THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE TIGHTEST DOPEST FRESHEST 'ZINE
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quote of the issue

“you don’t get anywhere being a dancing chicken.”

- Professor Hamamoto
Dear Readers,

First and foremost I would like to express our thanks to you, the reader, for picking up this issue of VENT. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to read the latest news and opinions of Asian Americans on politics and popular culture by fellow Asian Americans. Without you, there is no purpose for VENT. Your desire to see Asian Americans represented in avenues where they merely play token roles is what fuels the hard work of our staff to bring you the latest and greatest info on our community.

You’re probably asking: why is it important for us to have a magazine focused on Asian American politics and popular culture? Pretty much, this magazine is about power. We are trying to create equity for Asian Americans in arenas of our society where White hegemony limits our access. Honestly, the fact that Asian Americans are considered an insignificant voting bloc in mainstream politics and are also relatively invisible in mainstream entertainment creates an imperative role for VENT’s existence. In plain and simple words: we need more serious roles for our people in entertainment; we need holidays celebrating our accomplishments; we need politicians advocating for policy that represents our interests. VENT is helping us move toward these goals. But first, we need to figure out who we are and whether our unity is a truly tangible identity or one that only works in theory. Our articles and coverage are the steps we have decided to take in order to promote the discourse we need to figure out our political identity, which will take us a step closer to fighting the power.

If you totally disagree with us, write to us and tell us your own opinions, or maybe even try joining our staff and write your own counter arguments within the magazine. And if you can’t stand us at all, we encourage you to talk trash about us in your own publications or blogs. We need to talk about ourselves in order to get us the recognition we deserve as Americans. If we continue on with our efforts, we will someday see an Asian American actor play the lead role in a blockbuster romantic comedy. Or maybe we will even witness a White House occupied by an Asian American president and staff. These are the days we are waiting for, but in order for these events to take place we cannot stay idle. We need to be vigilant and take initiative in gaining power for our community.

Now, we realize that reading can be boring. Therefore we pride ourselves on being hella entertaining, aesthetically pleasing and, at the same time, never compromising. We know that lots of people hate talking and reading about Asian American issues because they feel they are redundant. But there are tons of issues in need of critical analysis that are relevant, sexy and worthwhile of discussion that the masses haven’t heard of yet. VENT will talk about everything from Asian American legislation to Asian American pornography. I hope you enjoyed this issue, and pick up our second issue where we will inevitably “talk about sex, BABY!” Again, thanks for reading!

Much Love!

Daryl Suyat
Editor In Chief
Asian American Popular Culture Representations: a step forward or backward?
It is irresponsible to say that a show with any Asian American character who plays a side-kick role and is the butt of all jokes is counterproductive to our progress. Yes, Lloyd, Ari’s assistant perpetuates the model minority myth and promotes the stereotypes that Asian American men are effeminate and asexual in terms of Anglo-standards but at the same time, there is a lot of complexity in Lloyd’s character...

Dante Basco (THE DEBUT) definitely isn’t a “Lloyd.” He represents the Anglo masculinity that is lacking in our representation in current mainstream entertainment. Fukijama reminds us more of the Asian American who can relate to the stereotypes of members of Asian American fraternities—guys into hip-hop and nice fits. This show highlights a variety of Asian American stereotypes but at the same time it is very honest to the diversity of our community. ENTOURAGE is displaying not a step forward, but not necessarily a huge step back. At least we are being portrayed, right?
I am disgusted at how slow our representation in media is progressing. All the possible stereotypes of our people were displayed on this show. The main character, Asian American female Tila Nguyen, a.k.a. Tila Tequila, is over exoticized and fetishized beyond belief. The show is about a bunch of guys and gals who compete for her “love.” Asiaphilia or Yellow Fever is alive and well ladies and gentlemen. One of the redneck dudes trying to court her even said, “I’ve never been with an Asian girl, but I sure like Chinese food” with a wink. Dude she’s Vietnamese, asshole! Gross, right?

Another thing that bothered me was that there were no Asian American males trying to get at her on the show—obviously reinforcing stereotypes of the effeminate and asexual Asian American male subject. While watching, I couldn’t stop hearing Asian American Studies Professor Darrell Hamamoto in the back of my head saying, “I told you so!” Hamamoto argues that these stereotypes about our sexuality are part of a hegemonic agenda to control us and keep us subjected to their policies. He says that if the people in power can control our sexual habits, they then can control a significant part of our lives, all of which stem from our colonial histories. He wants us to know that these stereotypes occur not coincidentally, but because the people making decisions have an interest in using our sexuality or perceived lack thereof against us. If you are skeptical, take his class, read his works and ask him questions.

Well, back to Tila. Frankly, a lot of these types of reality shows (FLAVOR OF LOVE, I LOVE NEW YORK, THE ROCK OF LOVE) are offensive and that’s exactly why people watch them. People like seeing trashy characters on TV to add some spice to their bland and boring lives. I understand that ignorance is bliss, but can we please see something entertaining that is refreshing as well? Sure, the bisexuality twist is different; but again, it just reinforces more dangerous stereotypes with remnants of imperialism.

While watching the show, I had a discussion with one of our writers who said that this show is not as backward. She said, yes it’s offensive, but at least more Asian American women are getting media representation. I don’t know what to think about that but, yes it is something to think about. This article is being written the day after the premier so we have to update you all in later issues. We need to see the whole season before we can make more concrete judgments. But for now, I’m going to have to stick with my first impressions and say that A SHOT AT LOVE WITH TILA TEQUILA is most definitely hella steps backward. 

"A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila

One of the redneck dudes trying to court her even said, “I’ve never been with an Asian girl, but I sure like Chinese food” while winking. Dude she’s Vietnamese asshole! Gross right?"
Warning: The views discussed in this article do not represent the ideas of the magazine nor the author. They are merely to convey an idea that has been expressed by much of society and are thus being thoroughly analyzed for our entertainment.
On a Wednesday, for some reason or another, a friend sent me a YouTube video. Normally, I would just ignore these random video links sent to me on AIM because they’re usually weird ass videos of singing ponies or people viciously falling down a flight of stairs and fracturing their privates. But my friend insisted I watch this particular video saying, “It is so true!” What made this video even more enticing was that about five minutes later another friend IMed with the same video saying the same thing, “It’s hella fucking true!” I thought to myself, “Why show this to me? What are they trying to say about me or themselves?” So I watched this supposedly amazing and convincing video entitled, “Just A Nice Guy” by Wong Fu Productions to see what it had to say. Now I and most other young Asian Americans have at least heard about these two Asian American UC San Diego alums. This dream team had created their own low-budget production company, putting together numerous short films. Although they have become a huge hit on the web scene, I never really took the time to watch any of them. But with both curiosity and boredom I finally decided to give this one a go. 

Just A Nice Guy” is about your average Asian American male college student who is trying to find himself a nice girl. But what is his problem? Just like the title indicates, he is “just a nice guy!” But why would it be so hard for a nice guy to catch himself a nice girl? What girl wouldn’t want a nice guy, right?

The short film starts off with the main character, Nick, introducing himself. He describes himself as this “nice guy” while wearing a shirt cleverly stating that he is in fact a nice guy and complains about how he has numerous friends who he is always there for. Nick also talks about how this image that he identifies with seems to be hindering his success with the ladies. In order to get the girl of his dreams he feels that he has to somehow overcome this nice guy persona, catch her attention and be seen as something more than a friend. He makes it seem as if having these nice guy traits is a horrible thing, as if they are what is holding him back from ever getting anywhere with a girl. This relates to that ever so common “nice guys finish last” belief that many guys feel is true. But is it in fact true or even a semi-consistent theory?

I personally, at first, thought that this guy Nick was kind of cute and sweet, and didn’t know why he was putting himself down so much. He is nice, good looking, and has a lot of friends. Wouldn’t you think he would be a good catch? As the film goes on, Nick attempts to lose his nice guy image but in the end realizes that it is not his personality that is holding him back, but the way in which he approaches the whole situation of love and interest.

First off, I would like to think that the whole “nice guys finish last” belief is bullshit. Girls should like nice guys. But does this
actually happen? Do girls actually ever fall for the nice guy or is it usually the "bad boys" who catch our attention? If this is the case, why the heck is it even the case? Why would one ever want to admit that they are attracted to inconsiderate guys with foul mouths and troubled backgrounds? I would like to think that in the end, nice guys can finish first, but first I need to look at what the terms nice guy and bad boys really mean. In what way can these typical beliefs of who finishes first or last change?

Just a nice guy. At first I didn’t understand why Nick was having such a problem. But then looking into my own social spectrum, I do have a lot of "Nicks" in my life who I do not think I would fall for. I think as a girl, we can all think of those nice guys. Those particular guy friends who we may ask for a ride to school or a party, or ask out to lunch just so we can gossip about other people. A guy who you know that you would never have any real infatuation with and therefore feel comfortable enough to go to for guy advice. Someone who you know is not trying to impress you.

This probably goes the same way for guys and their select "nice girl" friends. But how do we categorize our friends like this? Do we even know that we’re characterizing them this way? Maybe it is because we have known them for too long. Or maybe it is because we know that they are not attracted to us. Along the way, you just did not feel that infatuation and knew that they would always just be the "nice guy" friends.

I don’t believe it is based solely on physical attraction because I think I have a few "nice guy" friends who are really good looking guys. They are well dressed, well groomed and are perfectly fit. However, for some reason they are placed in the category of my "nice guy" friends. I am just not attracted to them in that certain way. In the film, Nick at first believes it is his own nice guy look and personality that is preventing him from catching the attention of the girl. He therefore tries to change his proper way of dress, spits out some foul language and acts as if he is the center of attention. However, this still does not get him the attention he is yearning for and ends up looking like a fool. This failed attempt at changing his image shows that it is not the physical appearance that is holding back this "nice guy." There is something else about him.

In presenting this nice guy image, one must compare it to its opposite: a bad boy. Who is this so-called "bad boy"? He is the one that is always getting into trouble, is always down to party. He is the center of attention; everyone knows who he is and wants them in their group of friends. It does not matter if he is well groomed or a slob, for some reason girls just find him "so cute." He carries himself well and confidence gleams from his face and emanates in his posture. It doesn’t have to necessarily be good posture, but he has his own confident strut. He has an ambiguous attitude and does not seem to care about what anyone else thinks. All the girls want him and all the guys want to drink a 40 with him.

Now what sets him apart from the "nice guys"? For some reason, we don’t ever think this way about those nice guys who give us our rides to parties or help us with our chemistry homework. Shoot, we never get nervous around nice guys, but for some reason when we’re around these bad boys we have no freakin’ idea what to say. I will admit that the sense of danger that bad boys bring is attractive because it is exciting. But I could just as easily fall for a guy who isn’t dangerous. I would like to say that what makes these bad boys so attractive is their confidence and personalities. But I know that there are plenty of really confident guys who are nice, and there are plenty of bad boys who are really cocky. However, in the end I will admit that these cocky bad boys are getting a lot of the girls. But why?

By the end of the film, Nick finally solves the puzzle. At one point in his journey, a friend blatantly tells Nick that in order for him to catch the girl of his
He carries himself well and confidence gleams from his face and emanates in his posture... All the girls want him and all the guys want to drink a 40 with him.
But in order for the nice guy to finish first, he needs to make that little extra effort to show that he is different and that she is special to him.

In dreams’ attention, he has to show her that she is different from everyone else. In having this “nice guy” persona, what will make her think that he isn’t being as nice to her as he is to everyone else? What makes her think that he actually thinks of her differently? In the end, Nick finally gets the courage to tell her how he feels. He no longer waits for her to call him out, he just tells her himself. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the way that the nice guy ends up being first.

The moral of the story is if you want something, you should just grab your balls and go for it. No matter what happens, at least you tried. Another moral of the story is that in order for you to get the girl, or guy, you have to let them know that they are special to you. You don’t necessarily have to blatantly tell them, but in some way or form just show them. When it is out of the ordinary, calling a girl to hang out with—just the two of you—is a good move in my book. It is possible for any guy, nice guy or bad boy, to get what they want without having to change who they are. Perhaps the reason that bad boys always seem to get the girl is because they appear to be treating the girls differently from everyone else. Bad boys are categorized as having this attitude where they don’t care about anyone else but themselves.

For the boys of Wong Fu Productions (Wesley Chan, Philip Wang and Ted Fu) what began in 2003 as a college hobby amongst friends quickly spawned into an Internet sensation. After graduating from UCSD, these boys formed their own business line called Sketchbook Media and have since collaborated with Asian American artists such as Magnetic North and the Far East Movement. Their videos on YouTube and their website have over a million viewers worldwide and have toured major college campuses across North America.
They either hold themselves high or pull away. Therefore when they meet a girl, and they redirect their attention toward her, it makes her feel just that much more special. Now I will admit, girls are attention whores. We like that little bit of extra attention because it makes us feel that the guy actually cares. A nice guy may feel frustrated at the fact that all the girls are falling for these assholes, but in their minds, these girls may think that these guys are not being assholes to them. They may feel as if the guy “has changed.” No matter how bad of a guy he is or was, if he shows the girl that he has changed, even the slightest, and made that certain girl feel just a little bit special, I guarantee he may win her heart.

Nick tries to change the way he dressed and the way he acted, but he still wasn’t successful because that was not what was holding him back. I will admit that physical appearance is a big part. But Nick was a perfectly attractive looking guy. All he needed to do was just give her that little extra attention to make her know that she is special to him. The reason a lot of girls fall for these bad boys is the attention they receive from them. Even if they may be assholes to everyone else, the fact that they are sharing that sense of affection toward someone will make any heart swoon.

Girls get their hearts broken because ultimately there is more than just getting attention that will make a relationship work. In the end, bad boys really are assholes putting up a front. Sometimes one can give them the benefit of the doubt, but it is definitely a risky game. Do people really change? It’s hard to tell, but there are nice guys out there who don’t have to change their niceness. But in order for the nice guy to finish first he needs to make that little extra effort to show that he is different and that she is special. «
Yi Jianlian

Kobe Bryant is the next Michael Jordan.
Adam Morrison is the next Larry Bird.

In a sense, each case is racially aligned, but looking further into this, there is an obvious misalignment. Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan are both six-foot-seven shooting guards, both equally thought of as dominating the sport of basketball. Adam Morrison is compared to the great Larry Bird because of the position he plays, and his stroke and form in shooting the basketball. Yi Jianlian and Yao Ming though, are both Asian. Yi Jianlian is a six-foot eleven inch power forward that shoots from the outside and brings versatility to the court. Yao Ming is a seven-foot-six center that dominates the interior with his monstrous size. The only thing that they share in common is their skin.

The comparison then brings up the issues of race and how they play into the stereotypes of an Asian American basketball player. This experience, though, is not limited to athletes professionally, but to those who play recreationally as well. It comes as no surprise then that Asian people will be forever considered nothing more than an anomaly when it comes to sports. I say this because of how comparisons of Asian athletes are only through skin alone, ignoring such aspects such as skill and physical features.

The fact that Yi is constantly compared to Yao, through sports highlights on the ESPN, is a flagrant example of orientalism in Sports entertainment. That Yi is not compared to someone more like Kevin Garnett, a player with similar skill sets and height, shows that Asians cannot be as great as blacks in basketball. That no foreigner can beat an American. When Yi entered the 2008 draft, the same comparisons were drawn as to which Asian player whom he most resembles. A segment on ESPN highlighted this notion when they talked about Yi entering the NBA. The segment featured other players such as Yao Ming, Wang Zhi Zhi and Mengke Bateer, all Asian basketball players. During the NBA draft, questions came up as to when Yi will take the reigns as the next Asian basketball star, after showcasing highlights of previous professional Asian (mostly Chinese) players. ESPN, the leading television channel for sports, tried to compare Yao's experience when entering the league to that of Yi. Despite the fact that Yi’s has been much more tumultuous.

Because of a dispute between...
Kobe Bryant is the next Michael Jordan. Adam Morrison is the next Larry Bird. Yi Jianlian is the next... Yao Ming?

In a sense, each case is racially aligned, but looking further into this, there is an obvious misalignment. Kobe and Michael Jordan are both six-foot-seven shooting guards, both equally thought of as dominating the sport of basketball. Yi Jianlian and Yao Ming both play from the outside and bring versatility to the court. Yi Jianlian is a six foot eleven inch power forward that shoots from the outside and brings his skill and physical features. Yao Ming is a seven-foot-six center with his monstrous size. The only thing that they share in common is their skin.

This brings up the issues of race and stereotypes of an Asian American athlete, though, is not limited to those who play recreationally. It’s surprising then that Asian people nothing more than an anomaly. I say this because of how comparisons of Asian athletes are only through skin alone, ignoring such aspects such as skill and physical features. The fact that Yi is constantly compared to Yao, through sports highlights on the ESPN, is a flagrant example of orientalism in sports. That Yi is not compared to someone more like Kevin Garnett shows that Asians cannot be as great as blacks in basketball. That no foreigner can beat an American. When Yi entered the NBA draft, questions came up as to when Yi will take the reigns as the next Asian basketball star, after showcasing highlights of previous professional Asian (mostly Chinese) players. ESPN, the leading television channel for sports, tried to compare Yao’s experience when entering the league to that of Yi. Despite much more tumultuous between the Milwaukee Bucks
organization, the Chinese government and Yi’s Chinese basketball team, the Guangdong Tigers, his career in the NBA took a backseat as the discussion was settled. Things such as playing time, allowing for his growth as a basketball player and the community of Chinese people located in Milwaukee had all become hot topics in his introduction into the league. Until recently, the discussions have been stalwart, as to if and when he will sign a contract allowing him to play in the NBA. Such commitments like the Chinese National team and his Chinese basketball team have left him in a limbo as to what his next move is into his professional basketball career. This has prevented him from actually participating in activities with his Milwaukee Bucks team, such as the Las Vegas Summer League which showcases the abilities of players recently drafted, and gets them accustomed to their new team’s playing systems. Yi, though, opted to play with his Chinese team, which had an abysmal performance. Yi recently has signed a contract with the Bucks though, almost two months since the Bucks selected him in the 2008 NBA Draft, and one month before the actual season starts. However, Yi is not unknown, per se; while playing for his Chinese National team, he competed in the 2004 Olympics and 2006 World Championships. International basketball has certainly grown.

Yi Jianlian may become the next ambassador of basketball, there is no denying that. But the argument here is that the image of the basketball player is more important than that of his skills. Players signing massive contracts and massive publicity on a global scale has become what is important in our society. A player’s ability to play is overshadowed by how much money he can make. The NBA has become a business, not a sport. This idea that who can make the most money force feeds the public into believing that certain players represent these ideals. It’s no surprise than that Yao has become the face of Asians in basketball. This image is played out, not only from a macro perspective, but a micro one as well.

I have played many pickup basketball games before with non-Asians. Since games are very informal, we try to give each other nicknames to identify each other. “Flash”, “Kobe” and “Dime” are such names thrown around to match the skill set of the player. Though I am a five-foot-eight Asian basketball player, playing against people a foot taller than me, I’m still given the nickname of “Yao”.

The nickname Yao is thrown around far too often while playing basketball with non-Asians, which is caused by how the media portrays basketball. Yao has become the centerpiece with everything Asian and basketball. The association is no coincidence though, the Chinese born star is a national icon in China, becoming the ambassador of Asia in the NBA. His height has become his most noticeable attribute, sky-ing over many opponents. He has become one of the greatest centers in the league, using his height and high basketball intelligence to overcome his opponents. He is Asian basketball. But Asian basketball is not Yao. We are not all giants of the basketball court, nor do we carry the same skills as he does. The only thing me and Yao have in common is that we are both Chinese, and even this issue is debatable with heritage and nationalities to take into account. Like I mentioned earlier, these games are very informal, thus there may be an oversight as to nuances such as ethnicity. But the fact cannot be denied that Asians have become a lump sum of one, which cannot be separated nor differentiated from. We have become Yao, like it or not. There is no separation.

Asian basketball players have become something of myth. Whether because of cultural reasons, or the fact that it is not a very popular profession, many Asians do not
Asian basketball player people a foot taller than me, the image of Yao. I don’t stand out, hard and trying to use my what I am given.

participate in basketball as a career. Thus, it is no surprise that the image of a successful Asian player has taken place, in order to put a picture of what it is like to be successful in this career. Other Asians must “suffer” these consequences of being constantly labeled and stereotyped in comparison to Yao. Either through the global, national or individual scale, these Asian athletes will be given this image. When Yi comes into the league and tries to create an image for himself, he will have to shake off this ideal that has already been handed to him.

In the face of Yao, he must overcome. Media images will forever ingrain some false imagination of what we truly see as reality, giving a false sense of hope. Those people who will compare Yi to Yao will be let down because they are not one and the same. This idea is true in a global sense for Asian Americans—being given a false sense of hope will often lead to a pitfall. Yi will become the next player in the NBA, and he just so happens to also be Asian. «
Plus Sign Vibes emerged as an event production company in 2002 with a vision of making a positive impact on people’s lives through the power of hip-hop and artistic expression. Plus Sign Vibes has been a major part of Northern California’s underground music circuit, coordinating a number of events ranging from break dancing competitions, MC battles, dance crew competitions, showcases, concerts, cultural events and numerous fundraisers.

Plus Sign Vibes became one of the most honorable event production companies in California, attracting and inspiring many through the power of artistic expression, while maintaining the goal of implementing positive changes in the overall community. Utilizing our events as a valuable channel to reach the masses, we stress the importance of positive community impact, cultural awareness and non-violence in society, while providing a much needed outlet for creative energy. Plus Sign Vibes continues to emphasize positive messages in an effort to educate and enrich the community and open the public’s eyes and minds through...
double D...tell us and our readers a little bit about yourself:

Music has always been an element in my life. As cliché as it sounds, my parents helped shape my taste in music. My dad, born and raised in SF, taught me about all the funk and soul. I remember he would always record his vinyl onto cassette tapes for car trips. My mom was a huge Beatles fan, and to this day I still know most of their lyrics. Back in the 6th grade I started playing the drums... marching band, jazz band, drumline, you name it, I probably played in it.

During high school my homie Chris, aka DJ Flow, started getting into DJing, the whole nine yards—doing parties, dances at school, etc., but I didn’t get knee deep until a few years following. Now hella crates and a couple grand later, I have this insatiable appetite for collecting records. Whenever I go run errands, I sneak in a trip to the record store... making a huge detour out of the way just to smell the dusty records. The element of preservation allows me to experience what life through music could have been like before hip hop was created.

College radio has definitely allowed creative expansion of my passion for music. Being able to play the music I like for listeners worldwide and have the occasional caller each week is elevating. KDVS opened my eyes to the other lesser-known communities of music that rarely see the lime light.

Now to some specific questions...how do you feel being a Filipino hip hop artist?

“Oh you’re Filipino... and you’re a DJ?” Not the most surprising encounter, however a good chunk of the best DJs in the US are Filipino—The World Famous Beat Junkies... Triple Threat... they’re all sick. And of course, when talking about DJing you have to talk about Qbert. The man is ridiculous. As far as celebrities in the hip-hop underworld, Qbert is pretty much a household name. You can’t talk about DJing without bringing up Qbert. This man takes scratching to a whole new level. Aside from the DJ community, I’ve noticed a rise in Filipino emcees. Notable artists I’ve come across include The Upstarts and producer Freddie Joachim, both coming out of San Diego. Leciejay Abucayan is holding it down in the beatboxing community.

Whoa hella plugs...we know that you have such a vast knowledge of good music out there and your show plays what you call “good” hip hop. But what exactly is the difference between good and bad hip hop?

In my opinion a good hip-hop song has depth. It can’t just have a cookie-cutter beat; it must have replay value. I could listen to a Primo beat on repeat all day without getting a headache, but with, let’s say, a Lil Jon beat, it gets old by the second verse. The emcee featured on the track has to feel the beat and
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Has your DJing helped you get girls?

Being a DJ has its highs and lows because the attention comes in multiple forms. At one gig I remember this girl came up to me after my set with a drink and some compliments. Effortless conversation starter and a free drink. However sometimes you get the girls that see you only as an employee and harass you with the requests. Usually those girls are the ones requesting tracks that kill a party's vibe like Fergie or something you left at home for [some] reason.

Hey man your eyes are pretty red, dude are you blazed? And what is your take on weed in the hip hop game?

Haha ssshhhh!... But real talk, I'm not—right now at least haha... Anyways...like all genres of music, hip-hop has its contraband. For us, it's marijuana. I don't think it's a bad thing. At concerts, temporary comradery is created when a group of hip-hop heads light up a joint or a blunt. After the session finishes, everyone is happy-go-lucky and enjoys the music more than before the session started. So in a sense, you can say that marijuana enhances the experience of the music or entertainment.

That's a nice shirt...are you a hypebeast?

Nah. I saw it at the store and just bought it. I really don't understand this hypebeasts. I guess if I was neck deep in the fashion game I would have a more ignorant opinion [sic], but I feel that some of the people out there need to tone down the super bright colors and take off the handkerchiefs from around their faces. It's like being a bank robber is the thing to do these days... haha.

Right...so any last words for the readers?

Check us out at plussignvibes.com or psvradio.blogspot.com, and download our new mixtape.«
The year was 1938 and Kang Soon-Ae was waiting in line for precious food rations when suddenly she was taken by Japanese military police officers and forced to board a ship that eventually took her to a Japanese army camp on a South Pacific island. Upon arrival, Kang was then taken to a hut made from palm trees where Japanese soldiers then began to rape her daily. At the age of 14, Kang learned that her purpose on that island was to serve as a comfort woman for the Japanese soldiers.

For most, the phrase evokes no sense of comfort. “Comfort women” is the term used euphemistically for women who were forced to become sex slaves in Japanese military brothels during the 1930’s and World War II. When Japan began its conquest for expansion, its military decided to set up a system of brothels, or “comfort stations,” where women would work as prostitutes for Japanese soldiers. Ostensibly set up so that the morale and military effectiveness of its soldiers would improve, the Japanese government also hoped to prevent its soldiers from committing uncontrolled rape against citizens of the countries that they had annexed by providing easily accessible women. Instead, there was a shortage of women volunteering, so the Japanese military ended up resorting to coercing or tricking young girls into working as sex slaves at the comfort stations.

The majority of comfort women came from territories occupied by the Japanese military such as Korea, China, the Philippines and Taiwan. It is estimated that up to 200,000 young women were recruited. Some were falsely told that they would be working in factories or hospitals abroad, while others were lured by the promise of good pay and clearing family debts. Others were simply kidnapped. Most of the adolescent girls had no idea what awaited them as they were shipped to all corners of Japan’s new colonial empire to foreign places like Manchuria, Burma, the Philippines and the South Pacific region.
According to testimony collected from surviving comfort women, daily life was a living hell. There were many Japanese soldiers and not always enough women, so one comfort woman would be forced to service as many as 10 to 50 soldiers a day. There were no breaks in between and any resistance was met with severe beatings and in some cases, stabbings and torture. This went on for as long as several weeks to several years depending on when the girl was abducted. Comfort women who were stationed at the battlefronts faced the worst treatment since they were subjected to the most violent Japanese soldiers as they released their battle stress on the women and frequently beat them.

Food rations were meager and usually of deficient quality. With so much forced sex each day, inevitably sexually transmitted diseases developed in many of the comfort women. Though medical check ups were given, sometimes even the doctors who checked for venereal disease in the women would then rape them afterwards. Medication given to comfort women to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and for forced abortions left most sterile and in poor health. Many were simply killed after their infections became too severe.

Some comfort women tried to escape. Lee Ok-Sun had been a comfort woman in China for three years ever since being abducted from her home in Korea at the age of 15. “It was a painful experience...

‘...there was not enough food, not enough sleep, and I couldn’t even kill myself... I had no time off, even when I was on my period... if a woman refused, they cut her body with a knife... some girls were stabbed.’

‘...there was not enough food, not enough sleep and I couldn’t even kill myself. It was too much, especially for young girls. I had no time off, even when I was on my period... if a woman refused, they cut her body with a knife... some girls were stabbed. I desperately wanted to escape’. One day, Lee did manage to escape her comfort station and made it to a nearby road, only to be caught again and brought back. “I failed and was severely beaten... they nearly beat me to death. I lost some of my hearing...
and some teeth”.

After 1945, documents and references related to the comfort women and the details of the whole military brothel system were mostly destroyed. Some of Japan’s leaders were convicted of war crimes in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, although many were released after just a few years of imprisonment. Meanwhile, many comfort women who had not committed suicide nor been killed in the war continued to suffer afterwards in poverty, isolation and shame.

It was not until 1991 when former comfort woman Kim Hak-Soon first came forth publicly about her suffering that the issue then began to catch attention both domestically and internationally. Asian countries formerly subjected to Japanese rule continue to have ongoing frictions over matters related to Japanese war crimes, especially the issue of comfort women. This is because the Japanese government has not only failed to officially apologize to the comfort women, but in fact, has denied or cast doubt that any of the events ever happened. In particular, China and South Korea have repeatedly expressed disapproval at Japanese school textbooks which gloss over the war atrocities, statements by Japanese lawmakers who deny any Japanese responsibility for war crimes and the general insensitivity and lack of sincerity that Japan seems to convey when addressing these issues. But Japan hasn’t necessarily been as insensible as critics may try to portray.

In fact, Japan has issued over 30 remorseful statements since 1945 related to Japan’s aggressions in World War II. The most important one was the 1993 apology issued by Minister of Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono who admitted that “this was an act, with the involvement of the [Japanese] military authorities…that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those…who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological
wounds as comfort women”. This was the first time a considerably high ranking Japanese official publicly admitted that the government of Japan had indeed been involved in the immoral human trafficking of comfort women in World War II. And to Japan’s credit, lawmakers also set up the Asian Women’s Fund in 1995 which provided monetary compensation to each surviving comfort woman along with a signed apology from the Prime Minister at the time, Hashimoto Ryotaro.

Critics however are quick to point out that the Asian Women’s Fund is supported by private donations and not government money, an act which is seen as Japan not officially compensating the comfort women. Notably, the letter of apology given to each comfort woman did not apologize using the Japanese expression “shazai” which is the gravest nuance of apologies in the Japanese language. Rather, “owabi” was used, the kind of expression reserved for apologies that are only slightly heavier than the equivalent of an “excuse me”.

Likewise, many of the apologies issued over the past decades, upon closer inspection, do not publicly admit wrongdoings on behalf of the past Japanese government. For example, prior to setting up the Asian Women’s Fund, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said that “the problem of…comfort women is one such scar which with the involvement of the Japanese military forces of the time, seriously stained the honor and dignity of many women…I offer my profound apology to all those…wartime comfort women.”

Similar apologies stating Japan’s remorse over the suffering that comfort women or civilians faced in World War Two have been made several times. Often the government official making the statement offers a personal apology too such as Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2005 when during the 60th anniversary of the end of World War Two stated: “in the past, Japan…caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asian nations…I once again express my feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology”.

While many Prime Ministers have expressed their personal regret, there has still been no formal apology from the Japanese government and no official acknowledgement of its responsibility for the coercion of comfort women. The apologies also seem to reflect only the speaker’s sentiments and not that of the entire government. Combine this with the fact that after these apologetic statements are made, another government figure can easily reverse the stance such as current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe when he caused an international outrage by retorting that “there is no evidence to validate the coercion [of comfort women]”, and it is easy to see why few comfort women have accepted the money from the Asian Women’s Fund and continue to demand for official compensation as well as a sincere apology.

In fact, the US House of Representatives recently urged Japan to recognize its past and move forward by passing House Resolution Bill 121 (HR121) on July 30th. Congressman Mike Honda, a Democrat from the Silicon Valley district, authored the bill which called for the Japanese government to “formally acknowledge and accept responsibility for its sexual enslavement of young women” and to “educate current and future generations about this horrible crime.
against humanity”. It is also called on the Japanese government to publicly refute all claims that the comfort women history never happened. When HR121 was passed unanimously by members of the House, it should be noted that it was passed as a nonbinding resolution, meaning the House or even Congress for that matter, does not plan on and cannot enforce the recommendations made in it. HR121 was essentially a symbolic measure, passed by Congress after only half an hour of discussion, even though the language in it remains rather cautious and hardly assertive.

Nevertheless, HR121 stirred a lot of opposition and displeasure from Japan as various government officials including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who found it “regrettable” that the US House of Representatives had passed HR121 and then went on to say that there was no solid evidence of women being coerced into being comfort women. In fact, days before HR121 was to be deliberated in the House, a group of Japanese lawmakers took a full page ad in the Washington Post stating that comfort women were all licensed prostitutes during the war and that they were all lying. Likewise, the news of HR121 passing brought the whole issue into light again in Japan as many conservative Japanese politicians made statements that the comfort women were trying to distort history and bash Japan.

This in turn caused a familiar backlash among countries, especially South Korea and China, where brutal memories of Japanese occupation often remain fresh. Positive Japanese efforts are not noticed as much as the negative ones, and every time an official denies Japanese responsibility for war crimes, a politician visits the Yasukuni Shrine, or a textbook downplaying the atrocities is approved, protests are launched and many in Asia are reminded as to why they continue to have tensions with the Japanese government.

Ultimately, it is this insincerity on Japan’s part combined with the lack of official reparations which continues to fuel the protest against Japan. The issue could have been laid to rest in the 1990’s after the Kono statement and the set up of the Asian Women’s Fund. Instead, some of the Japanese conservatives in power continue to try and distort history, even placing the blame of the suffering on the victims. In October 2006, they tried to introduce legislation that would amend the 1993 Kono apology so that it would note that while there may have been forced recruitment of young girls by independent brokers, there was no forced rounding up of women by the Japanese military. The revised Kono apology would also note that the apology issued in the first place was based only on untenable oral testimony of former comfort women with no hard documentary proof.

These attempts to revise an apology merely admitting that the Japanese military was involved with setting up comfort stations show the extent of the insincerity of the Japanese government toward the surviving comfort women. It’s also a good example of why an official apology from the government is demanded; simply because an apology made by an individual even on behalf of the Japanese people or the government is far too easily compromised by future individuals who do not share his views. One official may apologize during his term but his successor could very well undo all that and go back and change everything much like the efforts to change Kono’s apology. It would however, be very hard to go back on the word of the Japanese government.

But it is unlikely that Japan will issue any formal apology soon. Surviving comfort women in Seoul have been protesting against the Japanese government every Wednesday since 1992 in front of the Japanese embassy and still have not received it.

The Japanese government must be tired of hearing all these protests throughout the years and the protestors are probably just as sick of asking for something which should have been resolved decades ago. For Japan to really reach a final resolution to all World War II related issues, it has to show that it has sincerely done everything to settle the issues and to want to move forward. Granted, there will always be those critics who will despise Japan for its crimes against their country forever, but there is no reason why Japan has to keep fueling those flames of hatred.

For example, was it really necessary...
sary for ex-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to visit the Yasukuni Shrine six times during his term? The Shrine honors all the Japanese war dead in World War II, including 14 Class-A war criminals who were convicted of crimes against humanity, including Hideki Tojo. The visits are seen as an attempt for conservatives to legitimize past Japanese militarism and each visit by Koizumi caused great ire from China as well as North and South Korea. To understand how controversial these visits are, imagine the sort of international uproar that would be caused if German politicians were to visit a memorial that honored Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler and about 1000 other Nazi war criminals.

Equally unnecessary are the clumsy, heavy-handed reactions by various Japanese politicians in light of the recent passage of HR121. Some immediately lambasted Congress for not getting its history facts straight while others used the familiar arguments as to why Japan should not have to apologize for crimes that no one can prove it did. The truth is, the government of Japan continues to damage its reputation each time it refuses to live up to its own past, while instead promoting what has been coined “historical amnesia”. Each denial and each insult against the comfort women only serve to make Japan’s historical burden a lot heavier than it needs to be.

For the surviving comfort women, whose lives have been ruined and whose bodies are racked with painful reminders of their shameful past, nothing will be acceptable until the Japanese government acknowledges its crimes against them, formally apologizes and educates its public about its past misgivings. Germany was able to come to terms with its World War II legacy when West German President Willy Brandt knelt in front of a commemoration monument for Jews in 1970. Restitutions were and are still paid to Holocaust victims and it is a crime to say that the Holocaust did not occur in Germany. Likewise, the US formally apologized to former Japanese internment camp survivors in 1988 while also giving each survivor monetary compensation. Why can’t Japan do the same? Meanwhile, the surviving comfort women are getting old and their numbers are dwindling. It won’t be long until all of them are gone, and by then, an apology from the Japanese government will not mean as much. Former comfort woman Li Gu-Ying of Nanjing is now 79-years-old and can barely walk. But she says, “I am not afraid to speak anymore. I want the Japanese to admit their crime. A crime which I will forever be a witness”. Likewise, Gil Won-Ok, 78 years old says, “The Japanese government thinks if all comfort women die, it will be buried and forgotten. But it won’t. As long as our next generation knows about it, it won’t be forgotten.”

"The Japanese government thinks if all comfort women die, it will be buried and forgotten. But it won’t. As long as our next generation knows about it, it won’t be forgotten."
Proliferating propaganda is hella hard for me, so I just don’t do it. For some it comes easy or even second nature, but the Vent staff becomes so morally conflicted that we find it better to just avoid it. Our general guideline for writing is that we should view things objectively and write about our observations accordingly. That’s how all writing should be—too bad it isn’t like that. Since there are an abundance of agendas that people inherently have, I am assured that no matter what I say, there will still be some cynicism regarding the motives or merits of our political commentary on any subject. Although the cynics could easily deter us from being political, avoiding political dialogue is one of the supreme reasons why we lack Asian American representation in national government. Therefore Vent feels that political discussion is significant.

It is easy to ignore politics as an Asian American because many of us believe that policy created in our government is out of the hands of the masses. It may have something to do with our *cough* colonial histories. Take an Asian American Studies class for more information! But instead of sulking, we should remain optimistic and proactive with our potential to harness political power and influence. We can honestly do something to change SOMETHING if we aren’t apathetic. So let’s talk politics!

Vent’s politics are purely Asian American. Interpret that however you want but let’s be honest, it is hard to define what Asian American politics is exactly. For example, the Democratic Party cannot rely on our bloc vote like they can the African American community’s because we as a unit are pretty split in our views. This can be linked to our diversity in demographics as a pan-Asian voice. Some of us are rich, some poor and that supposedly influences our politics. But within the array of diversity and difference, we have many things in common which is why we can and are proud to identify as Asian American.

In short, when Vent claims to have purely Asian American political views, what we are trying to say is that we are trying to figure out what Asian American politics means exactly by addressing politics in a time when so many students find it easier to ignore. Our search for the politics through writing and interaction with students lays the beauty and significance of Vent. So if you do not like what we have to say, write back to vent@gmail.com and tell us to be part of our movement.

**DISCLAIMER:**

When I first heard about Andrew Kim, a sophomore from Orange County running for ASuCD Senate this fall under the GO slate, I couldn’t help but write him off as your typical “whitewashed” model minority. As justification for my first impression, what I knew about him was that he was in a white fraternity and was running on a white slate. I also knew that on his Facebook profile he referred to himself as “Andrew the Asian,” which to me insinuated that he found it appealing to exploit and fetishize his Asian status to his white friends and slate mates. So off the bat, you can tell I already had preconceived notions about what kind of politics he was going to spout off—student focus propaganda. After meeting him, I can say that yes, he has been influenced by student focus politics but at the same time, I can’t deny that without the puppetstrapping of his slatemates, he could do some good for the Asian American community.

During the interview I found that many of my notions about him were correct. He kept iterating about cutting student funding from Cal Aggie Camp—which was similar to the Student Focus agenda. He kept referring to the camp as a “philanthropic” which is convoluted jargon for diversity outreach that is ignorantly
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During the interview I found that many of my notions about him were correct. He kept iterating about cutting student funding from Cal Aggie Camp—very similar to the Student Focus agenda. He kept referring to the camp as a philanthropic outreach unit, which is ignorantly "WHEN I FIRST HEARD ABOUT ANDREW KIM...RUNNING FOR ASUCD SENATE THIS SLATE, I COULDN’T HELP BUT WRITE HIM OFF AS YOUR TYPICAL MODEL MINORITY... I ALSO KNEW THAT ON HIS FACEBOOK TO HIMSELF AS ‘ANDREW THE ASIAN,’ WHICH TO ME IN-DOWN IT APPEALING TO EXPLOIT AND FETISHIZE HIS TOKEN WHITE FRIENDS AND SLATE MATES.”

Cal Aggie Camp is an outreach unit, which is used to cultivate the diversity in higher education by showing younger students the power of the university in terms of enriching one’s life socially and economically, and Andrew Kim wants to cut it from our yearly budget. During the interview he tried to sound like he wasn’t against Cal Aggie camp but nonetheless he professed that he would cut it. His words were, “Cal Aggie camp is a good thing and we should voluntarily find ways to fundraise for it like have bake sales or something” However, at the same time he argued that he would “rather lower the price of parking permits for undergraduate students by 50 cents than fund it.” I personally would pay fifty cents to get K-12 students to think about college as a viable option for their futures. Better yet I will take a stand and say that I along with many people here on campus are willing to pay a few dollars out of our student budget to get more outreach units to K-12 students so that people from underrepresented, underserved communities—our brothers and sisters—get more equal representation in higher education.

Whoa, so now you have figured out my politics. In your head you have categorized me as the prototypical activist for changing educational inequality and you feel like you have figured out my “agenda.” But honestly, like stated in the disclaimer, Vent is interested in a holistic view of Asian American politics and I know that a lot of Americans on campus, don’t even know what Cal Aggie Camp is or could care less.
about increasing diversity in higher education. I personally think it is sad, but yes it is the honest truth. For those of you who could care less about these types of campus issues and would be content with seeing any kind of Asian American representation in our student body government, then Andrew Kim may be the right candidate for you.

For the most part, he seemed like he wanted to outreach to the Asian American community. During the interview he boasted about trying to start an organization he called KPAC (Korean Political Action Committee) to try to get a Korean specialist to teach Korean on campus. He claimed that he has already started working with Sigma Kappa Rho, the Korean interest fraternity on this issue. When asked about what he would do for the Asian American community, he vaguely said that he will be the voice for them in the senate. He pointed at the lack of Asian American leadership in national, state, local and campus politics and he said that if he wins, he would reemphasize the need for more Asian American representation in politics.

As of right now my conclusion about Kim is that if he weren’t confined to the party politics of GO, he would probably be able to do more good for our community. He is personable and with the right help he seems as if he could make some positive changes. The main problem with Kim is his limited knowledge of campus politics, which is especially dangerous because he is on a slate that refers to programs and units that increase diversity as a waste of money, regardless of how much he claims they don’t have a set of core beliefs.

Kim wasn’t able to disclose his exact platform during the interview but if you want more information on Kim feel free to check him out yourself. Be skeptical of my opinion as well as mine or his politicking and ask him hella questions. Hard questions. During election time we will see whether he is Asian American politics or if my first impression of him was way off. Maybe he is more than just the token Asian on the Student Focus slate.