presence in the Viet Nam, reinforces their own masculinity, and fulfills the goals of the American military, namely the recapture of Viet Nam by eliminating or incapacitating its people.

Toys and dolls. Soldiers were brought up with this attitude toward Asian women. Military training enhanced and cultivated this image and combined it with hatred of Asians. As The Enemy, Viet Nameese women were reduced to being gooks; as women, they were reduced to sexual devices. Considering the military as a male-dominated institution of a male-dominated society, the worthlessness of Asian women is, in fact, due to this larger sexist

context. Attitudes toward women were (are) little different in American society; Enemy women were necessarily worth even less. The very structure of the military perpetuates sexist attitudes (despite slowly growing numbers of women) in the training and segregation of the troops. Likewise, the military is a white-dominated institution of a white-dominated society.¹ As such, racism was a convenient, if not latent, tool to use in training men to kill. Again, the use of racism in the military was condoned by society at-large which was (and is), itself, racist.

To the extent that the military is a powerful means of enforcing white, male (heterosexual) society, the problems of racism and violence against women seem intractable, short of a radical change in societal structure. Racism, sexism and violence against women are, in fact, essential to the effectiveness of the military. Recognizing that the foundations of military efficiency contradict virtually every tenet this country was based on, the military therefore becomes a paradox unto itself: Bondage of servitude defends freedom of choice; oppression is the only means of liberation.

¹It is worth noting that a disproportionate number of Viet Nam veterans were Black, but the military, paralleling society, had (has) few Black officers - those in positions of power were (are) white. The high numbers of blacks in Viet Nam was, in fact, a byproduct of a racist society.

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*Dedicated to the cast and crew of **A Chorus Line**,
who made "I can do that" their reality.*

You have my voice.
I give it to you, a present
wrapped in tissue paper delicate and soft as spring, shaded
the colors of my skin,
brown stretching to yellow, tan sliding somewhere
in between.

For too long I have been told, "Your place is not here
on this stage,
The glittering shimmer of twirling sequined bodies,
this passionate dance,
is not for you, with your ceremonies of tea, your gentle
feminine shuffle,
your grandfathers who laundered and cooked and never
complained."
My song, brilliant with history, loud with determination,
clear the way truth sometimes is,
says, "I do what I want".
I allow nothing to cripple my speech, stunt my growing.

Tonight, I choose this stage, one of many places I can
claim.
Spotlights fill the space between darkness and sleep,
sweat coats fear carefully tucked behind my heart.
Here is my voice, once mute, silence golden as the land
my ancestors dreamed of,
now as beautiful and strong as those who came.

Therese On, J'89

