

YELLOW

Where We Can Be



An Anthology of the Asian American Teenagers' Experience

YELLOW

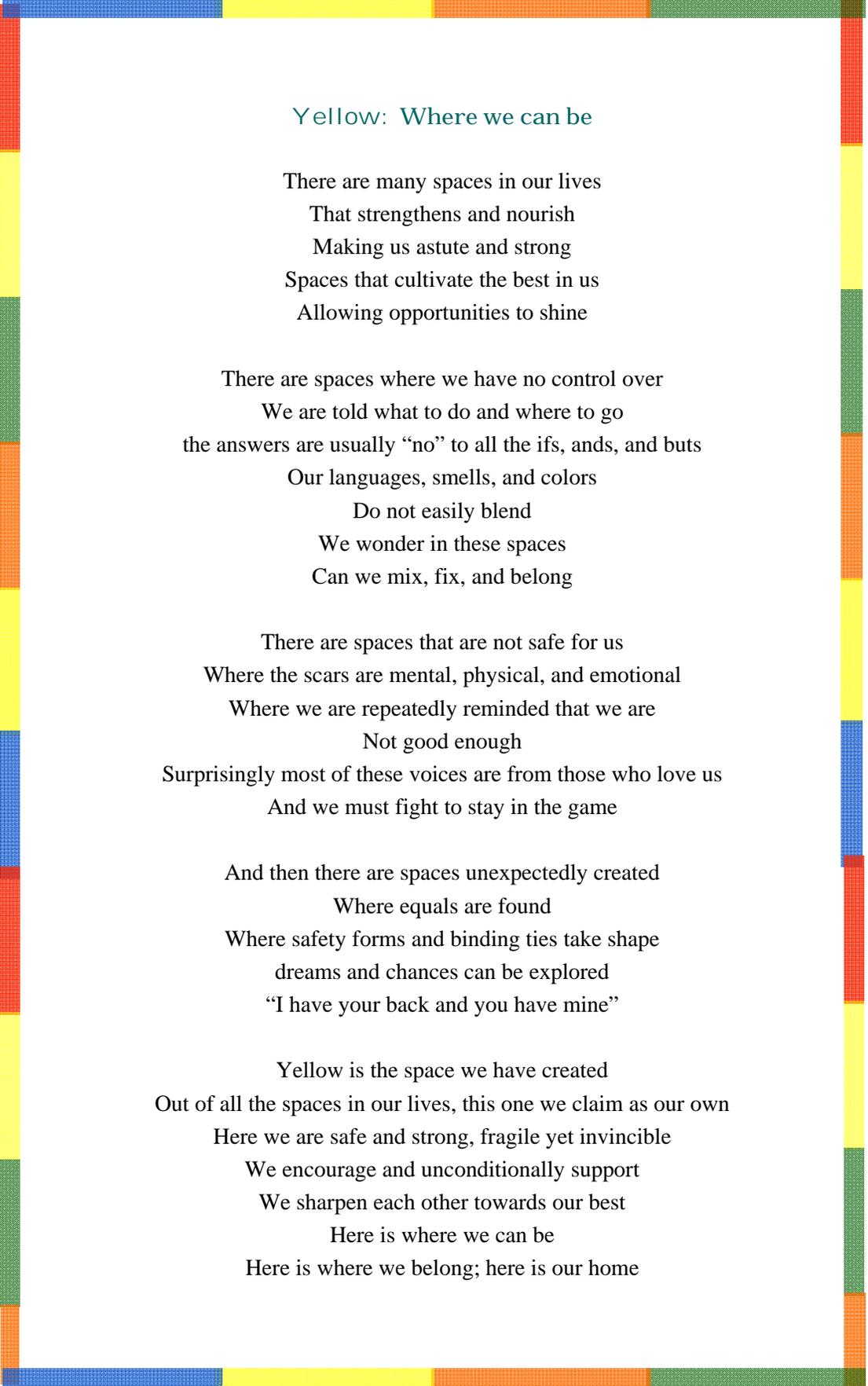
Where We Can Be

An Anthology of the Asian American Teenagers' Experience

Alec Spencer, Calvin Her, Gao Ah Lee & Joua Her, Editors

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Yellow: Where we can be

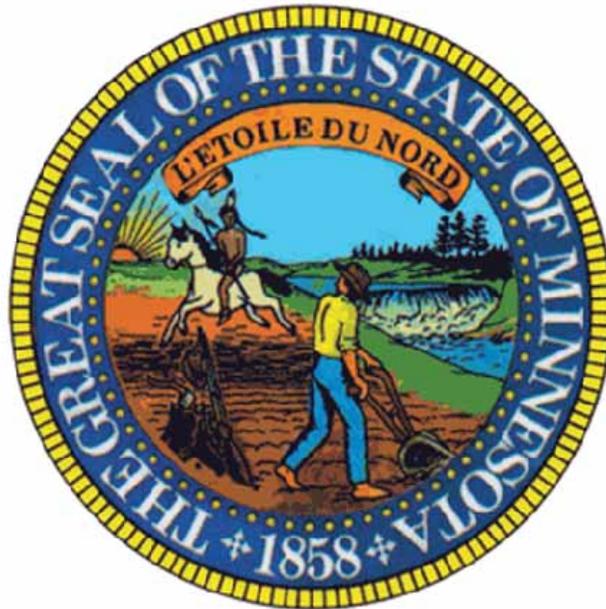
There are many spaces in our lives
That strengthens and nourish
Making us astute and strong
Spaces that cultivate the best in us
Allowing opportunities to shine

There are spaces where we have no control over
We are told what to do and where to go
the answers are usually “no” to all the ifs, ands, and buts
Our languages, smells, and colors
Do not easily blend
We wonder in these spaces
Can we mix, fix, and belong

There are spaces that are not safe for us
Where the scars are mental, physical, and emotional
Where we are repeatedly reminded that we are
Not good enough
Surprisingly most of these voices are from those who love us
And we must fight to stay in the game

And then there are spaces unexpectedly created
Where equals are found
Where safety forms and binding ties take shape
dreams and chances can be explored
“I have your back and you have mine”

Yellow is the space we have created
Out of all the spaces in our lives, this one we claim as our own
Here we are safe and strong, fragile yet invincible
We encourage and unconditionally support
We sharpen each other towards our best
Here is where we can be
Here is where we belong; here is our home



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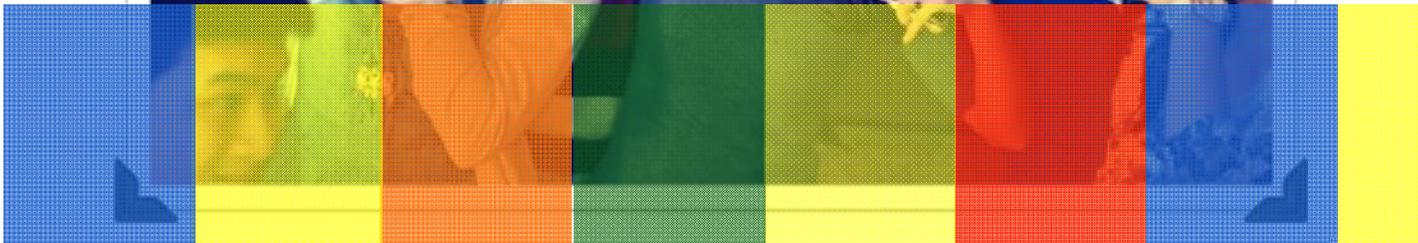
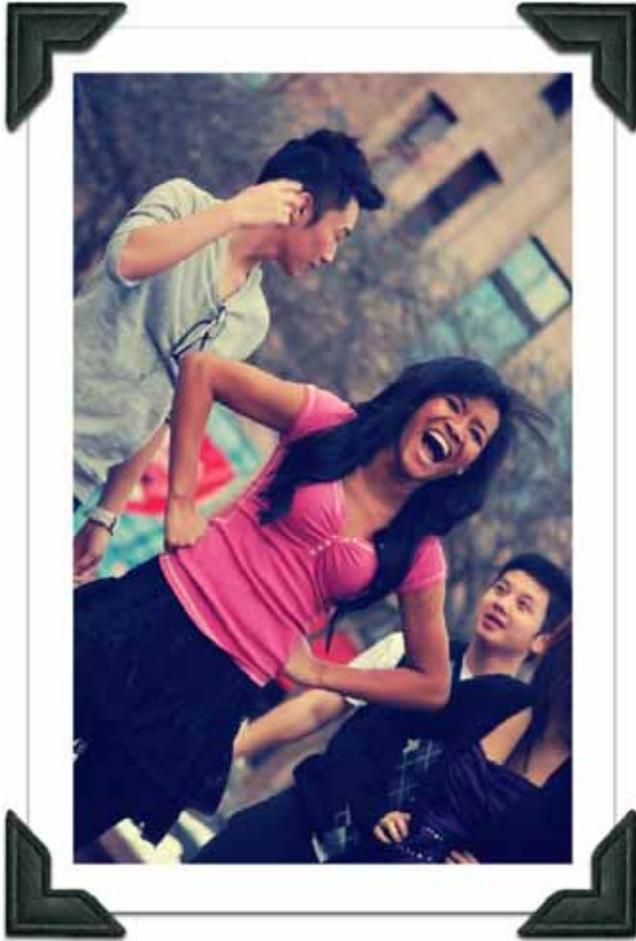
Dedication

*To those who journeyed and carried the dream
that someday we would be.*

Acknowledgements

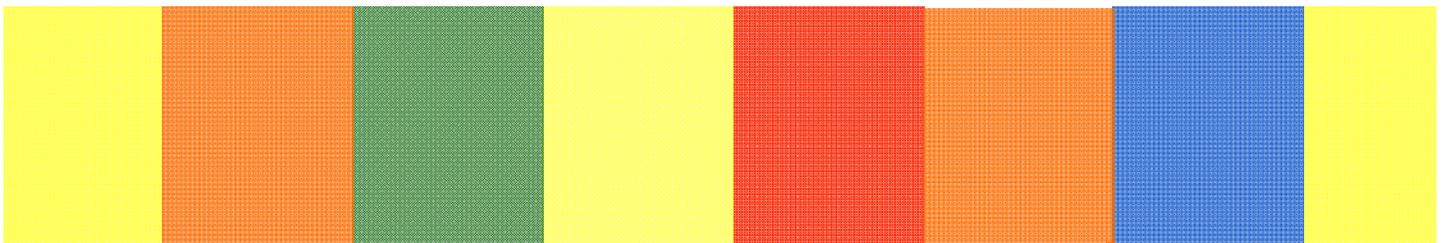
This book would not have been possible without the support, assistance,
and encouragement of the following people. To them we offer our
sincere thanks and deep appreciation.

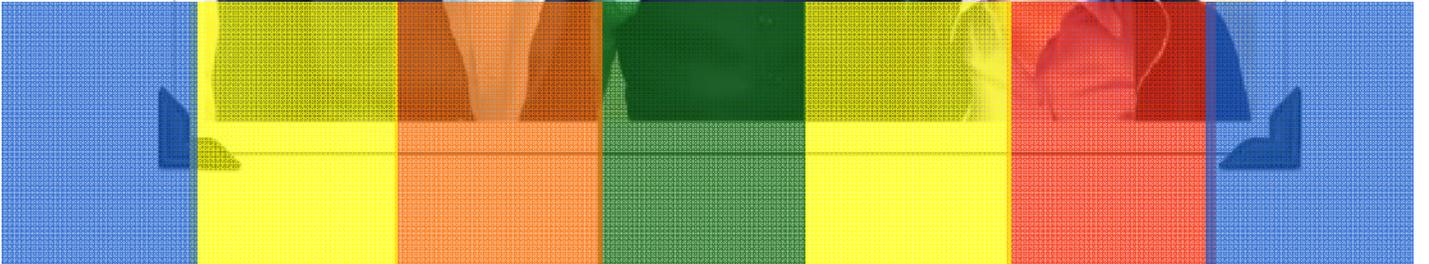
Our parents and family members; Mu Performing Arts - especially Rick, Randy, Eric, Sun Mee,
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the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans



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PREFACE

The Asian Pacific Youth Council (APYC) is a leadership program of the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans (Council), a state agency created by the legislature. The mission of the APYC is to be the voice of their generation. They want to take courage and speak up for and work on the issues that are impacting their peers and friends. A lofty goal and yet in the short time that I've worked with them, I've seen great results and change.

Asian American youth are awesome. It has been my pleasure to see them grow and accept this simple yet profound statement. I've worked with youth for the past 20 years. I've been a champion, mentor, organizer, advisor, critic, friend, and ear to many. They exude such innocent wisdom and hopefulness that when I work with them I do believe that indeed together we can change the world and improve the human condition.

The idea for this book started with a simple question: Where are the stories of Asian America youth among the vastness of American literature? Mixed into this query was the thirst to know more about themselves and a deep desire for others to know of them. Indeed, stories about them were far and few in between and rarer still were stories that were written by them. They realized that something was wrong for here they are, in America, living and breathing as Americans. And yet, their faces and stories were not a part of the images they saw every day in the media and or much less reflected back in the books and lesson plans they had in school, the place of learning and knowledge where they spent their days. They determined that if no one was going to write their stories then they would write them and share them with world. The results of their determination are held within this book.

Asian American Minnesotans are young with a median age of 24.5. In the Hmong community, the median age is 16. Over half of Hmong in Minneapolis and St. Paul are children. In my work with youth, I've spent time talking with them about how they can be successful in school and life. One of the subjects we kept on discussing over and over again revolved around resources. Students were in desperate need of resources that they could use to tell their stories to themselves and others. For example, messages produced by youth who looked like them and who had overcome the issues they are facing might be helpful in peer to peer mentoring and education.

Research shows that the most effective way to reach and influence youth is through messaging from other youth. Youth are willing and ready to talk to each other. They see the tough issues and are ready to tackle them. Often times, institutions, families, and communities do not know how or when to support them. So when youth speak out and tell of what they need, we best heed and help them in any way we can.

The APYC is a response to what we heard from youth. We called out for the best and brightest of this generation to come together to address the issues that will define their generation. I count myself lucky to have this opportunity to work with them. They've kept me young at heart and more informed about what moves their generation. And finally, I am happy to know them and am so enthusiastic for them. For in the work that they have produced, I have no doubt they will be the leaders for their generation.



Kao Ly Ilean Her
Executive Director
Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans

Introduction

In today's world, some people observe and argue that Asian Americans youth are losing their voice and giving up their culture and replacing it with the standard-issued culture of western society. That they are giving up what makes them unique and blending in with the majority. From our experiences working together as the Asian Pacific Youth Council, we have seen otherwise. We value our Asian ancestry and want to preserve and learn as much as we can about it. At the same time, we embrace being Americans and everything in pop and youth culture. We believe that we can balance the duality of our cultural heritage.

Asian American youth realize that we are a minority - our race and ethnicity making us different. Our cultural heritage, religion, and home languages vary from the majority. All these things lead some Asian American youth to deny their ethnicity just to be a part of the majority; some wished they weren't even Asian at all. It would be so much easier to just learn, master, and speak English instead of English and Chinese, Hmong, Lao, Khmer or any other language that is spoken in our homes.

If given the chance to change our ethnicity; the majority of us would not change. It's a big part of who we are. To think about our ethnicity not being a part of who we are is incomprehensible. We are happy and well adjusted. We see the benefits outweighing any possible negatives and challenges faced or to be faced. We do encounter discrimination, but we don't let that stop or get us down. We would rather fight for the right and work to create places where we can flourish and be our whole selves.

The APYC is such a place and so is this book. In putting this book together, we sought to capture the experiences of Asian American teenagers. We asked APYC members to write about themselves and to share anything they wanted others to know about them. The stories they wrote went beyond our expectations! They are poignant, powerful, and in many ways similar demonstrating that we are not alone. Major themes are 1) the cultural expectation of parents for youth and the balancing act that must be created; 2) identity and self-discovery; 3) experiences of discrimination; and 4) the love of family and friends.

We realize that words are powerful and have the potential to either inflict great pain or bring about great things and change. Through our book, we have chosen to use words for good. Our book provides a small glimpse into the mind and reality of Asian American youth. Many other stories are not included. But we hope that our book will be received in the vein in which it was created: an honest and open telling of the many stories of our lives. Finally, we hope that our book will provide understanding and be a source of information for many on the lives and experiences of today's Asian American youth. May readers grow to understand, appreciate, and value the youth in their lives.

Happy reading,

The Editors,
Alec Spencer, Calvin Her, Gao Ah Lee, & Joua Her





OUR

StOries

Unfolding

Coming to America

Asian Pacific Migration to the United States of America

According to ancient Chinese scrolls, Chinese explorers may have visited and explored North America long before Christopher Columbus did in 1492. Other records suggest that the Filipinos, who jumped ship from Spanish galleons and settled in the Louisiana Bayou in the 1760's may be the first Asian Pacific people in North America. Regardless, census data for Asian Pacific peoples was not kept until the 1860's when the population was counted at 35,000. Most of the people counted were recent immigrants who had migrated to the United States for economic opportunities of the "Gold Rush," building of the railroads, and agricultural needs.

From 1850 to 1950, Asian Pacific migration to the United States was filled with immigration battles and restrictions that there was little growth in the Asian Pacific population in the United States. In 1940, for example, there were only half a million Asian Pacific people in the United States a mere .4% of the total population. However, with the end of the war in Vietnam, historical immigration restrictions on Asian Pacific peoples were removed and 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees entered the United States in 1975 alone. This change in immigration policy opened the door for refugees from Southeast Asia as well as many other immigrant of Asian Pacific descent to migrate to the United States.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines 'Asian and Pacific Islander' as people from cultural and geographic areas of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Pacific Rim and the Pacific Basin and the six island jurisdictions in the Pacific that are part of the United States. Asian refers to but is not limited to Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Asian Indian, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Hmong and Thai. Pacific Islander refers to people of Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian background, among which are Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongans, Tahitians, Guamanian, Mariana Islanders, Marshall Islanders, Palauans, Fijian, and Maori.

Asian Pacific Migration to the State of Minnesota

Asian Pacific people have been in Minnesota since the late 1800's. Some migrated from other states, others were foreign exchange students who after their education stayed on for employment opportunities, and some came as foreign laborers seeking economic opportunity. The first documented arrival of people of Asian Pacific ancestry to Minnesota occurred in the Spring of 1876, when two Chinese men established the Chinese Laundry in St. Paul and the Lung Wing Laundry in Minneapolis. June Drenning Holmquist, ed. *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, Minnesota Historical Society Press: St. Paul, 1981. This first wave of Asian immigrants included Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Asian Indians, and Koreans.

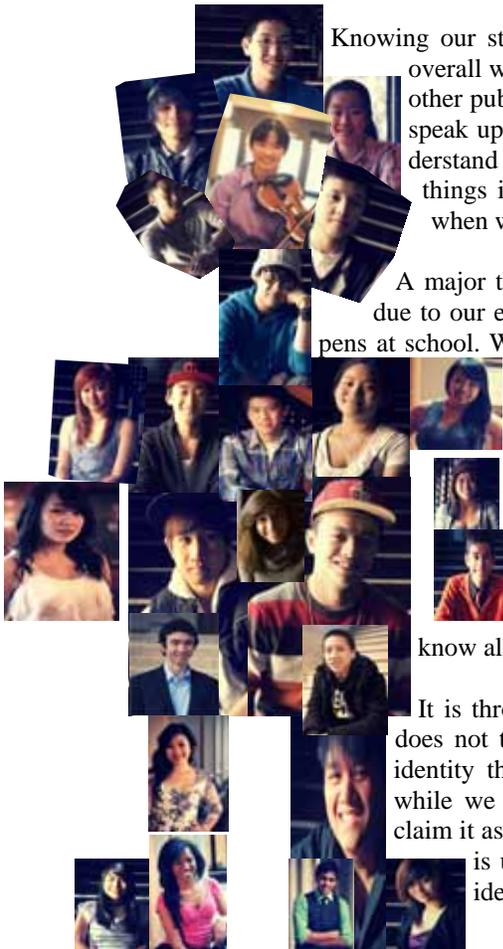
From 1920 to 1970, Minnesota's Asian Pacific population remained relatively small and static. The census in 1970 revealed approximately 6,000 Asian Pacific people living in Minnesota. However, in the 1970's, like the rest of the United States, Minnesota experienced an influx of refugees from Southeast Asia. In a five year span, 21,500 Hmong, Lao, Cambodians, and Vietnamese arrived in Minnesota seeking asylum. The Hmong came because they fought in the Vietnam War as soldiers in a secret army formed and funded by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Lao, Cambodians, and Vietnamese came because they were employed by the U.S. government and or companies in Asia as well as being allies with the military effort. The newest groups to arrive in Minnesota in the mid-1990's are the Karen, Burmese, Bhutanese, and Tibetans.

The Asian American Teenagers' Experience

The term Asian American is a misnomer. It is neither Asian nor American. It is not Asian as there is no single Asian culture, country, or language. For example, everyone calls a pencil a lead pencil, but in fact it is not. The "lead" is in reality graphite. You call us Asian Americans, but we are not. Inside the "Asian" is an ethnicity complete with its own language, culture, history, religion, traditions and norms. And yet, in America this ethnicity disappears and everybody calls us "Asian." We are not "Americans" in the traditional and historical sense: our fathers are not the founding fathers of this country; we are immigrants, but we did not come through the Statute of Liberty; we were present during the Civil War, but we do not know which side our fathers were on; and finally, but not definitely, our image is not the image when the average, wholesome American is called to mind.

Our parents are those who immigrated here to the United States. They witnessed firsthand our culture in action at its original state. Most of us can only imagine with the aid of our parents' stories and the media how our native traditions were practiced. It is ironic how most of us really don't even know much about our "cultures." We can say that we are proud to be Asian, but as long as we don't truly take the time to get to know our stories, our parents' stories, and the stories of our ancestors, we really are not making efforts to enrich as well as immerse ourselves in our cultures.

There are some who deny and are full of bitterness towards their cultural heritage and try to claim others for their own. But they just don't know their stories enough to appreciate them. There are some who don't even know how they got to this country or why they are here. Without knowing our cultures and stories, we are often ashamed of who we are and do not want to answer questions about ourselves. We pretend to be someone we are not and isolate ourselves from family, friends, and those who would help us.



Knowing our stories help us build confidence and increases our self-esteem and overall wellbeing. We are proud to speak our native languages at school and other public spaces and to showcase our cultural knowledge with others. We speak up for our needs and help our communities be better places. We understand that our ethnicity is a part of us, but it's only one piece of us. Many things influence and shape our personhood. We can only love ourselves when we love and understand very aspect of who we are.

A major theme we hear from youth is that we have all faced discrimination due to our ethnicity in one form or another. And that most of the racism happens at school. We deal with this issue in our separate ways, some fight and others internalize. Either way we end up hurting ourselves so we find strength in numbers, some to do bad things, others to do good things. In our group, the Asian Pacific Youth Council (APYC), we have chosen to band together to do good. We acknowledge that discrimination happens and that we've been impacted. But discrimination is the result of fear and ignorance of others. And we believe we can make a difference. Asian American youth comes in all forms: smart, brilliant, athletic, happy, outgoing, struggling, sad, even mysterious. We wish that the world would get to know all of us.

It is through our experiences that we see that the term "Asian American" does not truly or accurately define us and must be transformed into a new identity that has real meaning and represents real experiences. And thus, while we are not thrilled with the term "Asian American" we nonetheless claim it as homage to the land of our ancestors and to the land of our future. It is up to us to breathe true meaning into these words and live out our identity.

The Model Minority Myth

Asian Americans are deemed the “Model Minority” because they are considered smart, successful, hard working and passive. Although seemingly harmless at first, this term creates a harsh standard for Asian teens, as they are expected to fit this model. This model minority is an artificially plumped myth first originating in the 1960’s. The Immigrant Act, first issued in the 1960’s, stated that only the most successful and educated may immigrate to the United States to not only better themselves and their families, but also help American build itself. Therefore, the United States only chose the Asians that were the best of the best, many of which, were East Asians hailing from areas such as China, Japan or Korea. This allowed the American population to only see a small sample of Asian people.



Thus began the model minority myth. East Asian students soared in academics and surpassed other races, leading to new stereotypes such as nerdy, geeky etcetera. As time moved on, these stereotypes were no longer stereotypes, but standards for all Asians.

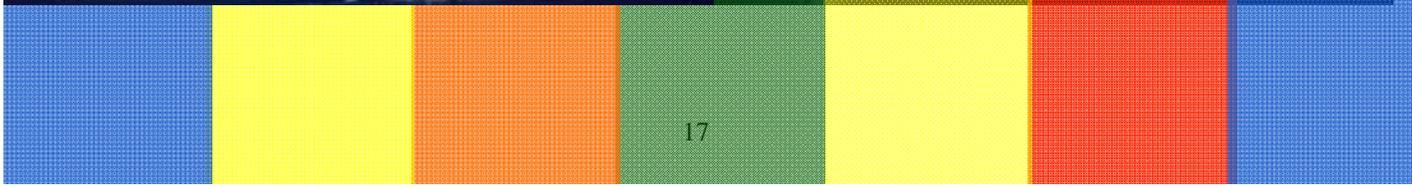
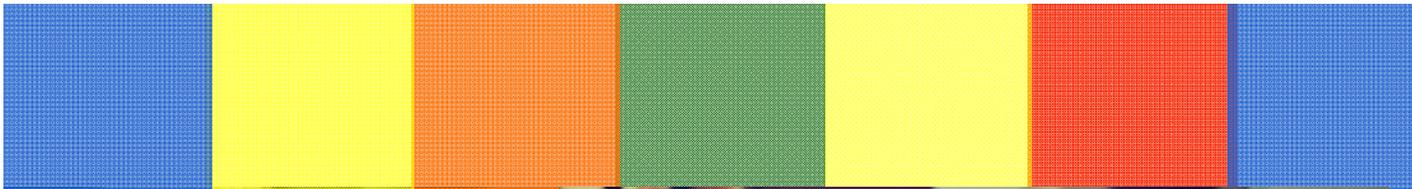
However, as time progressed, a new Asian flooded into America. Many South-east Asians came to the US as war refugees. Unlike the East Asians that were here before them, the Southeast Asians were not here because they were handpicked, or because they wanted to be educated. They were here because they needed a home. Education was not a part of their family dynamic.

This model minority not only creates a standard, but it also creates a shadow over other, smaller Asian ethnic groups. Generally, the majority of society considers and recognizes only the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean as they are the have largest East Asian population; however the South East Asian were completely overshadowed. Because of this shadowing effect, many South East Asians are ignored in their academic needs. Because Most South East Asians are relatively new to America, their struggles are not seen as people assume they are fine because they are Asian. However, this is very untrue because 40-60 of

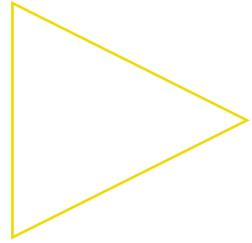
South East Asians have less than a high school education, and today, are still trying to find their place in society.

So where does the modern Asian American teen stand? Asian teens see this model minority myth as a burden that they must carry. This myth sounds great, until one day in class; you receive a bad test grade. You later tell your friend, and they respond with, “Wow, aren’t you Asian? That’s not very Asian of you”. It’s dehumanizing. To be someone, and have a stereotyped standard, and when you fail to reach that standard, you are told that you aren’t what you are. We want you to understand that, we Asians are people too. We are not machines, we are not manufactured to be perfect and fit this model minority myth. Do not categorize us into a stereotype. Today, Asian teens plan to, and are currently breaking stereotypes.

This generation will exceed the preceding one.



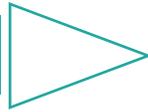
Random Lists:



10 Things to Know About Asian American Youth

1. We are **AWESOME!**
2. The hotter the pepper, the more we like it!
3. Some of us know Kung-fu. Some of us don't and that's alright.
4. Some of us only speak English. Some of us speak many languages.
5. We are **PROUD** of who we are.
6. We are not all from the same ethnic group or country from Asia. We are different.
7. We are full of TALENT.
8. Some of us are GEEKY smart. Some of us are just smart.
9. Ideally, we would **LOVE** to eat **RICE** everyday.
10. NO SHOES in the house

10 Things We LOVE



1. Rice
2. Hello Kitty
3. Noodles
4. Pandas
5. Karaoke
6. Hot Pepper
7. Soy Sauce
8. Stir Fry
9. Mangoes
10. Chopsticks



10 Movies we Watch

10. Harold and Kumar
9. The Karate Kid
8. The Blind Side
7. Despicable Me
6. First Love (Korean Series)
5. Green Hornet
4. Ip Man
3. Rush Hour
2. The Grudge
1. The Hangover



10 Things We Cannot Tolerate

1. Racism
2. Discrimination
3. Stereotypes
4. Waiting our turn
5. Hypocrites
6. Lying Liars
7. Censorship
8. Not Enough Air
9. Hidden Secrets in Food
10. No Respect



10 Best Advice

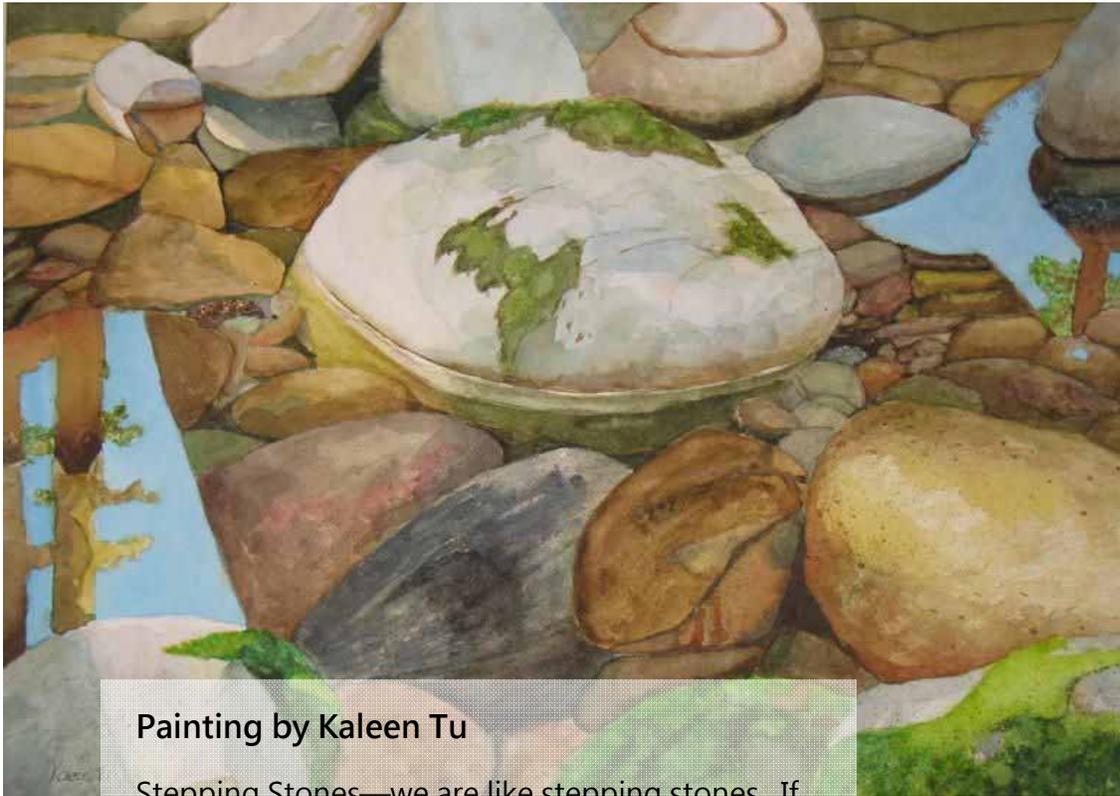
10. Always move forward learning from your mistakes
9. Forgive but never forget
8. Never apologize for who you are
7. Live your own dream, not someone else's
6. Before you can love others, you have to love yourself
5. Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind
4. Believe in Hope
3. Always persevere and try again
2. Try to love unconditionally
1. Family matters

10 Artists that we Listen to

10. Super Junior
9. Dumbfounded
8. Lady Gaga
7. Rihanna
6. Beyoncé
5. Tae Yang
4. Big Bang
3. Wonder Girls
2. Far East Movement
1. Bruno Mars



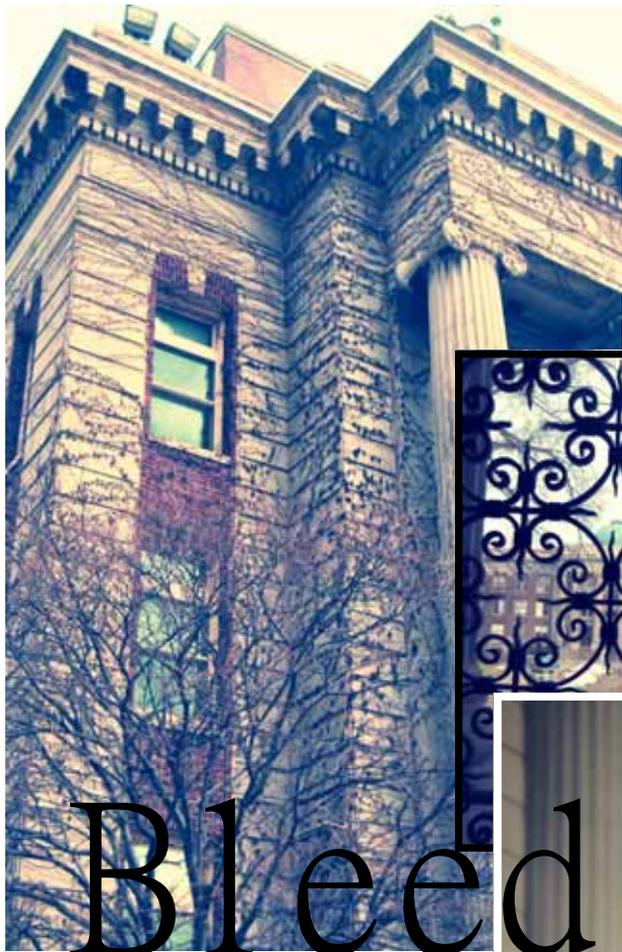
Breathe *art...*



Painting by Kaleen Tu

Stepping Stones—we are like stepping stones. If we live our lives well and with intention we can help to build the path for others to follow. We have the ability to use our lives and experiences to help others figure out their lives. We all face struggles, but we don't have to face them alone. Together we can build a strong future and a strong community.





Bleed



art...



Dear Latifah,



Dear Latifah,

I hate school. Everyone is so mean to me. I'm desperate. Help!
Lonely Sophomore

Dear Sophie,

From your letter, I can tell that school is very important to you. You strive to do well in academics, however, if I can venture a guess, you are not doing well and this is affecting your self-esteem. If you are struggling with the material you have to learn, I suggest asking the teachers. Although some teachers may be scary, they truly want to see all their students succeed and they are there to help you. If you do not want to go with that option, you can always create a study group with friends. If that doesn't work, another alternative is a tutor. If you are struggling because you are being bullied, or discriminated against, please tell an adult. These bullies have no right to tell you what you are or who you are, and they need to be disciplined by an adult. In the end, you will have to learn to bounce back from tough times and be resilient. In both cases, please reach out to teachers and friends. They care for you and are more than willing to help.

Latifah



Dear Latifah,

Ever since I was little, I've wanted red hair. But my dad always says no. He wants me to be, look, and act Asian. How do I get him to realize that how I look will never affect who I am inside?

Dreaming in Red

Dear Red,

You love your dad and his opinion of you matters to you very much. As a teen, you are supposed to explore your identity and image. And as a parent, your dad naturally wants you to be his little girl forever. If I had to guess, your father is a very traditional man and has a strong opinion of gender and cultural roles. Family and honor are probably very important things to him, hence his emphasis on appearance. However, he needs to realize that, as a father, he must listen to your want and needs. The daughter and father relationship cannot be one sided. I suggest talking to him, or writing him a letter, asking him what about your appearance matters to him the most and possible agreements that you two can come to. Ongoing communication with your parents is good. Share with them who you are and what you want to be. Start one step at a time on the things that are most important to you. And ask them to help you and you may be pleasantly surprised by the results.

Latifah

Dear Latifah,

I really like this guy at school. He is super nice, sweet, and kind. We've been facebooking for about a month now and I know he wants to ask me out. :) The problem is my dad. Now that I'm a teenager, he constantly reminds me that I cannot date a non-Hmong guy. He's greatest dream is for me to marry a Hmong guy so that they can be buddies and go hunting and fishing together. I really like this guy who is not Hmong. But I don't want to start anything that my dad will not approve of. Help me go to prom, if you can.

Dateless

Dear Date,

Like Red, you love your dad very much. It sounds like you have a good relationship with him so it should be easy for you to have a frank talk with him about dating. Remember you are in high school and you should not even be thinking about marriage right now. But before marriage, you have to get your feet wet first by starting to "date" and figuring this whole guy thing out. Tell your dad that you need his advice on dating and on how to pick the right guy. I think it's cute that your dad already has dreams for your future husband and himself, but remind him that before he can get to that dream, he has to help you make the right decisions. Just telling you not to date is not realistic and will not help you. Be honest and tell him his opinions and approval really matters to you.

Latifah



Dear Gary,

My girlfriend and my 1st anniversary is coming up. What should I get her?
-Clueless

Dear Clueless,

Girls are sentimental and all about feelings. Get her something that will bring back good memories of you and her together. I suggest going to her facebook and printing out pictures of the two of you and putting them together in a collage. Girls love it when you make them things. Tried and true! However, here is a tip for next time you need to buy her a gift. While lounging around with her, open a magazine and look with her. Naturally, her eyes will go to the things she likes, i.e., items of clothing, ads, accessories, etc. Whenever she says she likes something, Dog ear that page to remember what she likes. After a while, you'll have a whole list of what she likes and great gift ideas.

Gary

Dear Gary,

I am going on a first date. What should I wear? How should I act?
-Aping it

Dear Ape,

Congratulations! My best advice is for you to just be yourself. She said yes. She already likes you. But acting yourself is harder than it seems so here are a few extra pieces of advice.

Try not to go to a place where the two of you will sit for long periods of time, i.e., a movie which does not allow a lot of time for conversation, but a dinner may provide just too much time and pressure to talk. Try a park – bring a Frisbee, bowling, or the zoo. (Don't be competitive just play and enjoy the time together).

Clothing matters. Look good, but also feel good. Wear something comfortable.

Pay attention to the other person – you are nervous and most likely she is too. Pay her a compliment and really listen to what they have to say and respond to it. Don't rush to talk.

Be courteous and practice your manners – say please and thank you. Stay positive and say nice things. Use humor, but do not make fun of others.

Now get out there and good luck.

Gary

Dear Gary,

I have a friend who has a hot temper. The other day I saw him slap his girlfriend when she did not do what he asked. It was wrong, but I didn't want to intrude. I've been thinking about it and knew I should have spoken up. Please help me find the right way to tell him his actions were wrong.

-A Guy for Non-Violence

Dear Guy,

You already know the right thing to do. You just have to have the courage to do it. You need to be a true friend and tell your friend his behavior was wrong and unacceptable. Your friend needs to know that you don't believe in violence and will not tolerate it. But before you talk to him, please talk to a trusted adult and enlist his/her help. It would also be best that as a group of friends you all stand up against violence together. In the end, only your friend can change his behavior, but it's easier to change when loving and supportive friends are around.

Gary

Here is some information that will help you better understand dating violence from

<http://www.acadv.org>.

Teenagers often experience violence in dating relationships. Statistics show that one in three teenagers has experienced violence in a dating relationship. In dating violence, one partner tries to maintain power and control over the other through abuse. Dating violence crosses all racial, economic and social lines. Most victims are young women, who are also at greater risk for serious injury. Young women need a dating safety plan.

Dating abuse occurs when one person in a relationship has power and control over the other person. It is important for both adolescents and adults to recognize the warning signs of an abusive relationship.

Know the signs for dating violence and get help from www.hazelden.org.

For instance, does one partner:

- Demonstrate extreme acts of jealousy?
- Demand to know where and with whom his or her partner is at all times?
- Blow disagreements out of proportion?
- Constantly threaten to break up or worry that the other will initiate a break up?
- Insult his or her partner in public?
- Become verbally or physically abusive?

Does the other partner:

- Frequently apologize or make excuses for his or her partner's behavior?
- Always worry about making the partner angry?
- Show signs of physical abuse, such as bruises or cuts?
- Give up things that used to be important, such as friends or activities?
- Become isolated from friends or family?
- Get pressured or manipulated into having sex?

When a relationship moves from flirting to hurting, it's time to get help and get out. Adolescents who recognize these warning signs in their own or in a friend's relationships should talk to a trusted adult so they can get the help they need. Parents who suspect their child is in an abusive dating relationship should seek guidance from a professional at a local domestic violence center or mental health service or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-SAFE). For more information on dating violence, visit the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center Web site (<http://www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>) or contact 1-866-SAFETYOUTH.



F from Us to You

I am from the famous and the fabulous, or so I like to call it, rice.

I am from the deep jungles of Thailand.

I am from a body of creation in which two people
made me from the loving memories of moments.

I am from the bovine in location only; true descent from across the sea.

I am from the creativity of problem solving, maybe

I' ll be a mathematician or a regular teacher.

I am from the dance studio across the street from Arby' s.

I am from a world, a sleepless machine that doesn' t stop.

I am from a mother that digs too deep to see me not succeed.

I am from the land that seeks opportunity, to leave the
mayhem and outright scrutiny.

I am from a world of mazes, I lost the right path.

I am the princess of a fairy tale long forgotten.

I am from the blood and tears of my grandpa' s generation.

I am from the academia in which every possibility is
dreamt and growth of knowledge is like a tree

I am from all over the globe, a Multicultural world is what I live in.

I am from the generation that has the chance
to live the dream and someday travel to London, Italy or France.

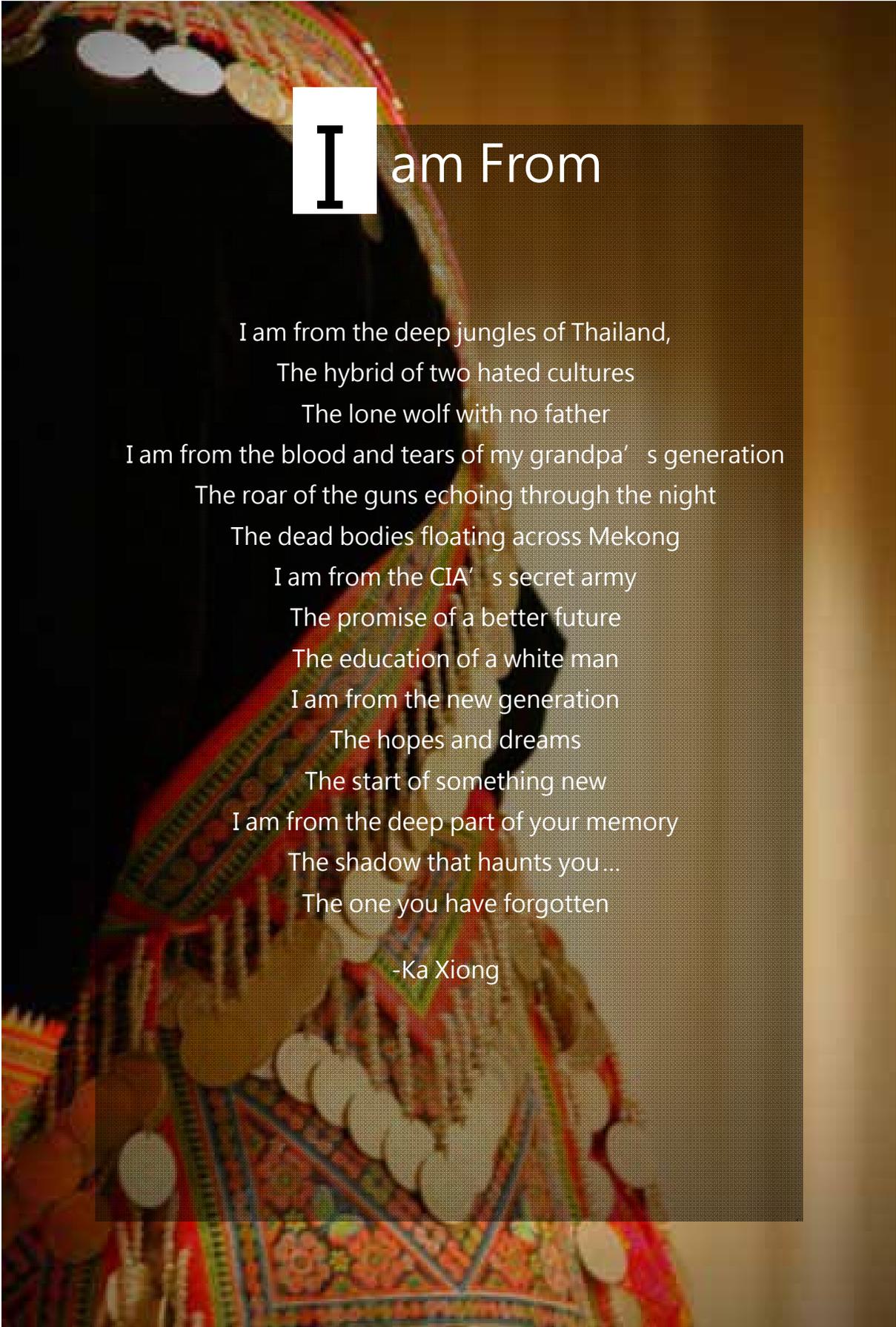
I am from a certain place hidden from the eyes of others,
where imagination becomes reality.

I am from outer space like star lights.

I am from peace, so please don' t fight.

I am from the notes that stick in the heart and mind, rather
than written on paper.

To really know where I am from...look into my heart.



I am From

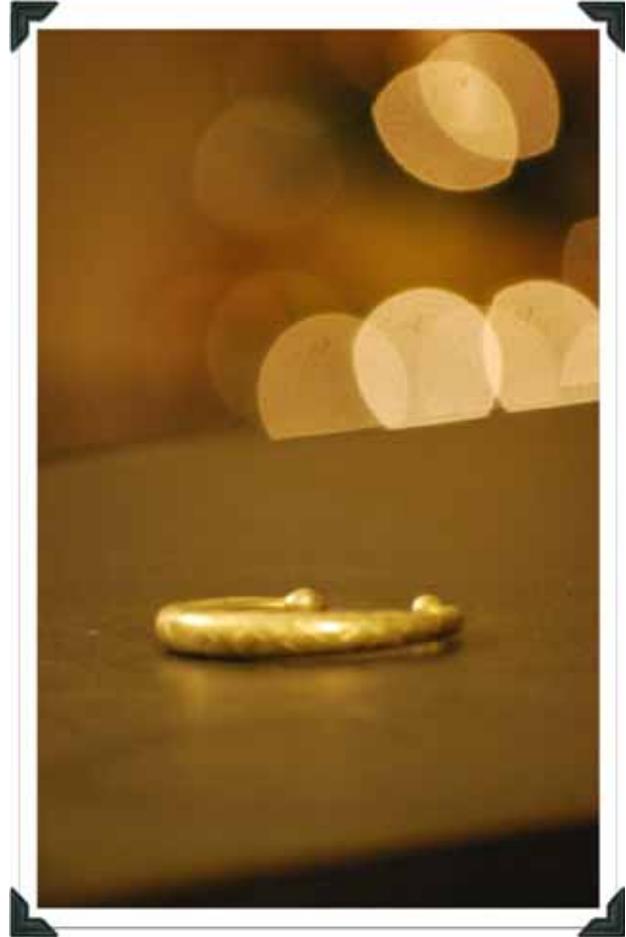
I am from the deep jungles of Thailand,
The hybrid of two hated cultures
The lone wolf with no father
I am from the blood and tears of my grandpa' s generation
The roar of the guns echoing through the night
The dead bodies floating across Mekong
I am from the CIA' s secret army
The promise of a better future
The education of a white man
I am from the new generation
The hopes and dreams
The start of something new
I am from the deep part of your memory
The shadow that haunts you...
The one you have forgotten

-Ka Xiong

I am From

Simpson J. Fongthian

I am from a home where two soft hands
And a loving smile welcome me each day.
I am from a room where I hide beneath the blankets
so I can sleep peacefully.
I am from the stars, where dreams become reality
And luck isn't too hard to find.
I am from stone built tough
To handle all the strong challenges life has given.
I am from a world
A sleepless machine that doesn't stop.
With problems so old they become news.
I am from a certain place
Hidden from the eyes of others
Where imagination becomes reality.
Where I become me.



I am From

Gao Ah Lee

I am from the variety of midnight diamond stars sparkling in the sky.
I am from a minority in a diverse environment.
I am from the mouth-watering purple sensation of grape soda.
I am from the National Archery in School Program.
I am from delicious red hot chili pepper in all my meals.
I am from the struggles that fill my mind with bad thoughts, wishing it would end
I am from the sweet scent of strawberry kiss.
I am from being surrounded by loved ones that brings me a smile each and every day.
I am from Bay Lake Camp 2010.
I am from the musical melodies that replay in my mind.
I am from the gloomy night walk, listening to the trees sing through the air.
I am from self-confidence; I have strength, luck and most important, love.
My name is Gao Ah Lee, and I am Asian American.

He, Him, Himself

Joua Her

He works himself tirelessly, only to be two steps behind.
Having spent those endless night in vain, waiting for the clock
to designate the beginning of his daily suffering.
Wrapping his head around the concept that no matter how hard he tries,
he will always be two steps behind.
Only to be surprised that no one is, because it is not appalling
to see this certain scholar dedicate the time to a long overdue cause.
Dreaming since he was young, having his dreams crushed
before he was even given a chance to fully explore it' s unknown properties.
Devoted to disproving mountains of fallacies set before him.
Only to see that despite the brilliance of the timeless mind,
one can never truly claim to be color blind—
it is embedded into the skin of tacit tradition.
Aiming to be proud of himself,
Hoping that all of the sacrifices that he made would be seen
and appreciated, and knowing that his intentions were clearly spelled out.
Only to see that his portrait had been twisted in such a disgusting way,
and that his goals have been so peevishly laid out by others that
no one would ever see the face of hard work behind that mask.
Exhibiting his final outcome, the one thing he had faithfully committed himself to
Yet when he looks out past the critical, hungry eyes, he sees that he is surrounded
by no one who he can truly share his success with—all of those who hum and flutter
in his wake seek his downfall and a smirk lurks behind those fake, empty smiles.
Realizing that he had been caught in his own mist of determination,
and did not grasp the double standard is indeed real.
In order to attain one, the other must be dismissed.
Only to realize that the goal that he had set before himself came in pairs
of unspoken bounds, where every move has already been predicted,
every failure highlighted, every success ruled out.
Noticing for the first time that the stage set before him is full of broken dreams,
only to find that his very own would also be brushed aside.
Having figured out that in the tundra of silence the scholars mourn—and
only to realize he mourns without the comfort of others
because when this scholar mourns, he mourns of broken dreams—alone.

Escaping

Joua Her

Running—my only chance to escape
Every tree in the jungle: blurring past me
Fighting for the air to fill my empty lungs.
Panting, for the life of me—scared out of my wits
I' m scared out of my mind
Hot tears stream down my cheeks; clinging at the base of my locked jaws
My breath is racing to get out; showing my fears for all to see
But only for a moment, for I have no time to stop and observe
For every distant tree looks like a withered old witch; wired and ready to pounce at me
Towering, encircling over me—reaching down to me with their thin and frail fingers,
Ready to seize me in it' s twisted grasp when my guard is down
Crows scream at me in loud piercing cries
Yelling at me; telling me to get out of here, urging me to run farther and farther away
They scream in the most horrifically dire screech
Bats are tossed about in the howling wind; fluttering up and around me
They fly at me, but turn to reverse at the last moment; threatening to enclose in on me
It' s as if they already know I' m doomed; condemned to be caught
I am to be caught by the nameless, caught by the unidentified, caught by the feared
Every shadow, as if enveloped by darkness, blindly grab at me;
missing if just barely by an inch
They' ll get me, unless I run fast. Faster. I need to go faster.
I need to get out of here. I need to run away. To get away from it all. To escape
I need to run to somewhere safe, somewhere-anywhere but here
I need to keep running. To somewhere safe. Yes, that' s right. To somewhere far away
My eyes can' t adjust to where the magic is laced with poison
and where midnight dances with the death—stained skies
it' s a pitched black moonless midnight sky.
I shouldn' t have seen it. I shouldn' t have been there. I shouldn' t be here.
My eyes are burned with the images in the inside of my eyelids.
I' ve seen the forbidden, I' ve done the most taboo act, and I' ve been caught.
They' re coming for me. I can feel their hot sticky horrid breath on the back of my neck.
They' re not far behind. They' re so close. They' re going to get me.



Make This Happen- E-MaNN

Eric Yang

I'mma make this all happen;
And I ain't ever backin' down,
All the other foo's frown,
Because I've only been on the 1st round,
I've been spittin my flows profound,
Holdin' it down for my town, Mo like city,
STP, I've been gettin my cheese and them Hunnies,
While foo's think I'm Chinese, Japanese or Tawainese,
Been spittin' these flows ever since 03',
Back when WaterFlowz held it down fo,
His G's and homies, So now I'm runnin this like Asian Kobe,
Photoshop it up with Adobe,
Been killin this mug like Shinobi,
Best know me, E-MaNN the Emcee,
Blowin this up like IED's,
Spittin the truth out; seriously,
Foo's talk mo, like the know me,
After listening to my CD,
They all of a sudden want to be coo' with me,
After listenin' to this, They all of a sudden,
Want to hug and kiss me,
Askin "What the hell happened G?"
~Foo, All of ya'll were judgin me,
Even before I became an Emcee,
But know you know, I'm here to blow,
And now you know, It's my time to show,
That I'm capable, to kill the flow on these other wackos',
It's GROUND ZERO, Holdin' it down... yeah.



It.

Joua Her

Within it Courage emerges.
Muster it.

Hold your head up high,
And bestow it generously.

Within it Fear emerges.
Face it.

Hold your head up high,
And look it in the eyes.

Within it Belief emerges.
Welcome it.

Hold your head up high,
And invest your soul.

Within it Denial emerges.
Understand it.

Hold your head up high,
And accept it.

Within it Bravery emerges.
Embrace it.
Hold your head up high,
And let it shine.

Within it Cowardice emerges.
Overcome it.
Hold your head up high,
And let go of it.

Accept it.
Face it.
Welcome it.
Understand it.
Embrace it.
Overcome it.
And at the same time,
Hold your head up high.



Stop the Sun

Joua Her



My eyes are opened before the sun rises
Yawns escape before birds get the chance to chirp
Heavy arms swim through seas of blankets
And I wait, for if only I could stop the sun
Anticipating for the adventures this day would hold
Yet dreading the mortal dangers that lurk
Behind the false front of simple happiness
And I wait, for if only I could stop the sun
Looking into the future is like looking straight into the sun;
It gets harder the more you try, and after a while you just give up
This is the only time and place where safety resides
And I wait, for if only I could stop the sun
I close my eyes and listen to the serene silence
As those around me start to rise from deep slumber
I brace myself for the day's mystery
And I wait, for if only I could stop the sun, I'd be safe.

After it All

Joua Her

After the airplanes have weaved their way through the clouds
After the surprises left behind came down in a boom
After the unidentified enemies have left their mark; branding our history
After the bayonets have penetrated into flesh of the innocent
After the first drops of blood have descended from the wounds of men
After the last of the eerie cries pierced the spurious serene sky
After the blood stained patches of grass have faded
After the trees of the jungles have calmed down from their rampage outburst
After it all

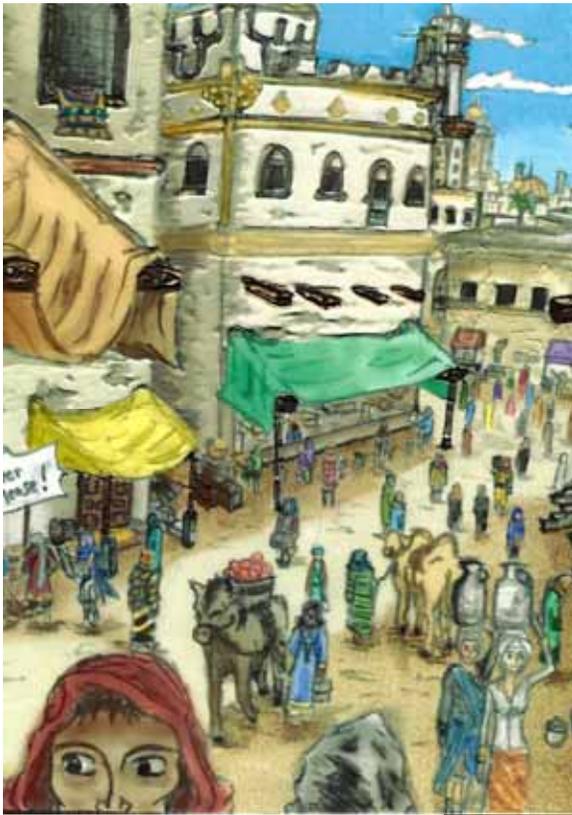
That is when the trails of abandoned bodies make mazes in the open fields
That is when the corpsman collects the abandoned dog tags
That is when the soldiers take a deep breath—amazed that they still exist
That is when the birds sob out the mournful cries to the lost
That is when blood bound brothers are lost to the world below
That is when men of courage become overwhelmed and uncertain
That is when tears will flow but no good will come of it
That is when it gets harder to breathe in the



You

Wibi MacDonald

Life is a game,
The clock ticks down to that buzzer,
Only you can dictate how you play,
It' s your choice to pass,
It' s your choice to shoot,
Choose to be passive and let people
step on you,
Choose to take the risk and let people
judge you,
What you do should please who you
want to be,
Not fulfill others desires,
Never regret what you choose,
Because no matter the outcome,
Life has turned out the way it has,
Just play



Alone

Wibi MacDonald

I am alone,
You are alone,
Everybody is alone,
There is no one else,
It's just you,
When you think at night,
You don't think others' thoughts,
You think your own,
When you make a decision,
No one else makes it for you,
You make it yourself,
You are all by yourself in this world,
But that's okay,
Because if you're confident,
In who you are,
Then that should be enough to make you happy

Friendship

Wibi MacDonald

Friends have fun,
But they also care,
When one day is bad,
The next one is great,
What you see is what you get,
There is no reading,
It's a friendship,
Not a puzzle,
It's happy,
You yell then laugh,
You don't laugh then yell,
If your friendship is like a roller coaster,
Then get off,
Because that ride never stops



Photos











LETTERS





Dear Mom,

I hope that you know that I love you. In all that I've done, I've always kept you in the back of my mind. I know you think I'm rebellious, but I'm just trying to stay true to myself. I could never play the good Asian girl role not even to please you for a moment or a day. You get mad at me for the things I do. I won't lie to you, I choose to tell you the truth – I'm dying my hair yellow, going to school in California, acting in a play, dating someone who is not Asian. I know telling you these things hurt you, but I want you to know me, your real daughter. We are at that point where you are so fed up with me and my way of life that I fear you will give up on me. I hope you see that the strength I have to make these decisions, to live the life I've always dreamed of, stems from the love and lessons you've given me. Don't give up on me mom, I need you and your love more than ever.

-Your daughter

Dear Mom,

I just wanted to tell you that you're a great mother. You raised me right and I really appreciate your concerns for me. Yes, I don't know how it feels to lose a mother at a young age like you did. I don't know how it is to move from one place to another knowing that no one cared for me. I wouldn't know how to be independent and take responsibility as a parent at a young age. I don't know how it feels like to be you. What I do know is that you acted the way you did due to your childhood. It was not what you expected. You lost yourself because of what happened. Married someone that didn't love you, but it was a better decision than becoming a second wife.

I don't understand how you can stay with someone who doesn't love you back. You lost two daughters back in Laos because of the war and sickness. I know you look at that picture of my oldest sister and cry with no sounds on your bed. Mom, please know that even through all of this you can still learn to be a great mother, you made it this far, giving birth to all fifteen of us. Look how far we've reached because of you. Look at yourself, the person with no mother or father and look at what you've passed down to us. Never take anything for granted because in the end it will be special.

I'm sorry I yelled at you. I'm sorry for not understanding. I'm sorry I don't know how it felt like to be you. I know you struggle everyday with this pain, but we simply ignore the signs. You put a smile on each and every day just to show that you are strong. I'm glad that you had me. I know all you want to hear is for me to say "I love you". I want to say it, but I'm so terrible at speaking in Hmong, you wouldn't understand me. I'm speaking for most of us children when I say it's hard for us physically to say these words because of the way we were raised.

So I write these words. I love you mommy, I really do. I want you to live a long time so you'll be able to see all your grandchildren. I want them to know how great of a mother you are. I don't want to ever lose you. I love you, I really do.

-Your Youngest Daughter

Dear Mom,

I hate sleeping in the same bed with you because you have such an annoying snore that it makes me want to cover my ears with a thousand ear plugs. But even so, I love you very much, and I wouldn't ask for any other woman with a horrible snoring habit. I want you to know that I appreciate everything you do for me and my siblings. You have worked so hard for so long for us children. I know it was a struggle for you to care for seven children all by yourself without dad's help. Mom, you've done a great job raising us all.

For years, you woke up every morning at 5am to take my older siblings to a school thirty minutes away from home. You dropped them off and picked them up every day because you wanted a better education for them. You worked two jobs to support us all. We couldn't have asked for a better mom. You went to the extremes to fill our happiness, Mom. Like you always said, you were both our mom and dad. Since dad wasn't able to play the father role in our lives, you were there. I want you to know that I am so happy that I was born into this world to such a great woman as you. I can't ask for any better person to be my mom. There is no other person in this world who will ever be able to replace you, ever.

I remember the day that my sister and I tried to teach you how to ride a two wheeled bike. It was an experience that changed the way I looked at mother and daughter relationships forever. That day, you learned how to balance and ride the bike all by yourself, but sadly you didn't know how to stop.



My sister was riding up from behind you and warned you that she was coming and for you not to be scared, but even so, you panicked and sent yourself flying in the air onto the ground. Even though the accident was awful; it was funny, it really was! And we laughed and laughed. I learned then, Mom that you can and you should rely on me as I've always relied on you.

Mom, I love you. I wish I was able to express to you how much I love you, miss you, need you, and how great it is to have you in my life. Mom, you truly are a wonderful person and I love you with all the love I've got in my heart.

Your Daughter

Dear Dad,

I miss you very much. I haven't seen you in such a long while. How are you doing? I hope you are doing fine. Mom, the kids, and I are doing fine. We all miss you very much. Even though mom and you are not together anymore, I still miss and think about you every day. I wish you would have stayed with us, Dad. I am constantly looking for you in the crowds of people. No matter how long and hard I search for you, you are no where to be found. If I had the chance to just sit down and talk with you about your day, what you ate for lunch and how work was, I think I'd die a happy person. I miss you so much, I want you to know that I am not mad at you. I just hope that you're eating well and living a happy life.

I want you to know that you're still my dad. You will always be my dad and nothing will change that. If mom ever remarries that man may be able to show us the fatherly love that we have been missing since we were young, but he will never replace you. Dad, I miss you so much. I wish I was strong enough to pick up my phone, dial your number, and talk to you for just a moment. I will always remember that heartwarming day, years after you and mom had separated. Mom, you, and I were on the staircase in the new house that she had just bought that year. We were celebrating my sister's success in her schooling and future as an English teacher overseas. You had been drinking with the relatives when mom pulled you away from the table to talk. You two stood at the top of the staircase. I came to see what you two were talking about because there were tears running down your red face.

That day, I saw the tough love that you and Mom shared. The way she looked at you, the way she spoke so softly to you, I knew how much mom has missed you. I came and sat down on the middle step and listened to the conversation. In time, you patted me on my head and told me that you loved me. You were drunk, crying, and trying to breath as steadily as you could. You told me to be a good girl, study hard, love my mom, and to not forget that you were my dad. I had been longing to hear those words all my life and when I finally did, I didn't know what to think of them. The tears that fell down my cheeks that day, I'm not sure if they were tears of happiness or sorrow.

Dad, I really miss you. Please continue to stay healthy, eat well, and be happy. I love you very much.

-Your Daughter

Dear Mom,

You probably won't understand anything I'm about to write to you, but I don't mind giving it a try. We fight; such as, get into arguments. A lot. Compromising with you is super difficult, and also trying to speak in a soft voice. You just seem to judge me with every word I use. I can't tell you about my day without you asking, "why do you hangout with them?" Or even adding comments; "They're not good people, you're just ruining yourself."

I just want you to know mom. The people that I spend time with are the best people in the world. So far, you've judged them by first impressions. Now, don't get me wrong; they do affect a lot, but first impressions barely tell you anything except of how YOU see them. I really dislike the fact that you judge my friends by what ethnicity they are, how they dress, or how they act. I absolutely HATE that.

They're the ones that are there for me when you and dad put me down. They listen and comfort me, while I'm crying from all the stupid things that you've said to me. You've put me through so much pain that I don't think I'll ever be able to tell you that I love you. But love you I do. Your love, understanding and acceptance matter to me. All I'm asking from you is to understand mom. To understand where I'm coming from. I'm not asking for anymore than that. But for some reason you can't even give me that. And you wonder why our relationship is so poor.

--Your Child

Dear Dad,

I don't understand why you act the way you do. It seems like you never cared for us. All you do is work, come home, go on the computer, and look at other women available on the internet. If you're not doing that, you gamble all your money away. How are you supposed to support us? Mom gets frustrated when you tell her that you'll remarry and have a new wife and new family. How do you think I feel like when you say that? You don't even ask me about my thoughts of a step-mom. You should already know how it feels like to have a step-mom that doesn't care for you. And now you're just willing to give up the family and move on? You don't even realize how much you're hurting the entire family. Does it look like we want a step-mom? I don't understand how you are so eager to have a second wife when I can see that soon you will have the feeling of leaving her for another. Just because you failed the first time it doesn't mean you can't go back and fix it.

Have you notice, not once have you asked me about my future career, instead you practically choose the career for me. You haven't once visited my teachers' at conferences or looked at my report card to see if I'm struggling. When I go out and see father-daughter, or father-son bonding moments, I feel bitter, dejected, envious, and especially heart-broken. I know that those bonds can never happen between us. We're not one big happy family, instead we are a family that has drifted apart through the years. I hate it. I was the kid that had the big family that loved one another; I grew up not knowing that it was a lie. Dad, I am broken inside, but you can't understand.

-Your daughter

Dear Mom,

I don't want anything to do with you. As a child, you left me with dad, and never came back. I sat by the living window, waiting upon your return. As days turn into years I finally realized that you weren't coming. Heartbroken, I gave up on everything, school, friends, especially dad. He didn't even try to help me at all. But went on his own personal business and forgot about me. One thing that I wanted to ask you after all these years; why did you leave? You had a family, but just left us, for another? I don't understand why. I grew up on my own with no help. I did things I know I would regret but that was how I lived my life. I wonder if you ever once thought about me, if you even talked about me to your other family. Sometimes I don't even know if I should call you mom. I had so much hate that hate is not what I want in the world. It is so easy to hate and cause harm, and it is hard to set peace. And yet, I seek it. My mind is blank on thoughts of you. The image of you is a blur. I can't even recognize your face anymore. Now I realize being left behind was not a bad thing. The life I am living, the me that I am now – strong, confident, happy, and secure, I would never be, had you been around.

-Your son

Dear Dad,

I love you. I just want to say that first. Cause I want you to know that I always love you no matter what happens, no matter what obstacles we go through, cause I know we'll always overcome them together as father and daughter. I know you mean best, I know you really do, and I know that you only want what's best for me and for my little sister too. I know you do, cause I see it in your face, the way you talk, the way your eyes light up when you talk about your dreams for us, the dreams that you can see happening for us.

But the dreams that you have for me isn't for me. Sometimes I delude myself and think MY dreams are similar to YOURS cause I just want to see the pride in your face. But when we talk about it, I feel myself disliking the topic more and more cause you want me to do all these things, but I know in reality and the back of my head, that, that's what YOU want to do. I know that's not what I want to do cause I don't feel the joy and happiness that you get when you talk about it.

I've told you that I don't want to be a psychologist anymore, and I know it's caused a rift between us cause we don't talk as much anymore. And you tell me that you're going to be happy no matter what I become, but I know, inside that you're hurt. And I'm sorry that I can't pursue the dreams that you wanted me to pursue, but the emotional and mental pressure that you forced upon me was too much to bear and I couldn't handle it anymore. I'm sorry, Dad. I really aim. Don't be disappointed in me. I love you.

-Your daughter



Dear Sister,

Why did you leave me bereft and all alone with no one to take care of me? Once upon a time, it was four of us sisters against the world. Then one by one you all left and I was alone. The oldest moved out to live on her own. You enlisted with the Marines and got sent thousands of miles away. And then suddenly, our other sister living with me for reasons unknown stopped talking to me. That was the final act that broke me. I didn't have hope anymore.

I know, all I had to do was to call you and talk to you about it. I needed you here to hug me and hold me tight, like you always had, but I couldn't find myself to tell you. When I have had to face problems, I wouldn't do anything about them because I didn't have you beside me. You were my strength and guide.

It was hard for me to let you go. I couldn't face living by myself with mom. I'm older now, but I still cry whenever you leave me. I wonder why we keep on abandoning each other. I don't understand why our family is like this. It is as if we're trying not to be a family at all. I hate it so much, it hurts too much inside. I feel so weak and paralyzed, I cannot think anymore. I wish I could just tell you all this and that I miss you, without saying it in joking fashion. I want to say I love you, and ask you to never leave me.

Please come back sis, because I'll be waiting no matter how far you are.

-Your baby sister

Dear Family,

I just want to tell you how much you guys have mistaken me. I know we have our way of showing love, but sometimes I wish we wouldn't do it that way. You guys criticize me all the time, and I don't like it. I don't understand how it would help me in the future. Mom always says that you guys do it because you care. Words hurt, don't you understand? I'm not going to listen to your criticism and uttering the worst of people, and I don't need to always listen to what you have say. Like people say, it goes in one ear, and out the other.

One thing that really bugged me was when I was applying for college. You guys were such a drag. You guys didn't even have faith in me at all. You said I should just go to a community college as I wouldn't get anything out of it. Like I would be like you guys,



travel the same road and stop where you gave up. Why did you not have higher dreams for me? It's like you don't want me to be better than you. You guys didn't believe in me.

I couldn't focus at school, I failed most of my classes, and my teachers gave up on me. When you guys noticed, I became the criminal in the house. I was labeled bad, and the kids could not be around me. I stepped myself up. I got involved in a lot of things at school and the community. My grades improved. I applied for colleges and paid for the applications myself. And now I'm graduating and going off to university in the fall. My future is laid out and I am going to go for it.

You guys still make accusations about me. Right now I really don't care what you think. I'm doing my own things now.

-Your Youngest Sister

Dear Mom,

Can you stop comparing me to my cousin! I know that she has a good education and such blah blah blah, but you really don't know her like I do. If you did, you would know she's not the best of people. I do not like being compared and I don't like my cousin. I just want to be me, and I want you to understand where I'm coming from. My thoughts, looks, and manners are not the same as other people. You just have to accept me for who I am.

-Your daughter

Dear Dad,

I love you, but I know your secret. The secret you wished your little girl would never find out.. And the saddest thing is that I'm not mad because of it, I'm mad because you hid it from me. To you, it's "no big deal". But it tears me up inside. You look and act okay to me. But inside, you think I'm going in the wrong direction for my future.

I want to do something that interests me not you. I want to do something for myself, not for you. Can't you see I want to live my dream, not yours? You barely support me in anything I do, if I do good, it's just expected, no reward or a congratulations. But if I do wrong by accident or just out of bad luck, I'm scolded, and you never let me live it down. You expect a lot from me, and I do try my best. Yet, I'm afraid one day, I'll crack. I'm not a bad kid, I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do drugs, I don't get into trouble, I get good grades, isn't that good enough for you? I could be such a bad kid, and deep down I wish I was sometimes, and then maybe you'd realize what you have.

But you are my dad, and I know you love me. I love spending time with you, but sometimes I just need my space. Its not that I don't like you, or think you're annoying. But I am a teenager, it is easier for me to tell my friends things rather than me telling you now. Sometimes you pick on me, honestly it really does hurt. Especially from my own father who is suppose to love my unconditionally. I shouldn't have to go through my flaws being pointed out by my own father.

I do still love you, I always will. You've given me so much. You've taught me so much, and I thank you for that. You're the best father I could ask for. I wouldn't change anything about my life. I love what you and mom have given me, I love the person that I am.

Sincerely,
Your daughter

Dear Dad,

Whenever I thought of you, I used to get angry—so angry that I didn't know what to do, and I had no idea how to treat those around me. You make me feel suspicious of almost every guy in my life. You make me feel so unsure and insecure of myself, and I don't want that. I feel like at any point in my life, whoever I am with will choose to get up and leave, telling me that I am not good enough and not worth his time. But I don't get angry at you anymore.

I see the way you treat mom, and I also see the way you treat your other wives. It hurts me to see how much love is absent in all of your relationships. There is so much love that we all are giving you, yet you seem to be so blind to it. You don't love your daughters, and there's no surprise there. But you also don't love your sons or wives, much less yourself.

You are obsessed with your pride, your money, and especially your ego. I can see that you don't truly love anyone, and that makes me angry, but even more than that, I feel hurt. Why is it that my very own dad cannot love his children, much less his wives, and himself? I used to get angry, but now I'm past that—it just hurts now. I've accepted my reality.

-Your Child



Dear Grandma,

Oh how I hate the fact that I don't know you. I wish that you are still here. I wish I could go to your house for the holidays. At times I feel people take their grandparents for granted. At times I wonder what you would say to me. I wonder how close we would be. Would I be your favorite? Would you want to come visit? At times I cry just for the little fact I don't know you. I've met you, I knew you for a year before you past. But the time was too short.

I want to thank you for the large family you left for me because of them I've learned some things about you. Here is what I've been able to piece together: you were born in 1926, you passed in 1998, you have 8 living children and one past. You were a foster child and didn't know your family and you married a man 36 years your senior. I've seen pictures, and whenever I see them, I just wish more and more that I knew you better and that I could talk to you.

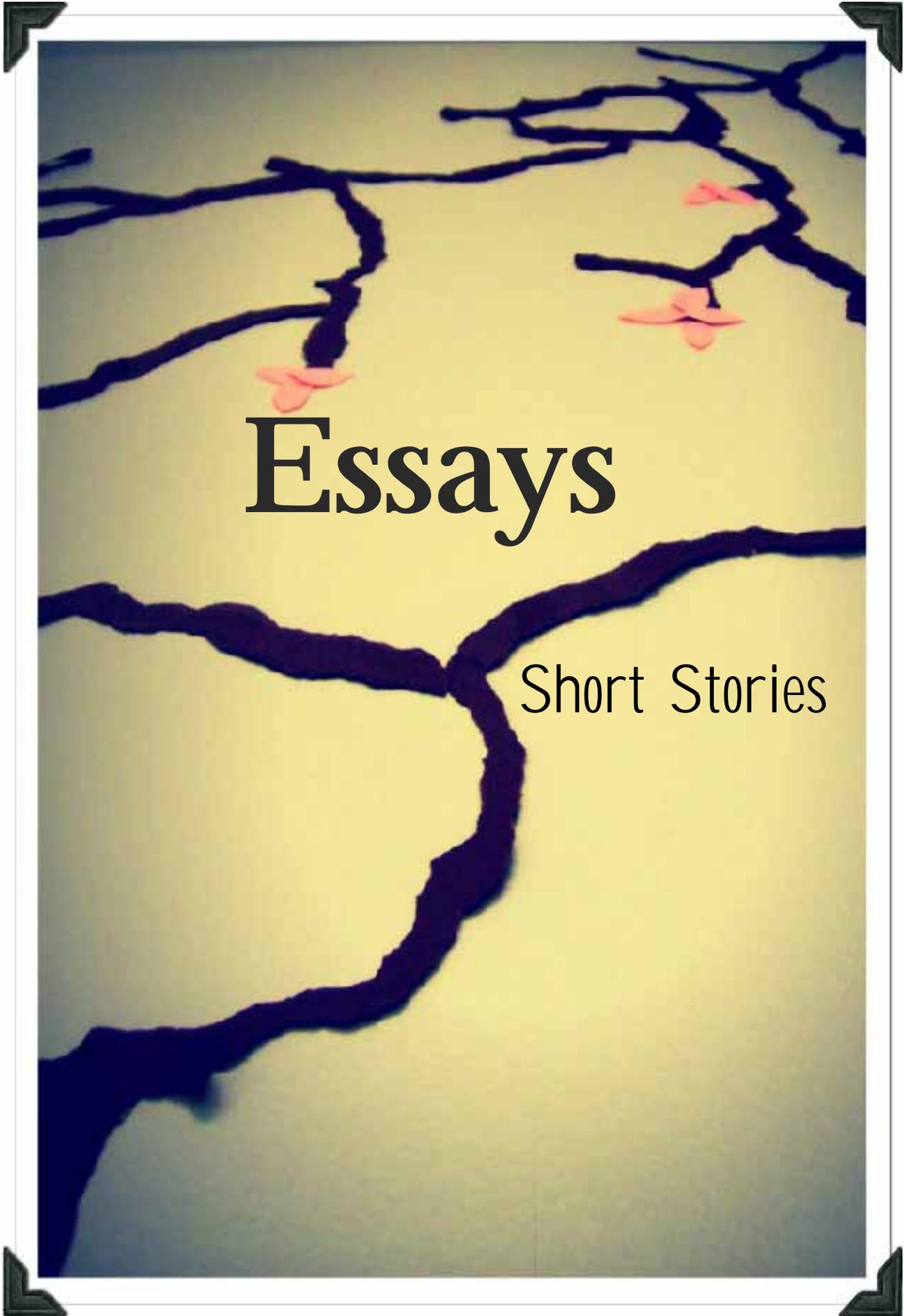
I feel as if I don't fully know myself because you are a part of me and I don't know you. The fact that I don't know myself tears me apart. I cannot imagine how you felt growing up not knowing where you came from. I want to know the stories about your life from your mouth. I want to know the emotions you felt when you met my grandfather and during big events as World War II and the Great Depression. I want to know how you fought for yourself and to be independent with 8 children after grandfather pasted.

If I could change one thing in my life, it would be to know you better or just having you around for one more day. To see the look on my father's face as he sees his mother one last time would bring me an enormous amount of happiness. Though I don't know you, I miss you. Though I don't know if you feel the same way about me, I love you. It may be conceited but I love you more than any other child would love with their living grandparents.

Not knowing you is probably the one thing in my life that I will always regret. Whether you were a bad person or a saint, I would do anything to change the fact that I never knew you and your story.

Sincerely,

-Your Granddaughter



Essays

Short Stories

This I believe

Gao Ah Lee

My mother constantly asks, "If I don't live anymore how are you going to make a living, and who's going to love you?" My mother's questioning makes me wonder how my life would be like without her. And I have to be honest, I'm not sure how my life will be like without her. And I think that's her point, her own way of telling me to grow up and not take things for granted.

Everything I eat, everything I do, everything else I can think of, they always connect to my mother. Whenever she gets her checks, she gives me a certain amount of money. She says it makes her happy. She says she wants my life to be satisfying, she wants me to get what I want. She does so much for us kids, but sometimes I want to ask her what are the things that make her happy. She should do those things, and most important, take care of herself.

My mother pays for land around Minnesota and Wisconsin for gardening. She spends summer growing fruits and vegetables. She spends all her free time tending them. She says the garden is for us. The garden helps her save money on grocery bills so she can give more money to us. She doesn't care for herself. Right now she has back problems and she is still willing to forget about them and work on her garden all because she cares for us. That is how we usually get most of our fruits and vegetables not just because of hard work, because of a mother's loving care.



I used to yell at my mother to stop working so hard to give us money and to just spend more time with us. But then one day, my aunt revealed to me that for the Hmong people of my mother's generation, money was the most important thing in the world. And that to have money was to have life. She shared that during the war, the Hmong's way of life was disrupted and they couldn't farm or work so they never had money. Without money, many families couldn't buy food or the basic necessities to provide for their children. My mother witnessed many families losing their children. That was her generation.

From my mother's actions, I've learned that she would do anything to help her children make it through a rough day. She likes to put a smile on our faces and make us forget about the bad things that have happened. My mother does all the hard work and makes the tough decisions. She hates to discipline us and make us feel sad when all she wants is for us to be happy. Knowing this about her, I believe her when I say, disciplining hurts her more than it hurts us.

My mother does not tell me that she loves me. And I don't need her to tell me because every day I see her living out her love for me and my siblings by the things she does for us. A mother's love is strong, and she would risk everything in her life for her children. This I know because my mother shows me everyday.



The Love of Home

Gao Ah Lee

Henry Ward Beecher once said, "We never know the love of the parent until we become parents ourselves" . When I first read this quote, I fell in love with it. It describes the love of a parent to their children without realizing they are revealing their love. Mothers are the most significant parent of all. My mother is independent, caring, and loving even if she doesn' t express it.

I usually refer my mother as mommy. My reasoning to call her mommy is because she would pay more attention to my expressions and words. You can say my mother is a house wife. I remember this one year when she had left to Florida for two weeks. The house became quiet and peaceful. It felt nice, but there was something erratic. After she left, my first night of sleep was great. I slept all day, but the other nights were awful. I became sick and could barely sleep. I soon came to realization during this sickness, that I needed her comfort, that I miss my mommy. I was in so much denial that I missed her.

My mother' s independence brings essences to our household. Our house would not be a home without her. My mommy does her own things to make herself happy. Usually, an argument with on of us can cause her to flee to her gardens nearby. It keeps her minds off of things. Whenever I come home from school, the house is cleaned. When my mother leaves for the whole day and comes back, she will eventually find that the house is a bigger mess than it was before she left. The dirtiness persuades her to clean up more.

My family could never be resentful of one another, though it was possible, my mother made it impossible. How? Well she is such a caring person. She can tell when there' s something wrong in each one of our relationships with one another, and it' s in her nature to know. Sometimes I would tell her there are problems even if I didn' t want to tell her, she usually would already know. She believes it' s unnatural and awry. She thinks that what we argue about should result in a compromise. It' s impossible , but not to her. My mother would make us talk to one another somehow no matter what, she could keep on trying to improve each one of us and relationship in the family. She brings order to our household, because I know that I would not listen to my older siblings, unless my mother advised me too.

My mother is loving and takes care of everybody. Whenever anyone in my family is sick, they come over to our house and ask my mommy if she can help them give medicine and to get better. Just having my older siblings come over here because of their sickness is funny to me. My older siblings always visit my mom whenever their child is sick and hurt. It' s amusing, but the time consuming. I love her because she does not choose one child over another. Even though she has her bad times with everyone of us, she still loves us all equally.

In the end, my mother helps keeps us connected to our relatives. My mom is close to all her brother and sisters, but we have trouble getting along with my Uncles, and Aunts kids. It' s not that we have trouble with other people. Home is momentous and it' s a part of life. For me, my home is soending the night at home with a nonstop nagging mother, but that' s usually the reason I love her. Maybe that' s why everyone loves her. As I said before, a home is not

Cinderella

by Calvin Txawjvam Hawj

She rises before the sun and slumbers while the moon shines, working throughout. Her mornings are rituals. She applies concealer and foundation to cover the bags of stress underneath her eyes the results of family struggles and tiredness from work. Mascara is applied to her slightly upwards slanted eyes' lashes, accentuating the glimmer in her eyes where hope still resides reminding her that all is not lost and that something better is yet to come.

In dark silence, her graceful fingers tidies up the living room slowly restoring the order of the room. As the day breaks, she tilts her face to welcome the sun' s glow. While washing dishes, she looks out the window and observes the song birds flutter to and fro. She is mesmerized by the beauty of the day and longing hits her as it does every so often. She squelches it. She lost her belief in wishes a long time ago. Before leaving for school, she quickly makes rice for the rest of her family. School is a reprieve. It is the only time when she is moderately happy, the only time she is let out, the only time she is surrounded by support. Friends flutter to and fro carefree and lighthearted. Their easy laughter and chatter fills the halls.

"Will we see you tonight at prom?" they ask her.

"Sure," she answers, "if only in my dreams."

Too soon the interlude ends and as she walks home from school, she thinks through the rest of day' s schedule. Make dinner, take care of the younger siblings, take care of her parents, clean the house, homework, and finally sleep.

She wonders to herself, "Am I happy?" Sadly, the answer is no.

She is a precious gem, untouchable; she is the highest ranking beauty, a prize that everyone wants. Her parents try to protect her by never letting her out into the real world and restricting her. "Why do they make me do all the work then? If I am so special, why am I treated like dirt?" she thinks to herself. "It' s not fair," she says, but her voice is lost.



"But why," she cries. "Why can't I go out? Just this once, please." She is unable to say the next words as her father hits her right in the mouth. She shushes quickly. She looks down as tears begin to develop in her eyes. Her father's words do not matter, they are always the same. As her father leaves the room, he passes her mother. She looks to her for comfort. Her mother's eyes are blank. There is no empathy, there is no comfort.

"This life sucks," she thinks. "When is my Cinderella day?" she wonders.



Secrecy

Gao Ah Lee

It's been four years since I was last in to my home town. I'm meeting up with Mike in

a few hours. I can't wait, we've known each other since we were infants as we were next door neighbors. Mike and I dated back in middle school, he finally asked me out after twelve years. The experience ended and we returned to being best friends. I've been ignoring his calls and messages these past four years as I've kept an important secret from him. I was afraid of what he might think, but I'm ready to tell him now.

Even though I haven't kept in contact, I'm well informed. Sophie, my best friend, did all the dirty work for me. She kept tabs on him and reported to me like she promised she would. Sophie is going to be visiting soon too. We are all meeting up in Crystal Park, where Mike and I had our first date. Our parents sat at a nearby bench and watched our every move. Mike and I had our ways to hide and sneak off while they weren't looking. We were a great team.

My parents decided to move back to Walnut Grove because of me. They wanted me to graduate with all my friends and be with my grandparents and extended family. My father and his 4 brothers moved here in 1990. They pooled all their money together and purchased an old and abandoned 25 acres farm. Each brother got 5 acres and throughout the years, each built homes and grew families.

I hadn't wanted to return, but as soon as we drove into town and passed the old downtown, and I saw that the water tower with its faded markings was still standing, joy filled my heart and I was glad, no, overjoyed to be back. I had not realized how much I had missed this little town.

As we arrived at my old house, Grandpa and Grandma were on the front porch waiting for us. Grandma saw me and quickly jumped out of her seat and screeched.

"MEKA,,," she said.

"Hi Grandma."

"My baby! How are you feeling? Are you car sick? Come inside quick and I'll get you some tea."

"Slow down Grandma. I'm just fine. And I am glad to see you too." I said and hugged and kissed her. Her embrace was warm and cuddly.

It's been two months since I last saw Grandma and Grandpa. They had visited us in Rochester, but they never felt at home there and their visits were far and few in between. All their children and grandchildren were here. They needed them as much as I did.

Mom and dad grabbed the luggage and headed inside as I returned to the car to grab my things. On my left, I glimpsed a gold car pulled up into the house next door down the old country road. It was Mike's car; and I was terrified that he would see me and come over. I was not ready and quickly ducked behind the giant bushes that lined the driveway. Mike stepped out of the car and I could see the wind slowly lift his hair from his face. I caught my breath and held onto it. He paused and stared at our car, his eyes blinking rapidly, and then he abruptly turned and pounded the hood of his car. I could feel his anger. I let out my breath.

"I'm sorry," I softly whispered the imaginary Mike, who has always been with me. I waited awhile and then jumped out of my hiding spot and ran straight to the front door.

Its two thirty and almost time for me to meet up with Mike. I'm standing in front of the mirror staring at my reflection trying to recall if this face was the same face four years ago. It was fall and sophomore year had just begun. I had lost a lot of my baby fat and was just starting to feel good about myself. I had a closet full of new clothes and a drawer full of make-up. I was determined to have the best year yet. And then, the news and the move. I haven't had much time to look at myself since then. Now standing here and remembering these things, I smile and wish I was that girl again. That I could go back and do things over. I was determined to do that with Mike and with Sophie.

As I walked the 3 blocks to Crystal Park, I repeated the things I wanted to say over and over again in my head. Ready to tell him everything he's ever wondered about. I'm planning to be there early so this time I will wait for him. On my way there - everywhere I passed I saw a memory or a reminder of Mike and I. That tree over there still has our initials carved into it. Mrs. Olsen's window - we broke it playing baseball. Mr. Smith's dog - God, I hope his dog is still not around. Last time he bit me. And then I saw the old oak tree with its knot hole. I stopped in my track. We used to hide secret notes there for each other. It was our game.

"Has it been like this for you? Everywhere you turned, did you see me as I am now seeing you?" I asked imaginary Mike. I had a sickening feeling that it had been that way for him. I wished with all my heart that it had been that way for him. I ran the rest of the way into the park to the playground area, our designated meeting spot.

A few feet ahead of me, I saw a man pacing. He had his back towards me so I did not see his face. It looked like Mike, but he was bigger and fuller. I was debating calling out, when all of sudden he turns and walks rapidly in my direction. It was him, but he had his eyes down casted and before I could say anything he bumps into me, knocking me over. Instantly, I closed my eyes. He gasps me around the waist to break his fall and we land on the ground with him on top of me. I could feel his stare throughout my body, his breath on my forehead. I wished we could stay like this forever.

I slowly opened my eyes and looked up. Our eyes met and at the corner of his mouth a smile started which ended up a full fledged laugh. I couldn't help but laugh with him. Mike got up and lowered his right hand towards me. I grabbed it and he pulls me up into a warm embrace. I can feel the coldness of his nose on my neck and then he kisses it.

"Now this is a proper welcome," Mike stated. And looking at him, it felt like old times again as if the past four years never happened. I have missed him dearly.

"Well, hello to you too," I responded

"After four years, you decided to come back?"

"Yeah well, my parents wanted to come back, so why wouldn't I?," I countered.

"Mind telling me why you've moved back?" he asked in a half mirthful way. But the look in his eyes was serious.

"I deserved that." I stated and then paused thinking over my next few words and then continued.

"I never told you why I left because I couldn't face the fact that I had to leave. And I'm sorry I never answered your calls. It was just easier to ignore them after awhile then to start explaining everything." I trailed off.

"I didn't want you to explain. I just wanted to talk." He said.



"Well, I couldn' t. Not then."

"I was your friend," he stated.

"I know." I responded.

We heard a loud thunder roar by us and we both turned around. A black Porsche Carrera GT drove by. And then it parked. I whispered quietly, "OH MY GO..SH! Don' t tell me that' s her driving that car."

"If it' s Sophie, I haven' t seen her in that car before."

"MEKA!" Sophie yelled as she bounded out of her car. She gave me a great big hug so tight I could barely breathe.

"Oh My Gosh haven' t seen you in such a long time." She gushed. "Gosh where have you been? Have you been seeing other people while you' ve been away?" asked Sophie. Leave it to Sophie to be diplomatic.

Pulling away from her, I desperately said, "Hey Sophie, first of all I ask the questions. Where the heck did you get that car?"

"Well, since I' ve been a good girl and all," she cleared her throat, "I started to work and got really good at things, discounts, and...okay long story short, my parents got it for me. You like?"

"I love it," I told her.

"Oh! And hi Mike." She said to Mike.

"Sup," said Mike nodding his head.

"Sorry I didn't say that before, I was too busy hugging your girlfriend here. Do you want a hug too, Mike?" She teased. Same old, fun loving Sophie, I thought. Some things just don't change.

"Nope, I'm good." He responded.

"You two looked pretty happy and sad at the same time. What seems to be the problem Meka? Mike?"

I replied "You are so dramatic. We were just catching up."

"Yeah it's been 4 years... We haven't had time to see each other...we haven't even met up." Mike murmured.

"Well, I'm back now and the three amigos are united." I stated.

"I know, and I'm glad you are back. Really glad!" said Sophie

"Me too," I said.

I thought Mike would agree, but he kept silent and then suddenly, we all fell back into our old ways of banter and before I knew it, the afternoon faded into evening and it was time to go home. Just like how it had been when we were kids. Sophie asked if we wanted a ride back, but Mike and I declined. We walked back and half way home, he hooked his right arm into my left arm and held my hand. We finished the walk in silence. "Could it be this easy?" I thought.

Later that evening as I was getting ready for bed, mom came in. She asked me how the day had gone. I told her it had gone better than expected. We said our nightly prayers then I went to bed.

"Meka," Mom said, "Are you awake, sweetheart?"

I slowly open my eyes. It is morning and the sun is shining. I look at her and smile.

"Good morning mom," I said. "I had that dream again."

"Of being back in Walnut Grove with Mike and Sophie," we both finished and laughed. It is one of my reoccurring dreams. The one I make myself dream, if I could. And I have been dreaming a lot of late.

"It's not going away, is it mom?," I ask.

"No, sweetie. It's not," she answers.

The cancer is too rare, too advanced the doctors said. They congratulated me on my courage and bravery. But I guess they need to say those words. It's better than telling me the end is near and for me not be afraid. For I am scared, and I am not brave. I need to hear those words. I drift off to sleep.

"Meka, do you remember that time, in eighth grade and I was a starter for our baseball team. You were so happy for me and you were my catcher every night. I threw hundreds of pitches to you maybe 1,000s. You caught them all. Then one night, I threw you a fast ball, but you changed the strike zone and I over threw it and it went crashing into Mrs. Olsen's

window. Boy was she mad at us. But she came, every game she came. So many memories Meka. I remember them all."

Slowly, awareness comes to me. I am not dreaming that voice belongs to a real person. I look around the room. Mike is sitting on my right and Sophie on my left. "Mike. Sophie." I ask, "What are you doing here?"

"I called them sweetie," Mom said, "Daddy and I decided that since your friends are so important to you, we should let them know."

"But mom," I start to complain.

"No, sweetie," Dad said, "I know you didn't want your friends to know, but we decide what's best for you. Mom and I are glad that family is important to you, but so are your friends."

"I hated you, you know, leaving without saying good-bye," Mike said. "You shouldn't have done it. I love you, you know."

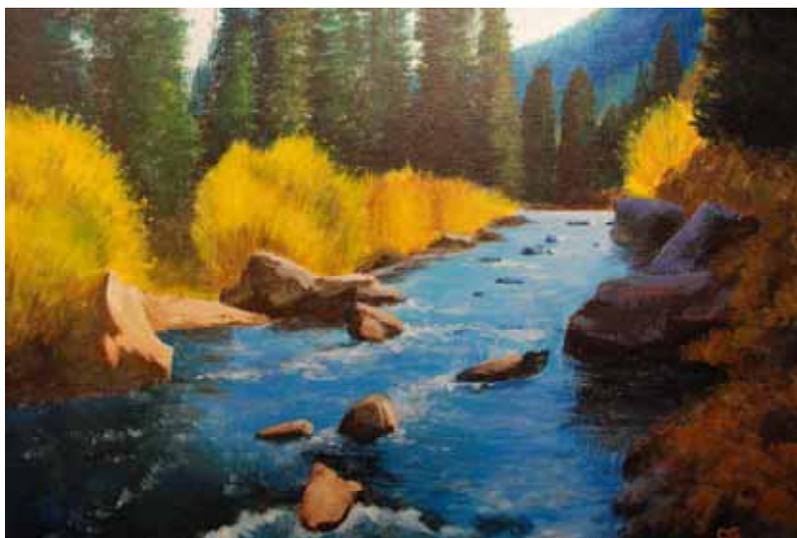
"I love you too," Sophie said. "And I am glad, you hear me, glad to be here by your side."

Mike leans down and brushes the tears from my cheeks and gives me a kiss in the crook of my neck. Sophie holds my hands ever so tightly and presses them against her cheek. Silent tears fall from her eyes. This is not what I wanted and yet, now that they are here, it is exactly what I needed. I am overjoyed and all of a sudden, I feel light and full of peace.

"Go on," I said, "Tell me more about what you remember."

Sophie responded, "Ha! Don't put me to the test missy. I have the longest memory. I never forget. Do you remember that time when we were four, yes, four and you took my Barbie for a bath in the Plum River? Boy was I mad at you. I wouldn't talk to you for days and you finally had to bribe me with your stash of gum."

Mike's voice drifts in and he tells me of our secret place. How when I left, he wrote a note and how that note has been there these past 4 years waiting for me. He reads me the note. I close my eyes. The sound of that voice. It is music, sweet, simple, and so pure. This is what I have been waiting for. I let out a breath and smile.



Pithy

By Connie Dong

William Curtis adjusted his thick glasses and straightened his tie before stepping outside his car to enter prison. No, he wasn't a criminal, only a writer about to become an author for an infamous mass murderer. This job could potentially bolster him to fame among the many writers in the world, which was exactly what he needed after his mental breakdown a year ago. His wife, Maria, had been killed in a hit and run accident with a drunk driver while they had been taking a leisurely walk through the streets. The driver didn't even stop and Maria had died in his arms. Naturally, this incident unhinged him as he witnessed a loved one dying in his arms, so he spent a few weeks in counseling with a psychologist. But he was ready to begin anew. He had moved to a new city, found a new job, and was about to have a huge career boost as long as he didn't let thoughts of his grief for Maria distract him.

William was a bit apprehensive, heading into the high security prison in Baltimore, Maryland. He had the privilege of writing a biography for Laban Edwards, a mass murderer who was on death row. Laban Edwards was a depraved man who had murdered at least thirty-one people, the police had only discovered the remains of thirty-one. He removed their eye balls, pickled them and stored them in his basement for perverse delight. No one knew why he would commit such an abhorrent crime against society and it was William's job to find out. Actually, Laban specifically requested William to write his biography before he died, which was slightly suspicious as William had only written small articles for the Baltimore Sun.

As William contemplated about why he, a zero in the writing world, would be given such a momentous task, he reached the end of the corridor where the hallway leading to Laban's cell was. William paused outside the double doors, took a deep breath, and adjusted his glasses, before pressing the buzzer to be allowed in. His glasses annoyed him. Ever since Maria's death, he had been seeing funny colors and shapes whenever he looked directly into other people's eyes. And the colors and shapes were always different, depending on the person he was looking at. The doctors told him that his funky vision was just a result of seeing Maria die in front of him and told him that the thick glasses would correct his vision in no time, though there was nothing actually wrong with his vision. The security guard watching the entrance to the hallway buzzed him inside, and glanced at his ID before pointing him in the direction of Laban's cell. William followed the security guard's directions and arrived at the room where Laban was being held, which was guarded by yet another security guard. William nodded to the security guard who allowed him to pass once he flashed him his ID and entered the room in which Laban was being kept. The room was small and plain, but not at all uncomfortable looking. It was quite an ordinary prison cell and it was occupied by quite an ordinary looking man lying on a prison cot. William's first impression was that Laban was not a particularly strange

looking man. For certain, he did not look like the type to be a mass murderer. Laban was around his late thirties with brown hair and piercing gray eyes. He was tall and thin, and when he glanced at William, his face broke out into a disarming smile. William was surprised at Laban's apparent normalness but quickly broke eye contact.

"Hello, you must be William Curtis," Laban stood up and greeted William as if he were welcoming him graciously into his home rather than an uncomfortable high-security cell.

"Yes, good to meet you," said William still avoiding those perceptive gray eyes, "Shall we get down to business?"

"Ah, concise and to the point," said Laban, "I like you. For your convenience, I already wrote a brief autobiography of my life." Laban handed William a small stack of notebook paper before settling back down on the prison cot.

William glanced through the papers briefly. Laban was born and raised by an abusive mother in Ohio. His father had abandoned him when he was young and both his mother and younger sister died in a gas explosion in their home while Laban was in college. He had gone to a small college in Illinois, majoring in Pre-medicine before going off to Johns Hopkins University to become a general surgeon. His background in surgery explained the precision used to remove his victims' eyes from their head. Laban was arrested after he gruesomely murdered another doctor named George Ross but it wasn't until after his arrest when detectives discovered the grotesque collection of nineteen sets of eyes that Laban kept in his basement. Psychologists who evaluated Laban ruled him as a typical sociopath with disregard for right and wrong and aggressive tendencies. But still, Laban was quite impressive.

"So, why did you do it?" William asked, settling into an uncomfortable metal chair and facing Laban.

Laban glanced at William before saying, "The psychologists will say that it was because I had a terrible childhood in which my mother abused me. But the truth is... I did it because I wanted to. In my point of view, I was doing society a favor.

"You see, the eyes are the windows to the soul, and ever since I was young, I discovered I could see into other's souls by looking into their eyes. It's quite fascinating. Beautiful souls have a myriad of colors and are heavenly to look through, just like beautiful scenery. But most people have normal souls which are like fields and fields of empty countryside. I first discovered my talent when I was young; my mother was the first person's soul I looked into and what a horrifying thing that was."

Laban paused to shudder, with a look of disgust on his face before continuing with his narrative. William noted his reaction and privately thought to himself that Laban was insane. It was impossible for a person to see another's soul, at least, according to conventional science.

There wasn't even any proof that souls existed. But still, the idea of seeing strange colors and shapes when looking directly into someone else's eyes plagued him. It couldn't be that was the phenomena he was experiencing after Maria's death, could it?

"My mother was a bad woman. She was a drunken drug dealer and she abused my younger sister and me. Her soul was much distorted; black, twisted, full of holes and emptiness. It was terrifying to glance into her eyes, but I just avoided her whenever I could until that cold day in December when I discovered she turned my sister into a crack addict in order to control her. My mother got my sister hooked onto a bunch of weird stuff, knowing that Alice, my sister, would eventually be so addicted to crack that she would do anything for it. Then she would use Alice as a messenger for fraud and drug schemes with the threat of withholding Alice's drugs if Alice didn't comply.

"Alice was the only thing that kept me from running away from home. Her soul was so pure and untainted. Looking into her eyes was like experiencing a peace of heaven on earth. It was euphoric, blissful, pure happiness. She was the only one I ever cared about in my life. I knew that if I ever ran away, Alice, six years younger than me, would be unprotected from my mother's drunken rages and profligate business. When I first left



for college, I was a bit apprehensive about leaving her alone but I thought she would be fine as I planned to visit her on weekends.

"Unfortunately, I failed to realize how busy I would be in college and didn't get a chance to visit until winter break. Alice looked terrible when I first saw her. She was emaciated, her hair lank, but most drastically, her eyes no longer reflected the purity she once had. Her soul was still beautiful but it was beginning to be tainted with my mother's dark colors. Her eyes had become opaque and dull, and it frightened me to see what my mother had done to her. I confronted my mother angrily and we got into an argument. Things escalated and she pulled out her shotgun and waved it around. It went off and hit Alice who was trying to calm us down. That was the last straw. Once Alice was dead, there was nothing tying me to my mother anymore so I strangled her.

William stopped scribbling notes on his paper and gasped. "So, you're saying that you murdered your mother?"

Laban looked at him coldly, "She was my mother in flesh only. The only thing she did was to give birth to me. After that, I had no connection with her. Besides, she destroyed the only person I ever truly cared about. The only reason I didn't kill her earlier was that she held all of the money in the family and Alice still needed her to survive because I couldn't provide for her myself.

"I knew that after I strangled my mother I knew I had to destroy any evidence that would link me to the scene. But I didn't want to destroy Alice, even if she was dead. So I took part of her with me. When I looked into her dead eyes, I realized that they still reflected her soul. Usually, people's souls are a moving mass of shifting colors and shapes; at least, when they are alive that's how they are. But once people die, the last thing reflected in their eyes is like a photograph of their soul's last moments in their eyes. I cut out my sister's eyes and kept them to remind me of her before blowing up the house to make it appear as if a gas explosion had occurred.

William dropped his pencil in shock.

Laban chuckled amusedly, "What? Does that disgust you? People all over the world often save locks of hair of their deceased loved ones. Saving the eyes of my dead sister is no different from that. Alice's eyes are a reminder of her to me.

"After I blew up the house, I returned to college and cleverly made a solid alibi for myself. After all, I didn't want to end up in prison for my mother's sins. Yes, I did murder my mother but it was justified; she killed Alice so I killed her. Lucky for me, the police didn't suspect that it was anything but a gas explosion.

"I suppose Alice's death was the trigger of my murderous spree. I was angry; angry at injustice in the world that Alice, a pure soul, had to die because of my depraved mother. I knew that there were other degenerates in the world like her and I wanted to rid the world

of their existence so that they would not hurt other innocents like Alice. I could have stopped after I killed my mother but, privately, I enjoyed taking justice into my own hands. I began my quest to hunt down and murder the savages in the world, one by one. You'll notice that all my targets have all sorts of moral corruptions in their records. They were prostitutes, drug dealers, abusers, drunken degenerates, etc. I was doing society a favor by getting rid of them all. And I did so beautifully. Most of them never suspected it was I that killed them. Some of them, I would stalk for months before "accidentally" slipping something in their food or drink. With drug dealers, it was especially easy since most of them were users. Accidental overdoses are very easy to fake.

"I remember my last target, George Ross. That bastard never knew it was coming. George and I went to medical school together but I knew he only became a doctor for the money. He simply oozed avarice. After graduating, I knew he set up his own clinic somewhere but I only happened upon him by accident four years later. We met at a convention for doctors and his soul was even darker than it had been in graduate school. I immediately knew that he was committing some sort of crime to make himself rich; George always did anything for money. I managed to convince him to give me a job at his clinic and for several months, I observed him. I discovered he would euthanize rich patients after they would incorporate him in their wills. The murder of innocents was unacceptable and I enjoyed killing George Ross. I managed to corner him one day after work in his office. I trapped him in an examining room and tied him down to one of the tables before disemboweling him. It was actually quite an interesting experience having someone alive and conscious while cutting open into them. Then after he was dead, I removed his eyeballs. I suppose it was overkill, murdering George in such a gruesome manner. I left too much evidence and got caught because of him. But I really detested that man's guts. I won't lie; I did enjoy dissecting him.

"I suppose that's a summation of my story up until now. The detectives collected the evidence and followed it to me, and then they caught me and put me here. I suppose I could tell you the details about how I killed all of my targets, but only if you specifically request the target. Any questions?" concluded Laban.

William was silent for a while before asking, "Why did you cut out all of your, ah, target's eyes? If they all had distorted souls, then why bother keeping them?"

Laban smirked, "Like all humans, I possess some arrogance. Isn't it obvious? I wanted to keep a memento of my accomplishments in life, and the eyes of a distorted soul drowning in fear are quite interesting specimens. Besides, the detectives haven't even found the rest of my collection."

William stared at the mass murderer. It was incredible that the man standing in front of him killed so many people. This man in front of him was very dangerous and his sense of justice was distorted, but at the same time, William could sympathize with him. William still knew

that it was wrong to take another person's life simply because they committed a wrong; after all, an eye for an eye makes the world go blind. But, the more he thought about it, the more he realized that Laban had some justification in wanting to rid the world of depraved persons. After all, if there were no drunken degenerates, Maria would still be alive. But something did not add up about the manner in which he killed George.

"If you knew that murdering George in such a manner would leave so much evidence, why did you not kill him discreetly like the rest of your targets? According to your case file, most of them died from drug overdose or poison."

Laban's face grew grave. "That's because I realized I enjoyed my job too much. I looked in the mirror and saw my own soul. And what I saw frightened me more than anything and I knew I had to end it all before it was too late. I meant for myself to be a tool of justice and justice is a merciless, emotionless end. But lately, I had begun deriving pleasure from killing my targets; that was dangerous, my job was not meant to be enjoyed. So I decided that George was to be my last target and that he would go to hell with some theatrics."

"One more question," said William. "Why, out of all the authors in the world, did you choose me to be your biographer?"

Laban smiled widely. "Now that is an interesting question. Who said that you were to be my biographer? I called you to my cell to meet you, to observe you, and more importantly to let you know my personal story. You, my good sir, are going to be my successor. I know you're like me because I've been observing you; you wear those thick glasses even though there is nothing wrong with your vision and you avoid eye contact with everyone. You probably received that gift after viewing something traumatizing, right? The doctors told you that the colors and shapes you see when you look into other people's eyes are delusions, easily corrected by glasses, but the truth is, you can see their souls."

"No, you're mad!" William stood up. "I won't be a pawn for you to use in your schemes. I won't follow the same path you took! I'm done with you." William turned and prepared to leave.

"If you don't listen to me, you'll never get revenge for her death," said Laban quietly.

"Her?" William froze.

"Maria. Your wife."

"How do you-?"

"I told you. I've been watching you. I was actually there and I know who killed her. Besides, I've looked into your eyes and I've seen your soul. You are a reflection of

what I once was," stated Laban calmly. "I am supposed to die by lethal injection within a few months, according to my lawyers. That gives me a limited time frame to train you, but you will come here, at least three times a week under the pretense of writing my biography to learn. Hell, I'm even going to pay you to make it look convincing. But for today, go home and think about what I've told you."

William took off his glasses and looked directly into Laban's gray eyes for the first time. They were gray, yes, but that was only the outer tint. Inside, they were swirling, morphing crescent shapes, like a kaleidoscope, with mostly blues and purples, which covered a deep red. It was a bit like standing next to a smoking volcano in a rainstorm. His soul was melancholy, a bit sad, but also it had an underlying passion. Laban's eyes were almost a reflection of what William saw in his own eyes when he looked in the mirror.

"I'll be here tomorrow," said William, who picked up his notes and walked out the door.

William knew that Laban could easily be lying about witnessing Maria's death. Looking into another's soul was just a reflection of his or her general character; it didn't reflect specific incidences of lying or whatsoever. But he couldn't miss out on the opportunity of vengeance on Maria's killer. He still remembered her death like it had happened yesterday. He could remember the crunch of Maria's bones shattering as the driver smashed into her, the roar of the engine as it continued speeding, and the feeling of Maria's weight in his arms as her lifeblood slowly dripped out of her. Maria, Maria, Maria. Maria, with her long brown hair and green eyes, the only woman who could laugh worries William's worries away or make him smile after a harrowing day at work, was gone. But now, William had a chance to ease his pain. And he would take it. William smiled and threw his glasses in a trash can; he would not need them anymore. He would use Laban and Laban would use him, but after Laban was gone, William had no intention of continuing Laban's work. After all, it was easy to stop after one, right?

Time Capsule

Caroline Qian

Raindrops fell onto the parched dirt, creating little clouds of dust upon impact. Soon, the water overwhelmed the soil and dusty swirls turned into mud. The sky continued to empty its heart out on the single small town, which was quiet except for the pattering of footsteps. Tristan jogged as fast as he dared on the drenched road; although it was pavement, he'd had plenty of experiences of slipping and falling because he hadn't been careful. He tried to sweep his dark hair from its place plastered on his forehead, but the rain kept pushing it back. He blinked droplets out of his eyes and continued his marathon.

Eventually, he stopped on the outskirts of town, by the woods. Retreating into the shelter of the trees, he dropped his soaked backpack onto the ground and began examining his surroundings. Tracing the faint mark etched into the trunk of an oak, he nodded, satisfied. This was the place. He knelt at the tree's roots and rolled his sleeves up.

The soil was wet enough for him to dig into it with his hands easily. Not caring that he was getting muddy, Tristan scooped up big clods of dirt at a time, casting each load aside before reaching again into the ever-growing hole in front of him. He worked steadily for a few minutes, uninterrupted except for the sound of rain in the background.

"Uh...Tristan? That's your name, right?"

He turned to see Mia, a girl from his class, staring back at him. Clad in a bright yellow raincoat and riding a faded green bike, she stood out against the dreary landscape. Clearing his throat, he managed to answer her question. "Yeah."

"What are you doing?" She wheeled her bike into the grove and leaned it against a tree. She pulled down her hood and brushed a few blonde strands from her face.

Tristan realized how odd he must look, hands and knees practically encased in dirt. He was pretty sure some of the mud was smeared on his face, too. Maybe it would cover the blush he felt rising to his cheeks. Embarrassed, he stuttered, "Ah, um...I'm...digging."

"Lemme rephrase my question," Mia smiled, amused. "What are you digging for?"

"Oh. Uh..." Tristan looked away, knowing that his objective would sound silly to anyone other than him. "Nothing. It's not important."

She puffed out her cheeks, pondering something. After a few moments, she nodded decisively and knelt down beside him. "Then you won't mind if I help?"

Tristan opened his mouth, but no sound came out. Yes, he did mind, but he couldn't seem to form a coherent sentence. After all, in explaining why he didn't want her help, he'd also have to say what he was digging for. So he just turned back to his hole and scraped up another handful of dirt. While he put the displaced soil to the side, Mia stuck her arms in and came up with another load. The two alternated like this for awhile until she could hold her

curiosity no longer. "Tristan, you are looking for something right? You're not just digging holes for fun?"

He shrugged. "It's deeper than I thought."

She peered into the opening they had made. "No kidding. I bet I could fit into that."

He grinned, unable to resist commenting, "Maybe. Jump in and find out. I probably won't start filling the hole in again afterward."

"Ha ha, very funny." She stuck her tongue out at him. "Just for that, I'm not leaving till you find whatever you're looking for."

Tristan just shrugged before bending down to retrieve yet another armful of soil. He was pleasantly surprised to find out that he didn't actually mind Mia's company—he was even starting to enjoy it.

"I'm looking for a box," he explained after a comfortable silence.

"I see." Her reply was muffled, as she was bending so far into the hole that her head was entirely underground. A few seconds later she came back up and deposited the dirt to the side with a loud exhale. "Is there anything in this box?"

"Of course," he retorted, extending his arm all the way into the hole and feeling around.

"Last time I checked, it should be showing up by now."

"When was the last time you checked?" She picked some dirt out of her fingernails absentmindedly.

"Uh...ten years ago." His face brightened as his fingers encountered a sharp wooden edge.

"Ha. Found it." He pulled his arm back up and peered down, spying the corner he'd encountered. "Hm. Buried it a little farther from the tree than I thought."

"I'm just surprised you remembered the right tree." Mia watched him start enlarging one



side of the hole so he could dig down again. She pushed up her sleeves, the raincoat crackling in protest, and grabbed another handful of dirt.

"I marked it." He gestured vaguely to the X carved into the trunk a little above their heads. "Well, my dad did. I was too short to reach up that high then." He paused, and then added as an afterthought, "We had a shovel, too."

"A shovel would've been helpful," Mia commented.

"Yeah, but I couldn't bring one to school," he pointed out. "The teachers might think I was going to smash someone in with it or something."

"True," she chuckled. The two continued working.

"Got it," Tristan exclaimed triumphantly a few minutes later, sitting up after clearing off a layer of soft soil to expose the top of a wooden box. "Just work around it and then we can lift it out."

"Yes sir," she gave him a mock salute. They began excavating more quickly, excited that the end was in sight.

Finally, Tristan was able to lift the box out of the hole. He rubbed some dirt off the top to expose a date scrawled in smudged sharpie: 11/11.

"That's today," Mia said.

"Yup." He smiled, standing to brush off his jeans as best as he could, the box safely tucked under his arm.

"Not gonna open it?" she sighed, getting up as well.

"Sorry." He looked at her apologetically.

"Eh, it's fine," she waved a hand nonchalantly. "I'll just hold onto the tiny, minuscule hope that maybe, one day, you'll tell me." She gave him a winning smile.

He laughed. "Yeah, maybe."

She changed the subject. "Are you gonna walk home in this weather?" She gestured at the rain, which was still falling steadily.

Tristan shrugged. "I guess so."

"Then you guessed wrong." Mia walked over to her bike and motioned to the small flat platform attached behind the seat and above the back wheel. "Hop on; I'll give you a ride."

He looked at her doubtfully. "Are you sure...?"

"I give my older brother rides all the time, and I guarantee he's heavier than you," she smirked. "With your backpack on. And that box too. So come on!" She pulled her bike onto the road and glanced expectantly at him over her shoulder.

Tristan relented. "Fine." He followed her and gingerly settled himself onto the platform, shouting over the rain, "But shouldn't your brother be the one giving you rides on the bike?"

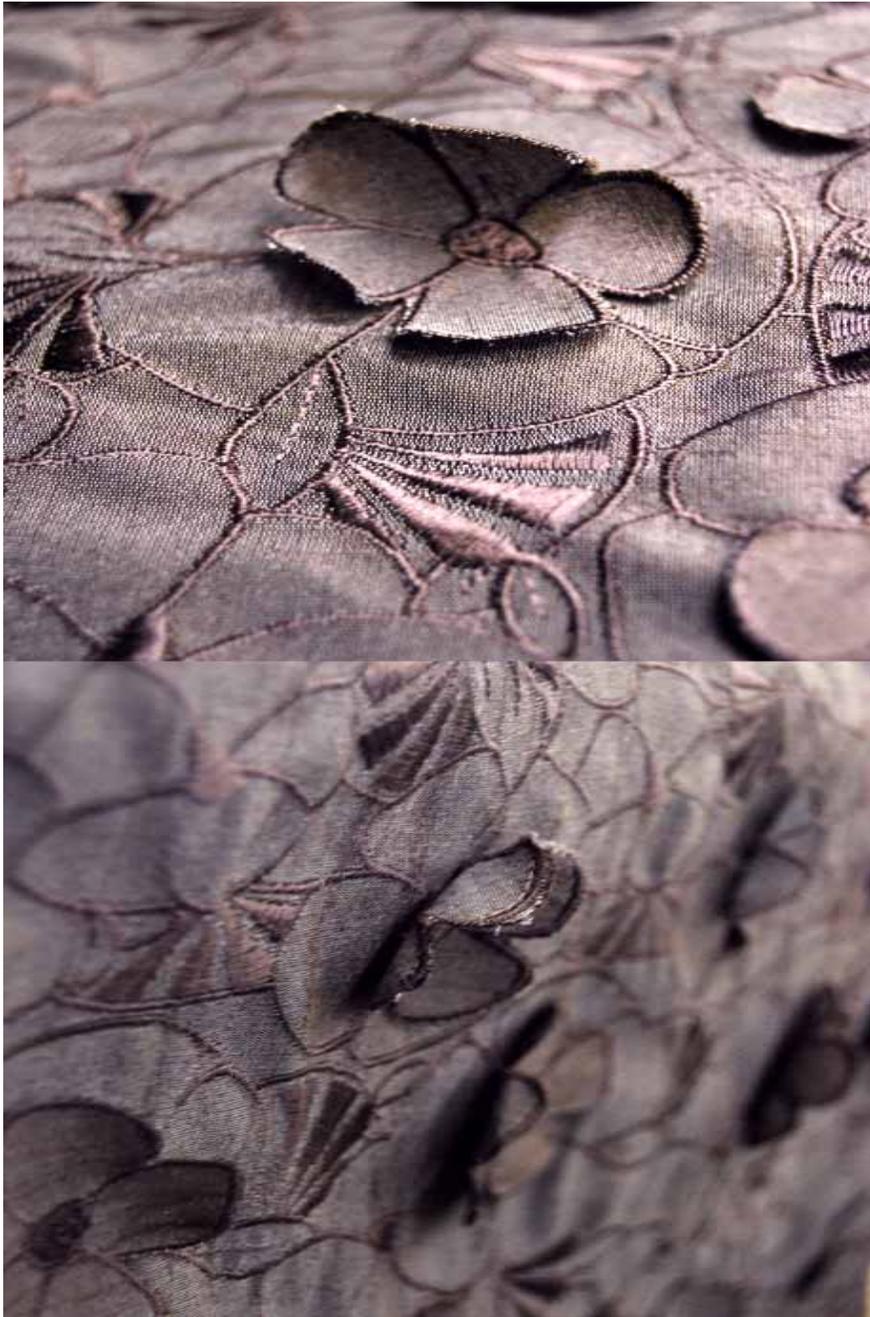
She laughed. "Yeah. Your point?"

He raised an eyebrow. "Just wondering."

"Alright then." She looked back at him. "Ready?"

"Sure." He let out a nervous chuckle.

"Okay, here we go!" Mia began pedaling slowly, and Tristan was surprised at how steady the bike was. She later increased her speed moderately, but not much since the road was so slippery. He held onto the edge of the platform with his free hand and relaxed, enjoying the ride despite all the rain pelting on his face.



With his directions, Mia soon stopped her bike in front of his driveway. He got off, turning to face her. "Uh...thanks. For the help. The ride."

"No problem." She laughed lightly. "See you tomorrow."

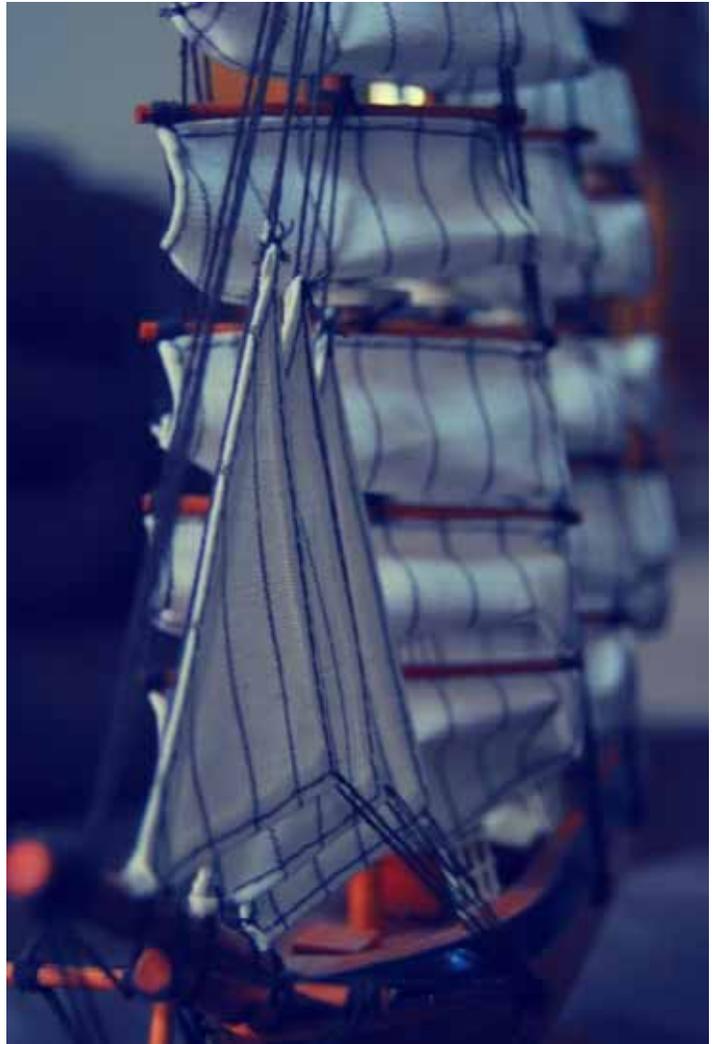
"Yeah. See you," he repeated, though she had already started pedaling away.

Tristan walked up to his front porch and sat on the steps, just out of reach of the rain. He rubbed his hands till they were reasonably dry, and then carefully opened his precious box. Inside was a single piece of paper, clumsily sealed by staples in a clear page protector. He read the message written in untidy, but familiar, handwriting.

Hi older Tristan,
I turned 6 today. i think you will be
16 when you read this, because $6+10$
is 16. That's what i learned in math.
Dad says that I should rite what I
wish I could do when I'm 16, but I
don't know what to rite, so I just
hope that something really awesome
will happen.

-Tristan

A smile slowly spread across his face as his eyes skimmed over the innocent words. Looking up to stare at the rain pounding on the ground, he thought of blonde hair and a crackling yellow rain-coat and an old green bike with a surprisingly comfortable platform behind the seat. A happy smile and dirt-covered fingernails and a bright laugh that overpowered the bleakness of the dark gray clouds. Yeah, he thought. Something really awesome happened today.





Profiles



Alec Spencer

Driven

Everyone in the APYC has their own story. Everyone has their own accomplishments. Everyone faces their own obstacles. After hearing about their experiences and their lives, and realizing how different my family and I are, it's amazing that, despite all the differences, we manage to come together in the APYC to work towards a common cause: getting Asian American youth to be proud of their heritage. Simply because we are all alike in being Asian American are we able to do this. That fact has made me re-think what it means to be Asian American.

I had always thought that I didn't preserve my culture much. With heritage itself, I am already only half Asian. Language is also an essential part of culture, but when my mother speaks in Chinese to me, I tend to respond in English. As for food, the only meal I have with my family is dinner, which tends to be American food over half the time.

After meeting the kids in the council, I realized it doesn't take much to preserve your culture; we vary greatly in how much we do so, but without a doubt, we all do. Some participate in traditional religious practices with their families, while other families don't do much more than celebrate cultural holidays. Some can speak the language of their culture, while others cannot. Yet even the smallest token towards a culture can be a lot, because it's not what you do, it's what it does for you. That is, it's not the actions of preservation that matter, but how they increase your sense of belonging to a culture.

With that realization, I believe that I do preserve my culture. I can speak the language, my family eats the food, celebrates the holidays, and visits Taiwan every other summer. I'd never noticed it before, but my house has many cultural decorations around it.

But as it has been said, it doesn't matter what I do, it's whether or not what I do makes me feel a part of the culture. So it must be asked, what about its effect on me?

There is no way I could be the same person without my culture.



Alvin Sulimon

My name is Alvin Jesse Sulimon. I was born in 1993 on October 25. I am the only male out of three children. I enjoy dance, breakdance and hip hop, and produce music as a hobby as well. I love to cook, not only for myself, but for others as well. I also, from time to time, draw random pictures when I'm bored. I am carefree person and try not to hate things or people. However, knowing that my work, or flow of how I did or will do things becomes taken over and altered is something I can not stand.

I am shy around new people, but once I start seeing others more, I begin lessening my tension and start being myself. Afterwards, people will see the real me, which is loud at times, playful and kind of childish. One thing about me is that I don't really know how to sincerely say sorry and when i try, it just feels awkward.

I am mostly an optimistic person. I would say that I live life for my friends, family, my goals, and my dreams. I dream to start an entertainment company by the name of Cloudy Skies Entertainment. The inspiration for the name stemmed from the lyrics from a song: "Reach for the stars, so if you fall, you land on a cloud," and the clouds, in my interpretation, are my friends and family, who support me.

I am also a daydreamer. My daydreaming affects me everyday and sometimes I need some type of event to knock me back into reality. My daydreams usually consist of my hopes, my company, and recent events that happened and how I would change what I did and what I thought I should've done.

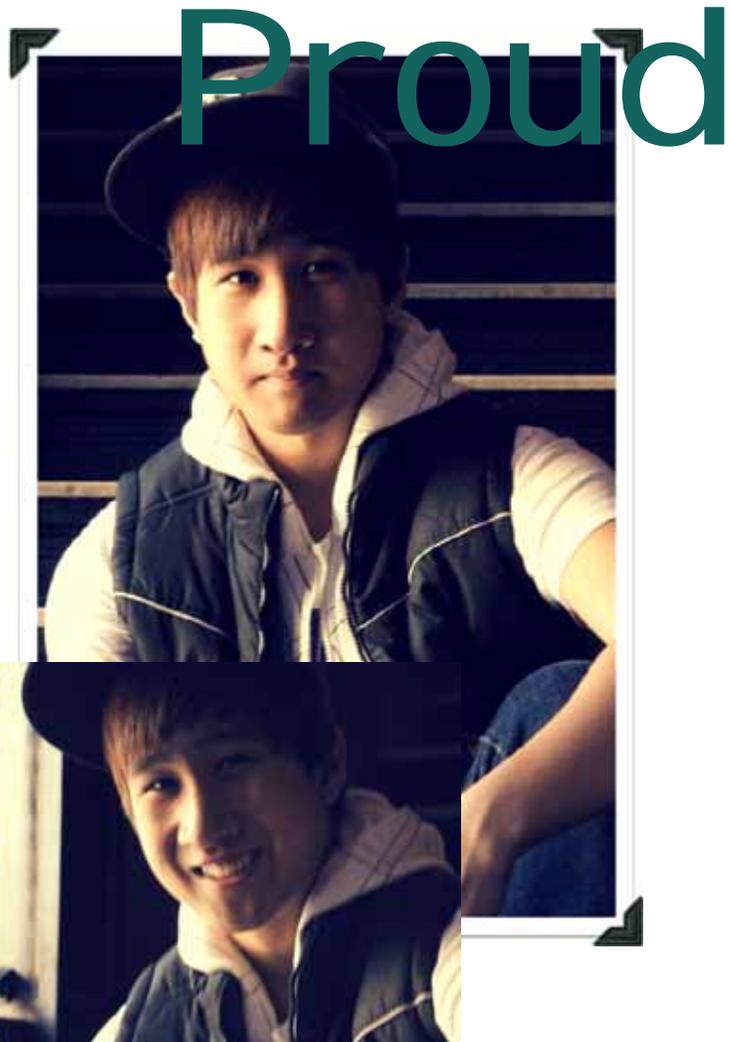
I am a person full of passion. I have passion when I'm doing something I love doing. For example, if I'm feeling a beat that I made and some other person close to me starts making fun of it, I'm not going to take it.

Same thing goes for while I'm dancing, I can take positive criticism and some negative, but if someone's making fun of it or dissing me, I also wont take it. Let's just say I'm not a forgetful person when it comes to this type of thing.

Dancing, for me, is one of the two ways I can express myself. I started out breakdancing in the summer of 2006 after my cousin got me into it. I didn't really take it seriously until my freshman year of high school, which was in 2008. When winter came, I started to try and branch out into different areas like hip hop, popping, and locking.

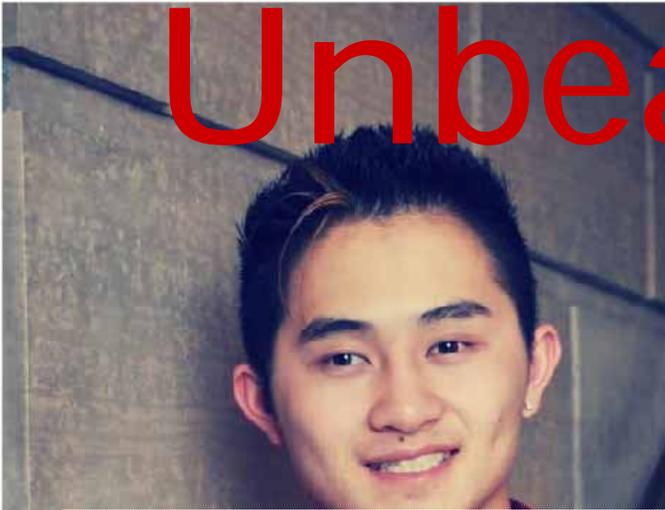
Music, is the second way I express myself. I started to have an interest in music production and audio engineering in 2008 after watching a couple of videos of artists in their studios. As of right now, I can only play the piano by memory, the trumpet and harmonica. I honestly trace my music creativity to when I was in band in 6th grade.

My hopes for the future are to own my own company, live in the cities, go to school for business and take an audio engineering course to expand my knowledge for music production. My ideal company system is a company where I don't just watch from afar as a CEO, but to participate in my company's activities as well.



Anthony Yang

Unbeatable



Taboo

My parents were born Yangs. Growing up being known as a taboo child has made my life complicated. "A taboo is a strong social prohibition relating to any area of human activity or social custom that is sacred and forbidden based on moral judgment and sometimes even religious beliefs," *Google*. The elders look at my parents and me as criminals. Everywhere I go, Hmong people look at me with disappointment because of what my parents have done. Within the Hmong culture, we are not allowed to marry someone else with the same last name. This is looked down upon because in our culture's history, those people who had the same last name all belonged within the same family clan; even though they may not be directly related to one another through blood. In the Hmong community, people gossip and everyone knows about one another's life. Eventually my parents couldn't take the pressure anymore and they decided to separate and leave me with my grandma.

My grandma, Lahard Moua Yang, is no doubt the closest loving mother I ever had but even she was embarrassed by me and my parents. Sometimes I would joke about my parents having the same last name and she would always tell me to shut up and never talk about it again. That's when I began to realize that she really loves me but at the same time, she'll never really love me. I lived with my grandma and her children for 16 years. They took care of me and taught me how to become a man and I will always love them, even if I may never show it. By my eighth grade year at Jackson Middle school, I began to embrace and accept my uniqueness. Life was great, not caring and listening to the elders. You can say I was somewhat a rebel; dying my hair, wearing baggy clothing, listening to rap music, and even piercing my ear. I was living life to its fullest. As puberty hit me, I realized it was time to grow up. In high school I began to mature and understand that to get around in life you have to follow the rules.

As I entered high school, I began to put my effort and focus into school work and I have learned a lot about the importance of an education. I will be attending Mankato State University in the fall. Being a senior in high school, I have noticed many people in this world trying to be someone or something they aren't. This is a stage that everyone goes through in order to fit in with the "crowd". Growing up, I have learned that being someone you're not gets you nowhere so I changed my looks and attitude. I have learned that strangers and friends enjoy your presence more when you are yourself. It helps people understand who you really are and it allows them to open up quicker. So my advice to you is, be yourself because you'll feel better and become more appreciative of the things around you. Don't try too hard to impress other people because you'll either hurt yourself or end up hurting your friends or loved ones.

Calvin Va Her Mysterious

Tee Ex Aye Double You Jay Vee Aye Em

"What does that mean, how do you say it", one says in a curious voice. I respond with, "I don't know, go ask someone who does". That was a lie, I know exactly how it is pronounced, I know exactly what it means and I know exactly why I was given that name.

Txawjvam: A Skilled Hoper.

Many would say that this quality is a good thing. However, hope is something that keeps me coming back to you, and wishing that we might have the same understanding of each other. Hope paves the way to my unrealistic ideal, leaving only unused and logical knowledge in my footsteps. I ignore all advice, hoping that maybe you'll change.

All I can do is simply hope. I hope, sometimes pray, that things would go back to how they used to be. We awkwardly talk in very brief, sparse sessions. You say that I'm weird now, that I've changed. However, the matter of fact is that, you've never known me when I wasn't in to you, when I wasn't infatuated with you, when I didn't think that you were everything. Even though, I still somewhat do. How is it for me, that Hope is a curse? When you are so cruel to me, why do I come back? Hope for the better you bring me back every time. I am able to bypass all the hurtful things you've put me through, because I always see the good side in you, no more, no less. I am a blind hoper. I try to be friends with you, but, it just doesn't work.

Someday, I hope I can gather the courage to tell you about all the things you've done to me and how you fooled me. But, because I'm a good person, and because I don't want to see you hurt, I'll keep it inside, for your sake. Am I too nice? I don't want to tell anyone about you, because I feel as though people would think less of you. That is not how I want you to be perceived. I want to shed the best possible light on you, and put you on a pedestal. Even though you wouldn't do the same for me, and I can only hope that you would.

I struggle to find the good side of hope. And suddenly: Hope: Something that keeps me constantly looking towards something better and keeps me going throughout the day. The words "Something better" rings through my ears. I don't need you.

Tee Ex Aye Double You Jay Vee Aye Em

My Hmong name says it all.



Caroline Qian

My English name is Caroline Qian. The reason why my parents chose "Caroline" is a simple one: Initially, they wanted to name me "Kelly," but they weren't entirely satisfied with it. Then one night, they were watching TV and came across a movie with a character named Lady Caroline. My parents decided that it was a nice name (especially my mom, who had never heard the name before and fell in love with it instantly). End of story.

My Chinese name is He Qianyu (何倩雨). The story behind my Chinese name is more complicated. "He" is my mother's maiden name. She and her sister carry their mom's last name as well, and my grandpa wanted their name to be passed down. Traditionally, a wife takes on the name of her husband. So my Chinese last name became "He," even though my English last name is "Qian," my dad's last name. The second character of my name, "Qian," (倩) means "Beautiful." This is a different character from my dad's name "Qian," (倩) but it's



spelled the same (though with a different tone). The last character of my name is "Yu," (雨) or "Rain." "Yu" (雨) is also my grandpa's last name, though it is a different character and a different tone than "Rain." So, my Chinese name means "Beautiful Rain," because I was born in Seattle (my younger sister was born in California, and so her Chinese name means "Sunshine after the Rain"), but in a sense I'm also carrying the responsibility of three names—He, Qian, and Yu.

I am proud of my name and my Chinese background and would never try to change it. I celebrate Chinese New Year with my family and I love eating moon cakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival. I frequently listen to Asian music, modern and traditional. I have rice every night for dinner (eaten with chopsticks, of course) and my favorite restaurant is probably a Chinese one called Tea House. I want to be able to speak fluent Chinese because I expect no less of myself—it's part of my heritage and my culture.

But at the same time, I'm American. I speak English and go to a high school in Minnesota. I learn Spanish and U.S. History, but Chamber Orchestra and Calculus are my favorite classes. I enjoy soccer, badminton, and karate, though I could just as easily be found with the latest novel by Cassandra Clare. After school I'm usually trying to find motivation to finish my physics homework, though I'd much rather be hanging out with friends or watching a movie. I also like playing the violin, writing, and watching the snowflakes fall outside my window. I love summer, hot chocolate, and reading for hours on end. I have two wonderful parents and an awesome little sister. I also have two goldfish and two parakeets (which are creatively named Green Bird and Yellow Bird). I have no idea what I want to do in the future besides going to college, but that's alright, because I'm in no hurry. I think the Chinese and American parts of me balance out pretty nicely, and I would have it no other way.

Eric Yang

Realistic

After All These Years

-Dedicated to my Grandma, my cousin Thierry and my nephew Kendrick
Rest in peace.

Verse 1:

It's been 4 years now since I've last seen ya,
And I still picture my life with ya,
Grandma I miss ya,
And even though you're gone now I try to,
Make the best from it all and succeed in life for ya,
So you can see me from above and be proud of me,
For what I do as an Emcee or just be happy for me,
As I try my best to spit the truth out lyrically,
You will and always will be my favorite Granny,
Because no matter how close I was or even how far,
You'd be there to give advice to me about it all,
And even if I stumble I know you'll make me stand tall,
Because out of the four seasons, I will never Fall,
And so know when I sit down to reminisce on the past,
On all of the memories we've had, good and bad,
I'm glad, You were such a big part of my life,
And with you gone now, life still just doesn't feel right;

Chorus: (X2)

I feel the tears after all of years,
Finally, coming down my eyes,
And after all those years,
I never said Good Bye,
So I gotta make this song cry,

Verse 2:

Yo what's up Thierry, man, What've you been up to bro,
Chillin'? Dang... It's been a while that's forsho,
It feels like yesterday, we were playing Yu-Gi-Oh,
But now a days, everyone's busy doing things and getting old,
And I miss beating you in Street Fighter ya know?
It's still funny how I always kicked yo butt though,

(Hehe)

Remember chillin' at the crib and watchin' TV shows?
It was you, me, my bro Steven and Guillaume,
Stayin' up late, Yo man, Those were the days;
And I'm still kickin' it with the fambam like always,
Everyone's been fine and you know I've been okay,



But we all still miss ya', That's all I've gotta say,
I still can't believe that your gone;
But in the end life goes on and we just move on,
So we've gotta stay strong and keep our head's high,
As much as I wipe my eyes, There's still that question...
WHY?

Chorus: (X2)

I feel the tears after all of years,
Finally; coming down my eyes,
And after all those years,
I never said Good Bye,
So I gotta make this song cry,

(Instrumental)

Chorus: (X4)

I feel the tears after all of years,
Finally, coming down my eyes,
And after all those years,
I never said Good Bye,
So I gotta make this song cry...

Gao Lee

Change



Perseverance

Recently, what I have always believed and known about myself have been turned on its head leaving me confounded, confused, and a little directionless. I have always known what I wanted; there were no separate pathways to take, but only one road. I am not sure why I became uncertain, maybe it is because I am becoming an adult finding my own voice and power. My head is like a bee hive filled with buzzing bees, and all I can see is black and yellow. I see people plan ahead. They are so confident of their future. It is ironic how I tell others to plan ahead when I do not do so myself. Planning ahead is terrifying. What if something unexpected happens? I struggle to make decisions about the important aspects of my life, and what I can see for myself in the future.

I always believed that family is important and that their love and support is unconditional. And yet, my sister and I have not talked in a year, I don't know why we stopped and unknowing the years will add up. I love and miss her companionship,

but I do not know how to bridge the divide or how to start making amends. Families are to support and champion yet, I find that when I need support for my most cherished of dreams -

going off to college - my family is a group of nay-sayers. They contribute to my uncertainty.

I am struggling to set my goals and hesitating about what to accomplish. My mind gets jumbled. I tell myself to "write it out, it shows how you feel," but sometimes I forget the process, my memory fades, and my thoughts wander elsewhere. Over the years I have lost my direction, something that had been important to me. I lock myself in an empty vibrantly violet room, with nothing but beanie babies surrounding me. I stare into the mirror discerned; I cannot recognize the reflection staring back. I close my eyes and try to recall the days of certainty and while I take deep breaths and emotions over power me. Tears fall from my eyes and stream down my face like rain. It is refreshing as it refreshes. I grieve for the old me, but now I must celebrate and claim the new me I am becoming.

I've had to rethink family. They are the start of me, but not the end of me. They influence my choices, but they are not my choice. And herein lies the problem and the source of my struggle. But understanding this point has clarified for me what I have to do. I have a voice and I will use it. I have faith in myself and I believe I can do anything. I have a starting point and I will continuously move forward from there to set little goals, make checklists, and strive to accomplish them. What I learned from my mistakes is to regard what I say, words are everything, and it matters. Watching every step I take, trying not to make a mess. As I think about my situation, there is a phrase by Walt Disney that is significant to me, "Around here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths." Keep moving forward, and I will.

Gary Saenvilay-Many

Random



“gangster”

Thinking about it now that was probably the reason why I was never accepted by the Asians. Time passed and around the corner came High School – a place to find out who you really are. You have the cliques – jocks, drama kids, band geeks, the Asians, preps, punks/Goth, etc. I was never really in a clique. I just couldn’t hang out with one group. I wasn’t comfortable with just one group of people. I hung out with EVERYBODY, even trying to accept the ones who talked behind my back.

Okay, enough about my school life. Let’s get to know me! Well, there isn’t really a lot to tell you so I’ll just use one word. And that word is RANDOM; Randomness, randomism, randomology, whatever you want to call it, I don’t really “act” random, I AM random. It’s who I am. Being Random is fun to express around my friends, but I must admit being random can get pretty annoying, so I learned how to control it at moments. But other than that I have lots of fun with my randomness. Randoms, gotta represent!

My name is Gary Saenvilay and I’m Lao American living in Minnesota. Being Asian can have its ups and downs but usually it’s the negative stereotypes that get to us. How many times have you been asked “Do you know karate?” or “Aren’t you good at math?!” I just want to smack some knowledge into them, but knowing the ignorant people that they probably are, they won’t get it. So most of the time, I ignore them and move on with my day.

Growing up I was always teased. I got called names, got beaten up, and even threatened. I never told my parents because I didn’t want them to worry about me or have one more worry about me. I guess you can say I didn’t really get along with my family. Since my parents divorced when I was little things have been rocky between us. Hard to believe that this all happened in elementary school but things got better in middle school; I wasn’t teased, I wasn’t getting beaten up, and never got threatened by the non-Asian kids. But I was never accepted by the Asians either. I always thought being Asian you’ll have a lot of things in common with each other but I had nothing in common with them. After being rejected by the Asians I really didn’t know where to go because, well, I’M ASIAN! So I had to move on and make friends with whoever was willing to be friends with me. This is how I got to know a lot more people of different races.

During this time I really just isolated myself from the Asians and hung out with a bunch of people who didn’t look like me –blonde hair, brown hair, green eyes, blue eyes. I’m pretty sure that most of the Asians at my school went through their phase. Not me, I was the odd one out.

Henry Vo

Content

The tip of a top is where I aim to be—that is my goal. My name is Henry Vo, and I am a senior at Champlin Park High school. There are many things that influence and shape me into the person I am today. I have had many hardships in my life; my family

and friends are always there for me, and therefore are the ones that shaped me the most. What I learned from my family is responsibility, respect, to be self-sufficient, independent, and learn how to love others and myself. My family has been there for me through the thick and thin, from birth until now. My sisters' helped me through academics, my siblings talked to me during hard times; mom and dad keep me in check so that I don't make the wrong choices. My friends have taught me to put myself out there, become outgoing and friendly, learn to stand up for myself, and know that I'm not in alone. Each and every one of them in some way, shape or form, have helped me move forward. When I want to stop, they always tell me to keep going, because there's no point in stopping. All my friends have looked out for me and helped me reach towards the top. They've helped me sense my goals in a clearer view, they've made me more determined to be successful.

I have changed drastically through all the years I have experienced. I can deal with my own problems now. I know that I can talk to anybody when I need to. I also grew because I've learned to not judge others because they might have a harder life than I would have though, so never think badly about someone if you don't know them. One thing that I want to say is think positive. When you have negative thoughts, it will hold you back. If you have bad memories or have done bad things in the past, look at them as part of being a learning process and grow from it. There's no need to mourn our whole lives, just keep your head up and never be blinded from reaching your goals.



Jasmine Nabhan

Outgoing



“Set your hopes up high and try your hardest.”
I've always lived by this motto and always plan to.

I've never been one to care about myself more than others. I strive to make others happy without realizing I might not be happy. If I could spend my life making the world a more joyous place, I would. Without having happiness, the world becomes a dull place. People away give happiness like it's a right and not a privilege. Happiness is the basis to life, in my opinion, and should definitely not be taken for granted.

To me, the greatest accomplishment is to be proud of who you are and where you come from. If you're not proud of yourself, what are you proud of? I believe that everyone came into the world for a reason and finding out that reason is part of the adventure. To get past the first stage in life's adventure you have to understand you are who you are for a reason and no one can take that reason away from you. You should never apologize for who you are, because without your personality you're just another number in the world.



I come from Madrid, Spain. My brother was born shortly after me in the same country. Where I come from family is everything. Moving around a lot causes hardships in trying to make friends, but luckily I've always had my family. As much as we fight, they're all I have and I would never trade them for anything. The greatest gift we have in this life is love and I get to experience that every day with my wonderful family. They are my support system and I am more than thankful.

Jasmine Nguyen

Dependable

Not much to say about myself. Jasmine Nguyen that is who I am. I've moved around, place to place, family to family, but now reside in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. I have a pretty curious and indecisive mind. I realize I'm a complex person easily moved by events and people around me. I am quick to anger and compassionate. To sum it up I'm really emotional and things just get to me. I can't focus for long, and I'm not Einstein, I'm in the middle.

I read, sing, and listen to music to calm and inspire me. When I have to cry, I always try to hold it in, or look to the side because I have few shoulders to cry on. But then I met the people in Asian Pacific Youth Council. Although I am not doing so well with the people in the group at the moment - I love them with all my heart. They gave me everything I've ever needed or wanted, and they've accepted every flaw of me. They complete me. They're so similar to me, as well also really different. They understand my curious mind and indecisiveness, and they help me choose when I can't. A smile is always on my face when they're around, and I also don't have to keep much in anymore because I trust them so much. Although, I say the wrong things at times they'll still forgive me for my mistakes. They didn't just become my friends but also my family. They accepted me for who I am, and gave me a shoulder to cry on. This should have been a biography about me and not them, but it's hard to exclude them because they made me who I am. They turned my world upside down, and right side up again. They gave me a heart. Thank you guys all for being here. You guys are my life.



Joe Yang

Truthful

The name is Joe Yang
I speak Hmong not ching chong chang
I like art and music but I can't sing
I like to be average not a king
I like to share whatever I own unless I dislike that person
But if that person is too low I can't stand and watch
Everyone got their own story and I got my version
While we climb to the top, we can make a few stops
Give a helping hand, walking this down like a marching band
Show what you stand for and be what you can
I take pride in being Hmong
And hopefully I'm not alone
I would say Asian
But they're dumb people who don't know what "stick to-
gether means"
Oh yeah I also like sports especially the ones with team
I like to help so if you ever need a lean
I'm right here and I'm not trying to pull a homo scene
I dress kind of average with them polo jeans
Well more to the old school style
I just like it better for some while
Or reason
Live in Minnesota with the 4 seasons
Born in California where everything's beaming
Lights camera action can you picture what I'm seeing?
But I never got to see that region
Because I was only 6
I don't remember much as a little kid
As for now it's the opposite
I don't ask for much but even if I did I would get those things
or such
I don't really care what happens to me I don't make a fuss
I live with what I got for real it's not that tough
As long as I got my family and friends that's enough.



Joua Her



Exotic

The clock ticks louder with each stroke, signaling the proximity of the last bell and our release. As I furiously attack the pages with my strong yet trembling hands (the pen as my weapon), I try to write down everything that my spit-spewing presenter has to say; giggles escape from those behind me in the thick jungle of wanton whimsical beings. Surrounded by the notion of evasive results with minimal effort, I try to keep my focus on crucial matters. It seems like everyone is looking for the “get rich fast” method: driven by their own laziness, spreading their superficial and artificial wings that only trained eyes could see. Disregarding the jargon spewing from their lips, I press on—the pen still in my hand.

The deadline is not far away, and I have already started to prepare for the battle. I hear through the grapevine: some have skipped out on honesty, integrity, and honor. It is meaningless to train and then quit as soon as the battle appears on the horizon. I am not of royalty, but a warrior, aided by my own effort and will. I rise from the rumbles of the abandoned.

My origin is from a faraway kingdom foreign to here, across the sea and over the rainbow, and my ancestors are those from a long, purposely forgotten, twisted fairytale. Day and night, driven by our wills alone, we secretly keep our oppressed and undiscovered society alive; oppressed because our birthrights and powers had been stripped away from us so that our history turns into an unsure allegory even to us. Because of

our oppressed culture, we cease to exist to the rest of the world. Those who think they know who we are mistake us for those who hunt for us—obsessed with their hatred and desire to annihilate us. Therefore we are undiscovered: unknown and left in the dark to fend for ourselves with our own diaspora clinging to our skin like a stench that is impossible to wash off.

With strong yet trembling hands, we preserve fragments of what defines us, whether it is true or not. With those trembling hands we stitch: etching what remains of our strained, repeatedly abused, and violated history onto a mere piece of cloth, telling our mournful epilogue, hoping for someone to notice us and our struggles.

So with strong yet trembling hands, I take in all that I can because my building blocks are limited. I am stimulated only from my will and what I make of myself in these few moments which will govern my obvious but unsure future. With my weapon, I attack the pages, hoping to catch all it is that my speaker has to say before the clock indicates the last bell, signaling our release.

Julie Xiong

Adventure

Summer's Worst Fear

I kept making wishes at the water foundation, hoping the wishes come true. I kept lying to myself that everything is okay. I kept looking for a way to break free into a sunny day, but the day is just sleeping in the darkness of a gloomy day. I looked like I had many friends, but in reality I had only few close friends. I looked I was smart, but I was stress over keeping up with homework, chores, and babysitting. In my mind I should be happy; but somehow my heart is in pain. I wasn't ready for all this to happen. I knew I had to grow up faster than any other teenager would. I saw life from different view. I had to be an adult, even if I didn't want to.

When I turned thirteen, there were so many rules to follow. You couldn't go out at night, do chores before and after doing homework, take care of my siblings, and learn how to cook. I began to learn new things one at a time. Everything changed from then; the friends I knew didn't want to hang out with me anymore. I felt like I was invisible and alone. It made me upset, and I ask myself all sorts of questions. But even while being lonely I made new friends. There were five of us, and we had share many things together. We dreamed of our future together in a big house, with all of us living in the high life of society. We all wanted to travel the world together, but one by one we each moved away. The dream we shared ended.

By 8th grade, my life was changed forever. My mom was diagnosed with cancer. I didn't want to hear from the doctors; I lied to myself that she was going to be okay. I couldn't focus in school. I prayed every night to have hope for my mom. When school ended, summer vacation came. I didn't enjoy it like others would; instead, I went to the hospital everyday to be with my mom. My mother was getting weaker by the day. She remembers telling me she had a dream of having a beautiful house with my whole family. My oldest sister sacrificed everything: she was pregnant at the time and she quit her job to watch my mother. The doctor gave me a book explaining how people are going die with cancer. First, they start to hallucinate the same situation again, and then they wouldn't eat at all, and lastly their final breath. My mother passed away in August that year. It was so hard I barely even talk to my little brothers who were five and four at the time, calling them to tell them that our mom had passed away. I couldn't believe it; I wanted to yell and scream saying "Mom, don't go!" I knew in my heart that mom was in real pain. I have to let her go to be free of the pain, so she can live in heaven in peace

I am a Hmong Asian American girl. I'm currently seventeen years old and I have twenty-five brothers and sisters who are step, half, and real blood are from different mom and dad. I like drawing, playing video games, and hanging out with my friends. I am planning on going to college and working hard at school. What I want to do the most is travel around the world. This is my story.



Justen Gowing



Delightful

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

I am a senior at Champlin Park High School. I plan to attend college when I graduate. I feel my life is passing by very fast, and I have little time to choose from the over abundance of choices regard what to do and where to go. So when I start looking for my major and minor degrees, I didn't know what or how to choose. I am thinking of going into the field of Electrical Engineering and/or Computer Programming, but these things are too finite for me. At the moment I don't want to stress myself too much because my parents tell me always to take things slow and they will be a lot easier for me. In the end I believe that I am willing to take up any challenge that is to come my way. Like my inspirational quote, I want to learn, I want to improve myself.



I am living a happy life. I am a carefree, fun-loving, and go-lucky guy. I take what comes my way. I was born in Minnesota on May 6, 1993. I grew up in a trailer park in Otsego, across the street from my cousin, Alvin Sulimon. Living there was great because of close neighbors and good friends. When I was seven a tornado came through and pretty much destroyed our neighborhood. Having to leave my house because it was not a pleasant thing for me, even now that I am older I'm still scared of tornadoes. Brooklyn Park has been my home for about 10 years now. But now as a growing teenager, I want to experience and explore more places.

My friends would say I am funny and mellow. I like to play volleyball and football, and I attached to my computer. On weekdays I usually go to Gold's Gym and work out with my close friend Simpson Fongthian. My friends call me a nerd because I play Pokémon very competitively, and I play Yu-Gi-Oh. I can't help myself from my inner child, I just love them. I also like to try new things, for instance recently I have learned how to techno dance and shuffle, and it's a lot of fun.

I believe the word that would best describe me is strong. The word strong is represented in many ways, physically and mentally. My outer appearance is structured and many people see me as a person of strength; strong can branch off into many categories as leadership, power, and determination. I am also mentally strong as my mind seeks the better me. I am always trying to better myself every day. It keeps me alive and able to keep an open mind.

I'm not that good in concluding myself in a short biography, in fact, I am a person who likes to leaves things open ended. I do this because it gives me options to change my mind and be flexible. I'm only 17, and I don't know what's going to happen in my life. The future is yet to be defined. So, I leave my conclusion open ended, as I still have more of my story to write.

Kady Moua

Wonderful

Happy-go-lucky. Sensitive. Strong. Complicated. Selfish. Beautiful. Awkward. Wonderful. Careless. Motivation. Loyal. Ignorant. Indecisive. Naive. Perseverance. Deceiving. Honesty. Undefined. Lost. I'm drowning in an ocean of words with no meaning; an unfilled dictionary page, awaiting my definitions. When I look into the mirror and meet my own dark brown eyes, reflected back is a shapeless void of a human form. I ask myself if this is what others see, and shouldn't they see so much more?

I am Kay. Welcome to my world.

In the deep jungles of Laos, after years of suffering and hardships an act of fate brought my parents together. They are both the children of the Vietnam war and had witnessed the consequences of war. I was born on March 25, in the year 1995. My parents named me Kaj Nrig (kah-deeh) meaning a better day. In English my name is spelled K-a-d-y and pronounced Kay-dee. For many years it never occurred to me that my name even had a meaning; it was just something people acknowledged me by. As the years went by, I have come to understand and realize the meaning and expectation of my name.



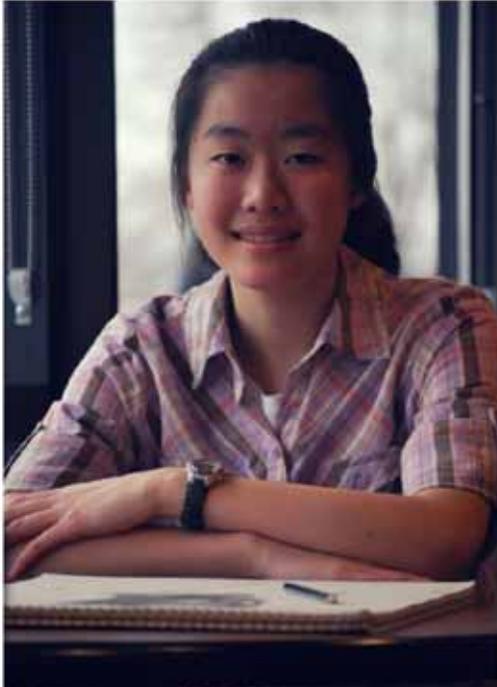
Life through my eyes was simple and spoiled. The truth is the work I do will never compare to what my parents had to go through in order to provide a life for my family. As a young couple my parents were forced to leave the land of their ancestors and start their lives over in a new country, a new land, with a new language. When they came they did not know how to drive, had no suitable job skills and no one they could turn to for help. They struggled and learned how to do everything on their own and ever since then they have worked hard to ensure that they provide for their children. I've realized that everyone in the world takes different paths and experiences all kinds of hardships in order to overcome sufferings while heading to the same destination: success and happiness for their children.

My parents' experiences has had a huge impact on my life and underscore for me the notion of personal responsibility--that no one is responsible for you--you've got to be responsible for yourself.

Kay is the end product of my parents' journey. My meaning is becoming more defined with each step I take. I will continue on my journey, with the motivation of my families' history. As long as I'm alive everything will always be oh-Kay, because being alive gives you chances to overcome obstacles and suffering. I am proud to own Kay, and I am Asian American. I will become my parent's better day.

Kaleen Tu

Happy



I always hear about people who have done extraordinary things for the benefit of humanity or about those who have accomplished a great deal during their lives. Reflecting back on my own life, there seems to be nothing that I have accomplished or done that is extraordinary. Not only that, but it appears that I have never been successful at anything at all. Failure seems to have been lurking in the shadows around me for the past sixteen-some years but have yet to pounce. This feeling has been a motivation for me to continue working towards performing better than just my best, to gain more knowledge of the amazing world I am lucky enough to live in.

Reflecting on my experiences I note that I have been the beneficiary of an accidental extraordinary accomplishment. Little it might seem in the grand scheme of things, it was a moment that illuminated for me the depth of my person-hood and potential.



Throughout elementary school, I was an average math student. The concepts were not that complicated at all, but utilizing them in the correct manner was a pain in the neck. Following my ceremonial graduation from Pilgrim Lane Elementary School, my parents decided that we would move to a different school district, as well as to a new home. I started the school year by taking a place-

ment test for math, which did not seem as hard as I had thought it would be. The next day, I was placed into the accelerated math class, but was requested by the advanced math teacher to visit her. She wanted me to take the test that the rest of the sixth graders took last year. The formidable, one hundred multiple-choice question test took me two days worth of math classes to finish. After the test was scored, the teacher contacted my parents to notify them that she would accept me into her math class, even though I received an eighty-three percent and only knew half of the sixth grade math curriculum.

All through sixth grade, I struggled immensely. Not only did I lack half the knowledge that the other students seem to know inside and out, I also felt like an outsider to the group. Surprisingly, I managed to receive an A in the class, albeit being constantly confused. As I progressed through middle school, the math classes became easier and easier to understand. Also, I learned a lot more from being confused from the start rather than knowing everything already. Like Benjamin Franklin once said, "I didn't fail the test, I found 100 ways to do it wrong".

Latifah Moss

Bubbly

Never in my life did I think when I grew up life would be so complicated. I was born on September 1st, 1995 to two loving parents. My mother was an immigrant from Indonesia who moved to Washington D.C to live with my uncle and take care of his 3 daughters while he and his wife worked for the Indonesian Embassy. I always joke about sending him a Hallmark card for bringing my mother here against her will to the U.S. My father is American born and bred and was a college graduate moved to D.C when he met my mother; fell in love; married; and moved to Minnesota after taking a job at Northwest Airlines as a software developer. We lived in Burnsville until I was about two and have resided in the same house since in Farmington. Almost a year after residing in Farmington, we had 2 new editions to our family, my brother Tony, and our new nanny Darcy.

My parents made sure we had the best childhood. Every birthday, every Christmas, every vacation, and every event was spectacular and always over the top. By the time I was enrolled in school I already knew four languages: English, Indonesian, Javanese, and sign language. I was shy in school, I had friends but I was never loud. As my elementary school years past, I became wiser and goal orientated. I had dreams of being anything from a singer to a vet to an astronaut. As I entered middle school, I also entered my awkward years. I was more into reading a book than going out with friends. Throughout middle school I was a somewhat content kid but I didn't feel my prettiest and that's when I felt as if my life was going to shatter. After the rough years, my high school life took a turn for the better.

As my high school life came into play, I felt as if I was approaching actual happiness. My freshman year was my beginning on

the grasp of reality. I was finally enjoying myself and felt I had found myself. But when I really found myself was the summer of 2010. After going on the Asian Pacific Youth Council retreat to Bay Lake, I realized that what I go through every day is my real life and the real world. I have learned to accept that you can't be the best at everything, you can't win over every single person, and you can't expect everything to always go your way. It's amazing to think that in a 5 day retreat I had learned all that. To this day, it still astounds me. The biggest thing I learned is that for people to see your true beauty, you have to be vulnerable, you have to put yourself out there and let others see you how you see yourself.



Maly Thao

Respectful

I go to school at Park Center Senior High School as a sophomore. I spent the first seven years of my childhood in St. Paul and then later on moved to Brooklyn Park with my family. I live with my mom, three sisters and three brothers. My mom's name is Xai, three brothers are Steven, Keo and Lue, and my three sister's are Lee, Mai Nhia and Faith. Mom is always working super hard to support all of her seven children. All my siblings love me dearly and we all take care of one another.

Life is a journey. Whichever path I take, I know that my friends and family will be there with me all the way. I grew up learning things the hard way, always making mistakes over and over again. No matter how hot the stove burned, I still kept at it. You know, sometimes what they say about the cat and curiosity really is true.

There are so many things in this world that one life time cannot cover it all. Time is the most precious thing that anyone could have. Every moment that passes, it's one moment that cannot be given back. Life will come at us at full speed and we won't even know what hit us. That is why living life like there is no tomorrow is very important. Love yourself, your family and your friends because in the end, they're all you've got.



I am Maly Thao and fifteen years old. I live in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota with my loving family. I would someday like to fulfill my dream as a choreographer and be able to build my own dance studio. I'd like to find true love in the future and travel the world with that person. I am still young, still trying to figure out who I really am, why I'm here and what's my purpose. Time is precious to me. I want to live life as if tomorrow would never come. Even though life is hard at times, I will keep my head up high and smile through it all because in the end, I am the true winner. "Life, they never said it would be easy, but they promised that it would be worth it."

Matthew Daranikone

Hot

Running - "To go without resistant."

- Webster Dictionary

Typically shoes could last up to 300-500 miles as explained on The Runners Guide, but there is no actual limit. Shoes are made for the protection of the human foot and to heighten our ability to sprint on two feet. There are many different kinds of shoes (footwear) and also different sizes. There are factors to what makes a shoe work and if one piece of the shoe doesn't work, you'll notice and know its not whole!

In Ancient Egypt, the footwear would represent what class you were in. You were considered poor if you had no shoes or wore rags and leaves. You were in middle class if you wore papyrus and you were considered high class if your shoes were pointed at the tip of the shoe.

There is a great importance of footwear in my life. I like my shoes sharp, durable, flexible, and comfortable. This is not only a shoe, but a hobby because I learn to admire the shoes.

To sum this story all up, people ask why I'm so picky with my shoes and why it takes me a long amount of time to pick one that is perfect just for me... those simple little shoes represents me. Just how we got souls, shoes got soles. That has always been a part of me and it forever will be. "I'm forever running with myself."

--daranikone



Ming-Ren Chew

Goofy



Influences

I have always believed that the way a person ends up in life, is not 100% nature or nurture. I have seen it as a mixture between both. I believe it is partly nature because there are some things that you cannot really control. For example: allergies, genes, where you are from. No matter how much you do not like it, they are part of you and immutable. However, I also believe that a bigger influence is the nurture side of that person. Things like: important or sentimental events, the people in your life, and the way you act or re-act in certain situations.

The biggest factor that has influenced me is the people that I have encountered. When I was in elementary school I was bullied and made fun of a lot. Everywhere I went in school there would be people laughing at me, calling me names, pushing me around. I had only a few people at school that I actually did trust not to make fun of me. So during my elementary school years, I started to put on a shield around myself and started to mistrust and not get too close to anyone because I was afraid of just getting hurt again.

When I left elementary school and went to middle school, I remember thinking to myself, "Alright, this is middle school now, you will still have to see some of the people who bullied you but there will also be many more kids from other schools and maybe they won't be as bad as the kids at your school." It was not better. In fact, it was probably worse. Many of the people who had bullied me in elementary school had friends or befriended many kids from other elementary schools and so I got picked on even more.

After middle school, I told myself the same thing as I did when I transitioned out of elementary to middle school. It was mostly the same experience as before during my freshman and half of my sophomore year. Bullies, picked on, made fun of. But half way through my sophomore year, I found a group of friends and suddenly, I was more immune to the bullying and felt accepted somewhere, finally.

During this time is when I started to express myself more openly. During my sophomore year, my math teacher really helped me get some more confidence. I will never forget him, Mr. Droegemueller. He was a very down-to-earth man, who told us stories of from life that had lots of meaning for me, in which, helped strengthen my ethics and morals.

Apart from the people in school that shaped me, my older brother was one of my best friends for the longest time. He was always there for me. He was there when I had had a particularly rough day at school, he was there when our parents were yelling at me for something stupid I did. He gave me strength when I was weak.

Today, I no longer attend my old school. I am now a junior in high school and live in a dorm. I do not see my old enemies, and rarely see my old friends. I have not seen or spoken to Mr. Droegemueller in a long time, but I will drop by my old school soon to visit him. My brother is now a senior in college and will be moving away after he is done with this year. I only see my parent's on the weekends and my brother on holidays. Although I am far away from friends and family, I have no regrets because I have made new friends. . My early years and the people I have encountered have taught me the skills to survive. More than half my life has been full of being bullied and sad days, but I have turned things around, and overall, I think I turned out pretty good.

Ondre Yang

Peace

My parents got divorced when I was four years old. I was young so I don't remember much about the situation. My only memory was arriving in California in a new home with a new dad. The first week I made a friend, an African American and part Irish boy named Aaron. From that point on we became the best of friends. My sister Aly, who is only a year younger than me, was the best sister I could ever ask for. We were inseparable and always together. She and Aaron were the closet people I had and still are to this day. Aaron and I were next door neighbors and did everything together.

As time went by my step-dad and mom got divorced. We moved to new home far from my best friend. We still kept in contact and hung out from time to time. Some things we did caused trouble. He would graffiti and I was the lookout waiting to raise the alarm. We once put graffiti on an entire school and the incident was reported in the newspaper. On another occasion, we were apprehended and had to do community service. We were never really grounded by our parents. Because no one stopped us, we continued to go out and cause more trouble.

During my time in California I never built a relationship with any other Asian

Americans. I didn't have the chance to because there weren't many around. Kids at school would pick fights with me because of the color of my skin. I would fight back trying to defend my race. But all the while in the back of my mind, I was asking my self who are these Asian kids that I have to keep taking all this for?

When I was fourteen, my mom sent me to Toledo, Ohio, because of my trouble making ways. I stayed there with my mom's parents. I was a minority at school. There was only one other Asian kid beside myself amongst African Americans and Caucasian students. Again I was picked on and had plenty of fights for being Asian. Then stereotypes came to my advantage, they were convinced I knew karate so no one messed with me after the first few brawls.

I was there for a few months before moving to Minnesota to be reunited with my long-lost biological father and his family. Ten years of no contact with my father, but yet I was willing to take a chance and start anew. I've been living in Minnesota for three years, but I have yet to build close connections or relationships with my family here. I've been keeping them at bay. I've been using bad habits to get away from the stress and pain. Stress from school and home and pain due to missing my sister and Aaron. This past winter break I returned to California to visit Aaron and Aly. Aaron arrived the day my plane landed and we picked up as if time had not past. I spent a lot of time with Aly and played the big brother. As our time came to a close I realized that in the time I was away, I had changed and became stronger - someone with substance and who was worthy of the big brother role.

I returned to Minnesota with a lighter heart and appreciation of the journey I've made and the new life I've built for myself here. I have a family and I've become very close to my friends in the Asian Pacific Youth Council. I now know a little bit more about myself and instead of having the urge to destroy, I seek to create with my guitar melodies that will unite and heal.



Partha Naidu

Friendly



Who We Are

Hearing the words “college essays”, most teenagers experience a sinking feeling. College ask you a wide range of questions delving into the lives of the applicants in search of something to set them apart from the rest. A favorite question of mine is, “What is your greatest achievement?” This seemingly straightforward question is actually the most difficult of them all. Is my achievement worth writing about? I spent the first couple years of my high school career trying to accomplish something that was worth writing about. Ironically, my greatest achievement surprised me in a way that I can never forget.

During the summer before my Sophomore year of high school, I heard about this camp for Asians and immediately thought of the stereotypical nerdy, smart, unathletic camps you see on TV. However, my best friend begged and pleaded me to go and I agreed. It was a three day, two night experience that really changed my perspective on people. The Asian American Youth Leadership Retreat it was called, was a test program that gave encouragement to Asian

youth to defy stereotypes, break down social constraints, and to develop powerful leadership and speaking skills. We had workshops ranging from team building, writing, storytelling, and even rock climbing. Most of the kids there were from the cities and didn’t have the same opportunities or extravagances I grew up with. My perspective of other youth my age changed completely. I learned about the pain that some of the kids went through and my mind was blown away by the courage they had.

After the retreat, Illean, our supervisor, asked if anyone was interested in starting an Asian American Youth Council. The group’s goal was to break down stereotypes and create a place that was safe for Asian youth in our area. I and several others joined and the group was born. During our first year, we completed a poster project, and launched our group to the public. During the launch, we did poetry, movies, dances, and just about everything else. We wanted to demonstrate the talent that Asian youth had to the public. Our biggest responsibility was to plan a second retreat for the summer of 2010. The group decided that making the retreat longer was a necessity. Three days was not enough to completely absorb all that we could offer. We changed the duration to five days and filled the time with workshops, Dj’s, poets, and other accomplished Asians.

The retreat was a huge success to say the least. Groups of people from several schools showed and the turnout was great. Of course, as teenagers are, cliques immediately formed and it was the responsibility of the Youth Council to break down the barriers and allow people to be comfortable with everyone. The last night of the retreat, it finally happened. We created a place of confidence in which people could share their stories. Person by person, everyone had a painful story they shared. From Rape, to divorce, to abuse, to fear, to happiness, to sorrow, to grief, and the list continued. There was not a dry eye in the room. Even I shared a personal story of my own. After I had done so, I looked around the room and felt the support each person gave me. I remember taking a step back and smiling. I realized that we had done what we set out to do. We created an atmosphere that allowed stories to be told. We created a group that broke down barriers and stopped discrimination. We created a Council of teenagers who had the courage to stand up and the strength to give courage to others. We created this book which holds our literary thoughts and ideas. We created a movement that defies all social barriers that stop us from growing. We created the Asian American Youth Council, and we have yet to achieve our full potential.

Rathminee Hach

Optimistic



I'm the daughter of two people who survived a genocide in Southeast Asia in 1975. Through those four years of hell, my parents witnessed and experienced things that no person should ever have to go through. Young or old, big or small. As they emigrated to the United States, they brought with them hope for a new and better life. But they also carried with them dark personal burdens.

Being the daughter of immigrants is rough because my parents cling on to their personal and cultural beliefs and try to impose them on me. They want me to be the perfect Cambodian and Chinese girl as compared to all the girls in the community. It is hard for them to let go of the past and of what has always worked for the ancestors. Having been through poverty, war, and destruction, my parents only want for me to see good things. They can't help but raise me with a strict belief that the key to success is through academics and money. They care more about my social appearance and how I look and am viewed by society than my feelings and true selves sometimes. Then I realize that the life that they want for me is base on THEIR ideals, not MINE.

I want to be able to lead my life the way I want to lead it, but with the cultural boundaries that lay in front of me

it's hard not rebel like any other "American" teenager. I am first generation Asian American. America is known for it cultural diversity; where ever you look, you can see many different ethnicities. Being a minority in America is an balancing

act. It's hard living a life where you are culturally split between two countries and cultures: your native country from which your parents are derived from, and the country and culture in which you grow up and are immersed in. Who and what are you supposed to be and pick? It constantly changes based on who you are with. Can't I just be ME?

You know that poem by Robert Frost? Yeah, the one with two roads, and the challenge is to choose the from the one less traveled or to go the flow? Well, what if you don't want to take the two roads in front of you. What happened to a third option? What happened to the option of making a whole new road, created by YOU?

I want to make that third path. A path that no one's ever taken and no one has ever thought of or even attempted. I want to be innovative, creative, and inspirational. I want to be able to define myself as a person that blends and utilizes the best of both cultures and every influences in my life. I want to be me, I want to be Rathminee Hach. And the world will follow.

Samuel Herold

Smiley



Annyeonghasaeyo ~~ My name is Samuel Herold. My Korean name is Myung Keon Ho. I am a South Korean adoptee living here in Minnesota and I am very proud of being Korean. People can stereotype or judge the way they want about me having white parents and not practicing traditional Korean culture, but I can very well say that I make my best

effort to stay aware and true to my ethnicity. When I talk about myself I usually point out that I am Korean because I believe it is a very unique nationality to be and I am not afraid to tell people what I know about Korean culture and history but also the experience of being adopted.

The reason I talk about these features the most instead maybe my hobbies or characteristics is because these are exactly the thing I believe is what makes me who I am and also showing what I am interested in the most.

People will always judge me when I first tell them that I am adopted. One they are surprised and second I understand that everyone gets curious once in a while. And I get the questions from two sides – the Asian and the “Americans”. So I can say I have built up a patience for those who ask the questions such as “What do you eat?” and make dumb-ass remarks like “You’ll never be full Asian.” But it is what it is and all I can do is accept it. I won’t always talk back to the ridiculous comments made to me. It just makes me want to actually give out knowledge about Korean adoptees to others and tell them what it’s like so the stereotypes can be put to rest. Just because I never learned how to speak my native language in the first place doesn’t mean I’m totally clueless. I would also hate to see younger Korean adopted children discriminated and made fun of by others. So that is why I actually joined one of the many Korean Culture Camps in the Midwest. I help volunteer as a teen helper to assist Korean teachers from Korea to teach the kids about the Korean culture early. I will continue to do so and will be open to talk about the experiences of being Korean adopted.

I have been learning the Korean language for about 1 and a half years now and I it is pretty great. I have the best people in the world to help me out and I hope to make more connections in college. I hope to advance my Korean and go stay in Korea for a bit and most likely find a job over there. Being Korean is what I’m all about and I will never run away from it and always have love for my Korean people and nation.

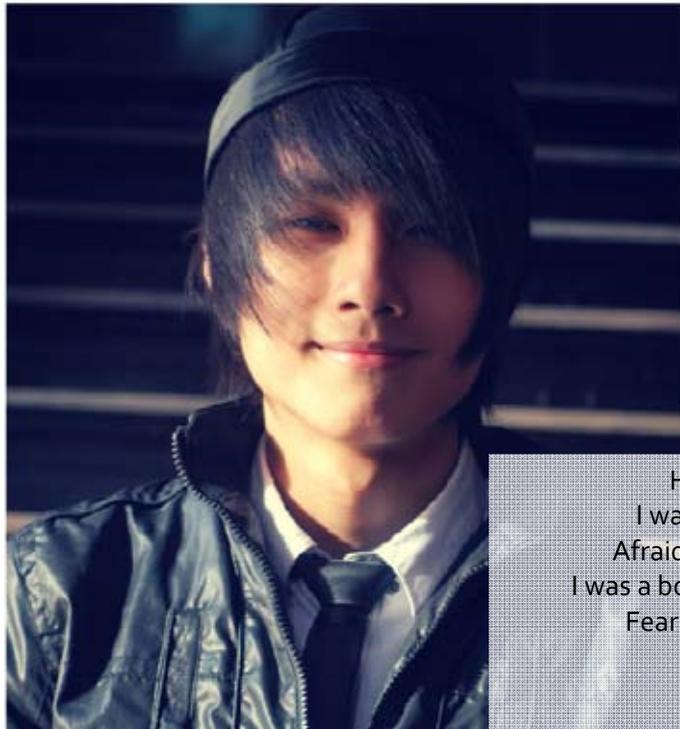
Sheng Vang

Loyal

The name that parents give to identify their offspring and to connecting it to the world; I can't really say just my name identifies who I am. You can call me Sheng Vang. Not Chang Hang or Shingaleng with an "I", just because I'm Asian. (Hmong to be exact). I'm 16 years old and I attend Tartan High School. As a Hmong American I go through the same things any teenager would have to deal with. One of the things I deal with in life is the way I look and act compared to my age; the way I look, the way I talk or just the way I carry myself. Everywhere I go people think I'm older than I really am. It's always been a problem I've had to deal with for the past 3 years. The day I started to own up to my mistakes. The day I started to think for myself and the time where I was starting to find out who I really am. I'm still growing and learning as the years go by and I love that. I love to learn from my mistakes because that only makes me a stronger and better person. After the 3 years have passed, I've come to a conclusion that I must love and accept myself. It was hard for me to balance out the truth and what people saw. People would think I was at least the minimum of 18 years old. I always felt embarrassed of my age. I felt as if I had to lie that I was older so strangers wouldn't look down upon me. But I've found to realize that I don't need to lie to strangers or myself. All I really had to do was to accept myself. Whether people believed me or not, at least I knew I stated the truth. I can't help the way I think and talk. It's just who I am. It's like a name can't just define one. An age number can't define who I am. It's what's inside a person that counts. Not completely saying I'm better than those of my age because honestly, I'm still a kid. Like I said, I'm still growing. It comes with the saying: "No matter how old I am, I'm still a kid at heart", but vice versa. I feel as if one can never stop knowing or defining oneself. Because as you grow and experience new things in life, it will just add on to your perspectives. Now I'm proud to say, "I'm 16 years old and still growing!"



Shoryeah Yang



Yah

Hello. My name is Shoreyeah Yang
I was a boy, who once stood in the crowd
Afraid of my own voice to be heard by others
I was a boy, who never tried to accomplish anything
Fearing my own imperfections and failures

Nice to meet you,
My eyes aren't lines on my face
My skin is not the color of a bloomed dandelion
My English does not sound funny
When I raise my arms up, I'm not performing kung fu

I am someone
Someone who is like you
Someone who is constantly being torched by life
Someone who has been broken to the size of a grain
Someone who has cried so many times
Someone who knows the sting of a tear

Shoryeah Yang,
I love to see the sight of friends and family laughing at peace
I speak a language most people don't understand,
but dancers should
I'm an average teenager, foolish and ambitious
about many things
Give me a writing utensil, and I'll turn it into a paintbrush
Twisting and twirling I'll turn the ordinary into the interesting
I get my strength not from muscles, but through love from
friends and family

Hello I am Asian American.

Nicholas MacDonald

Grateful

Nicholas Wibi MacDonald

Some call me Nick, some call me Wibi, some even call me Nicholas Wibisono Mardjono MacDonald, but eh that's not too common. Those who know me well call me Wibi, which is Javanese, an Indonesian dialect, meaning wise man. Not a sarcastic wise like you may think, but a wise beyond my years kind of wise. It was my mom's idea, don't criticize.



For the record, my cultural background is half Indonesian and half Caucasian. Yes, a Caucasian Asian, and loving it. Sometimes I get called names because I'm a diverse guy, but I've learned to deal. .

Jakarta, a city 12,000 miles from Minneapolis or halfway around the world, but a place I call my home. The city is located in the country of Indonesia, a place where in my mind made me the man I am today. Well maybe "man" isn't the right word but you get the picture.

It was only three years in that country but it was enough to influence my life in the way I act and live. It has been the most significant part of my life so far and I hope to have it stay that way. The most important thing that you should know is that my family means more than anything. Especially Indonesia, it plays such a big role. There everyone respects one another, and the sense of community is strong. The country is poor, but what the people lack in material comfort they make up through love of family and community. Having been there, I so appreciate my life in Minnesota and try not to take the little things for granted.

I don't see myself living the way I do without the influence of my family and Indonesian culture. Even though I live in the US my life still revolves around it.

Next to family and friends in my life probably comes basketball. I know what you're thinking, an Asian White basketball player, weird. In my family (my dad's side) basketball is life. Basketball is everything. I learned that confidence is key, and you don't succeed without confidence. It will hopefully pay for some of my college tuition and open up possibilities for the rest of my life. I don't want to be cocky, but I'm good. I live and die for this sport

That's pretty much who Wibi is, nothing special. But yet everything that occurs in my life is special to me.