



AMALGM

# AMALGM

## NEWSLETTER

\$3.00

September/October 88

Alliance of Massachusetts Asian Lesbians and Gay Men

### Interview with Connie: On Choosing Children

By Sharon Lim-Hing

*I interviewed Connie at her home on 24 September, 1988. As Connie spoke, her partner Barbara watched over Lee and Malia while they played, cried, and ate rice crackers.*

*Can you give me a general description of yourself?*

I grew up in Hawaii. I consider my culture to be Chinese-Hawaiian. My family is from mainland China, and I was born in Hong Kong. So I have a very strong sense of an Asian identity and an Asian-American identity. I'm 34 now, and I work as an assistant professor teaching psychology at a large urban university; my training is in clinical psychology. I have two children. The oldest is a boy, and he's going to be two next month, and the baby's fifteen months old, so she's getting old, too—not such a baby. My lover (or partner) is from Minnesota, and she's white. She's 34 as well. And she teaches accounting at a junior college. We've been in the Boston area about ten years now.

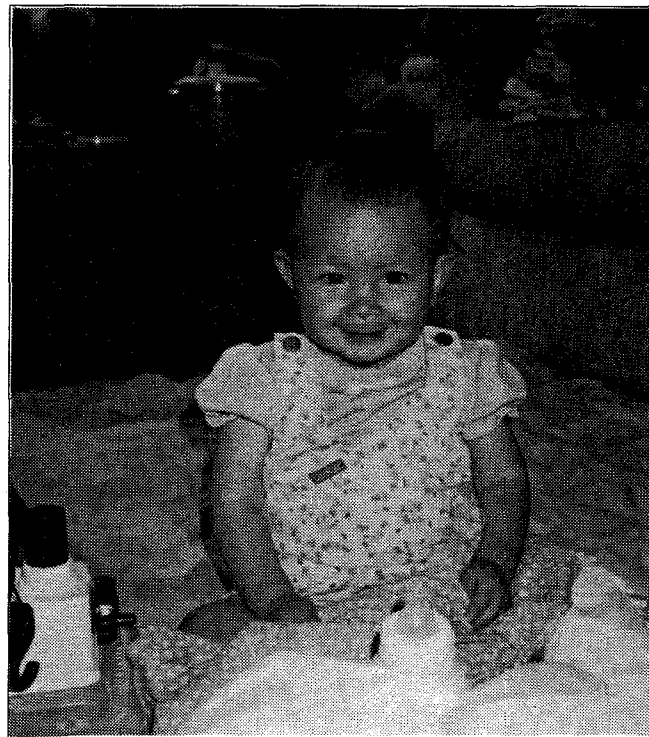
*Why did you decide to have children?*

We both always knew we would have children independently. So when we met, that was one of the criteria for our going out together, whether we were

going to have children. If she wasn't going to have children it would have been interesting to go out with her, but I would not have gotten involved in a serious relationship. On our first date, we each asked each other if we wanted to have children.

No, actually it was the opposite for me, from my family. They had strong pressure for me not to have a child out of wedlock, that unless I was married they didn't want me to have children. . .

*. . . to a man?*



Malia

(photo: Connie)

*Chinese men in particular and Asian men in general feel pressure to be pro-creative. Did you feel that pressure as an Asian woman?*

(Laughs) Right. Unless I was married to a man they didn't want me to have children. Not only that. They were real upset when I talked about having children without being married to a man.

*Continued on page 4*

# EDITORIAL

At a recent well-attended *AMALGM* organizational meeting there was concern raised that the *AMALGM Newsletter* may be projecting an image of the organization inconsistent with the leanings of the majority of its members. Strongly worded articles and tough, uncompromising opinions contained in these pages give the impression of a radical, controversy-seeking journal out to shake up and offend those of a more sedate and reticent stripe.

Contrary to this popular notion though the Newsletter has consistently strived to remain an open forum for all variety of views and expression by gay Asian men and Asian lesbians. In our history of about a year and a half now since our first "revived" issue in February 1987 we have never rejected a single article or letter submitted for publication. We have printed articles analyzing racism, letters taking issue with these analyses, papers on history as well as gossip reminiscences, stories of growing up and coming out and even recipes. To encourage a variety of voices we have gone out to interview people. We have heard from a famous gay writer as well as an unpublished gay teen, lesbian activists from California as well as a Vietnamese man experimenting with drag, a Filipina mother whose son is gay and a black man and a Chinese man who are lovers. As *AMALGM's* official publication we are obliged to report on the events sponsored by the organization. These have included marches and speeches but we also cover the dinner parties, the ethnic get-togethers, the quiet cultural soirees.

The newly re-organized Newsletter Committee in our meeting on September 6 has reaffirmed our commitment to an open forum for diverse gay and lesbian Asian expression. We realize that often the controversial and strident leave an impression inadvertently setting the tone of our publication. To offset this effect we will make it a point to emphasize in no uncertain terms that the opinions printed in the Newsletter are not to be taken as the official positions of either *AMALGM* or the Newsletter Committee. We do see the role of the Newsletter as a tool to encourage all gay/lesbian Asian voices rather than as a weapon to selectively stifle and silence a part of our community.

In an editorial of the first "revived" issue of what was then called the *BAGMAL Newsletter* the editorial staff wrote about using the Newsletter to explore and exchange the solutions that each of us has created in our attempt to live as a pioneering generation of self-identified gay and lesbian Asians. The last part of that editorial bears quoting:

*"...The only answers to those burning questions - what to wear, who to love, what to tell our parents - lie with us. We are the pioneers. Individually we are creating our own gay and Asian role models, our own gay/lesbian and Asian culture as we live from day to day. And in the pages of this newsletter we can, as a community, record, preserve, exchange and encourage our creativity in this exciting time of our lives. Let a hundred pink blossoms bloom." □*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Page 1</i>
<i>Interview with Connie: On</i>
<i>Choosing Children</i>
<i>Page 2</i>
<i>Editorial</i>
<i>Page 3</i>
<i>Down on the Farm</i>
<i>Page 6</i>
<i>The First North American</i>
<i>Gay/Lesbian Asian Confer-</i>
<i>ence in Toronto</i>
<i>Page 8</i>
<i>Announcements</i>
<i>Page 8</i>
<i>Minutes of August</i>
<i>Meeting</i>
<i>Page 12</i>
<i>Calendar of Events</i>

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# Down on the Farm

ALOEC'S Asian-Latina Lesbian Retreat Catskill Mountains 2-5 Sept., 1988

By Sharon Lim-Hing

When we pulled up to Don 's farm last Labor Day weekend, women and tents were already spread out on the lawn. The late summer foliage of the Catskills framed the farm and its grounds. As I was to find out later, even the How-Many-Lesbians-Does-It-Take-to-Dig-a-Latrine latrine was surrounded by tall grasses, foothills, and at night the sounds of a brook. For a moment, I was seized by the same dread as on the first day



*The Boston Contingent  
(photo: Jacquelyn Black)*



*Some of the Participants of the Peach Game pose for Portrait  
(photo: Jacquelyn Black)*

*Continued on page 9*

### *Choosing children from page 1*

My parents don't have grandchildren except for the ones we have. They really wanted to have grandchildren, but they wanted it the traditional way.

*Were you out to your parents?*

Not officially. I thought they knew, I wasn't sure. I think they were denying it—there was always the hope that I would find a man and get married. And when I told them we were going to have children, I didn't really come out. I didn't use the word lesbian. I said that Barbara and I had decided to have children, to raise them together as a family, and that we were going to have kids that were racially mixed. I didn't really describe the nature of our relationship. But they knew.

*Do you think your parents were more accepting afterwards because of the kids?*

No, not really. I wouldn't call them accepting. They were terrible when I first told them. They thought it was the worst thing they ever heard, and that I was destroying the family—all this Asian guilt stuff, you know, around, "How could you do this to us? Don't you love us?" I tried to point out I wasn't doing anything to them, but that's what they felt. They were pretty upset, hysterical. I basically didn't have much contact with them during most of my pregnancy, until the baby was born, and then I told them that it was a girl. But they didn't come, and they have not come to visit since I've been pregnant. It wasn't till I started sending pictures of her that they got more and more interested. But they're only accepting of her. They won't accept Lee or Barbara as part of my family.

*Do you think that your Asian-lesbian identity has contributed to your desire to have children? Or being Asian or lesbian?*

Ge. Probably in some way. It's hard to separate it out because I've always wanted to have children. But maybe in some ways being Asian has made me want to have children more, because the family unit is so important, so special in the Asian family, that it would never occur to me to imagine life without a family or having children.

*Was it important that your children be your biological offspring? Did you consider adoption?*

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*...in some ways being Asian has made me want to have children more...*

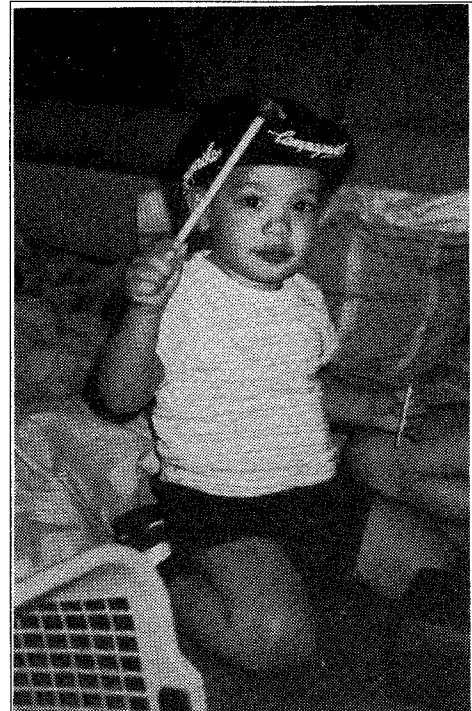
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The answer to that is yes and no. On one hand we wanted to have children and certainly an adopted child would have fit the bill. But we also didn't want to go through what would be involved with adoption—having to be approved, waiting forever, and spending a lot of money. So in a way it's easier to have a biological child. But to be totally honest there's a part of me—maybe a large part of me—that wanted to have a child that was part Asian. There was a strong pull for us to want to have children that were Eurasian, because we wanted them to reflect who we were, and our backgrounds. So that was ideal. But we don't preclude the idea that when our kids are a little older we might adopt another older child or be foster parents or something—if that was possible, depending on the legal situation at the time.

*I'm really interested in the symmetrical racial make-up of the two children. I know you both consider both children your children, but whose child is whose biological child?*

Lee, the boy, is Barbara's biological child; Malia is my biological child. That

way they have the same racial make-up, because we used Chinese, then white sperm. It worked out very nicely because a lot of people think the kids look alike, and they act truly as brother and sister. It's much easier for both of us, either of us, to take both of them out—everyone automatically assumes that they are our children.



*Lee  
(photo: Connie)*

*Is having kids harder than you thought it would be?*

Infinitely harder. I mean, certainly if we had had one, it would've been a lot easier. Having two is much worse than twice as hard, because we're both busy all the time with both of them. Lee wasn't even crawling when Malia was born. So here we had a baby who wanted to be held all the time. Then we had another baby who wanted to be held all the time. And we're both working.

*Continued on page 5*

You just give up so much of your own life when you have kids. You give up being able to do anything you enjoyed doing in the past! There's no spontaneity, you can't travel, you can't really go out. Even on a day like today—we went apple-picking—while we enjoyed that, I probably wouldn't have done it, but you try to do excursions that the kids will like. So you plan everything around them. But luckily we had a great time today.

*Has having children affected your perspective on being Asian and/or lesbian?*

There might be some ways. One is that

you have a harder time. I also think that we're not going to live in small towns, so being in a big metropolitan city makes it easier.

Our kids go to a daycare that has some Asian kids besides ours and some black kids, and there are four lesbian families, so we're not the only ones. Being in this daycare we are forced to interact with many other families, and they probably have never met anyone like us, but they've been forced to because we're in a cooperative daycare and we work together. We're hoping that the schools will have people like that as well.

But it is harder. We do plan to be as

*I noticed that Lee calls Barbara Mom and you Momà.*

Right. He just started that this week. He never called anything until this week. Both kids call Barbara Mom, and both kids call me Momà. I have been trying to teach them a little Cantonese; I'm fluent in Cantonese. They know a few things. Hopefully they'll start to speak it more.

*What kind of world would you like to create for your children?*

I guess we've been thinking of it in terms of community. We would like

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*I would want them to have a strong sense of my identity as an Asian woman...*

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we've done a few more things with the white lesbian community than before, because most of the mothers are white—not all, but in general. So we've gone to a few lesbian mothers support groups, picnics, get-togethers. So being a mother has put us in a different category.

Being Asian has made me want to have the kids have a sense of what being Asian is about. Right now they're a little too young, but certainly I would hope that in the next few years we'll do more things with the kids in the Asian community. So in that way I think we'll have to be more out or be more open in the Asian community, so our kids will get their sense of Asianness or Asian identity. I think there's hardly any alternative kinds of families within the Asian community; we'll be somewhat unique (laughs). We'll have to put up with it, because it's important to me that they attend Asian activities that are not necessarily gay Asian activities.

*It's hard for a kid to grow up being Asian in a mainly white community. Do you think your children will have trouble being Asian plus having an unconventional family?*

I think in some ways it'll be harder. Any time you're a kid and you're different

honest and as straightforward with the kids as possible. We would never lie to them. We'll tell them that we didn't know who their father was, and this is how they came to be, and they have two mothers. In a way I feel it's like racism. It's not our problem, it's the racists' problem. It's like when they say, "Well, black people have a problem," because they're discriminated against, but it's not *their* problem, it's the people who discriminate against them.

The argument I gave when people said, "Why are you going to have children? You'll make it so hard on them!" was, "Well, that's just like telling black people or Asian people, 'Why are you going to have children? They'll be minorities! You'll make it so hard on them—so don't have children! Because they'll be black!'" Well, that's true, they'll be black, and our kids will be children of lesbian mothers and they'll be Eurasian. That doesn't mean we shouldn't have them. We just have to instill in them a sense of who they are, a sense of identity. Which I think is a little hard, because neither of us are Eurasian, so they're not like either parent, in a way. On the other hand, hopefully they'll be happy kids—they'll adjust.

our kids to really appreciate differentness or diversity. I know it sounds trite. Our friends are made up of both straight couples and straight people and gay and lesbian people, and a mixture of Asian and non-Asian. We try to expose them to a lot of different types of people. Ideally I would like their community to be one in which they were involved with different kinds of people, in terms of race, gender and sexual orientation. And that they would grow up with a sense of pride in being who they are, in that they would feel good about themselves. I think you instill that by being proud of who you are, so we will certainly never hide that we are lesbians. I would want them to have a strong sense of my identity as an Asian woman and Barbara's identity as a white person who is from Minnesota, which is important to her. So the kids go to Minnesota every summer. Once they get old enough, we'll probably go to Hawaii every year if we can. Ideally at some point I would like to live in another country, preferably an Asian country for at least a year to have them learn about what that's like.

*Would you recommend to other Asian lesbians or lesbians in general to have children?*

*continued on page 12*

# Unity Among Asians: The First North American

## *some personal reflections*

I have never found conferences in general that exciting. Usually workshops and presentations tend to get formal and academic. It is usually the time you spend in between the formal events, chatting and exchanging with other conferees that are most fruitful. Such is the conventional wisdom.

Nevertheless I had been looking forward to the *Unity Among Asians* conference in Toronto for a few months now. I was eager to touch base again with the many friends who I knew would be there. I have known the activists of the *Gay Asians of Toronto (GAT)*, (joint organizers of the conference with *Khush*) for quite a few years now. Earlier in the summer I had visited Toronto and was privy to some of the gossip and preparation for both the Conference and *CelebrAsian: the Show*, which is *GAT's* annual gay Asian cultural event. A few weeks after that I had the chance to spend a few hours with the members of *Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA)* in San Francisco. I had been impressed by their organizational strengths and their youthful enthusiasm and energy, and I knew some of them would be in Toronto.

From Boston Jack Lo and Nusrat Retina were also attending. Each brought their "main squeezes". Rick K. who had been involved in *AMALGM's* own *CelebrAsian Massachusetts* - an evening of theater and politics held earlier in the summer - was the other non-Asian conferee from Boston.

### Toronto, Ontario

Most of the conference was held in *The Church St. Community Center* in the heart of Toronto's gay ghetto. This area of Toronto remains bustling and alive late into the night with restaurants, sidewalk cafes, bars, shops, variety stores

staying open and filled. On the streets cruisy pedestrian traffic circle the blocks all night long. There is very much a sense of being in a gay neighborhood, but with a difference. In gay Toronto you can't miss the sizeable numbers of Asian men around.

Despite my eagerness and anticipation I was still slightly taken aback on arriving at the Center for Friday night's Reception. I had not expected to see so many South Asian men there - the registration and reception committees appeared to be all South Asian. I had known that *Khush*, Toronto's newly formed association for gay South Asians was jointly organizing the Conference with *GAT* and yet the fact that there would other than East Asian people present had really not registered in my mind at all. A sign of my ethnocentrism perhaps.

### Two Types of Unity

The theme *Unity among Asians* was expressed I thought in two curiously different ways during the Conference. On the surface unity suggests coming together - groups and people of different backgrounds trying to work together and understand one another. There was certainly some of that in the official conference events with workshops dealing with ethnic prejudice among different Asian peoples, on men and women working together, on how non-Asians can work with Asian groups. However I sensed among the gay and lesbian Asians at the Conference a more profound quest for unity - and that was the search for unity in our personal lives.

Many I sensed felt the need to reconcile our alienation from family and from the larger Asian community and from Asian friends. Ever present as well

were the anxieties and conflicts around being gay and living in the West while having traditional cultural needs and expectations. And certainly many wanted to talk about their sense of difference and exclusion from mainstream gay life in North America. I think this search for unity in the personal was the engine which fueled many of the lively discussions and debates at the workshops. They dealt with issues like coming out to families, reaching out to straight Asians, examining Asian racial and sexual stereotypes and so on. Of course unity in the organizational sense and unity in the personal realm are but two sides of the same coin. You can't have one without the other - each makes the other possible in a dialectical relationship. The personal is political. The conference in Toronto was an illustration of this truism.

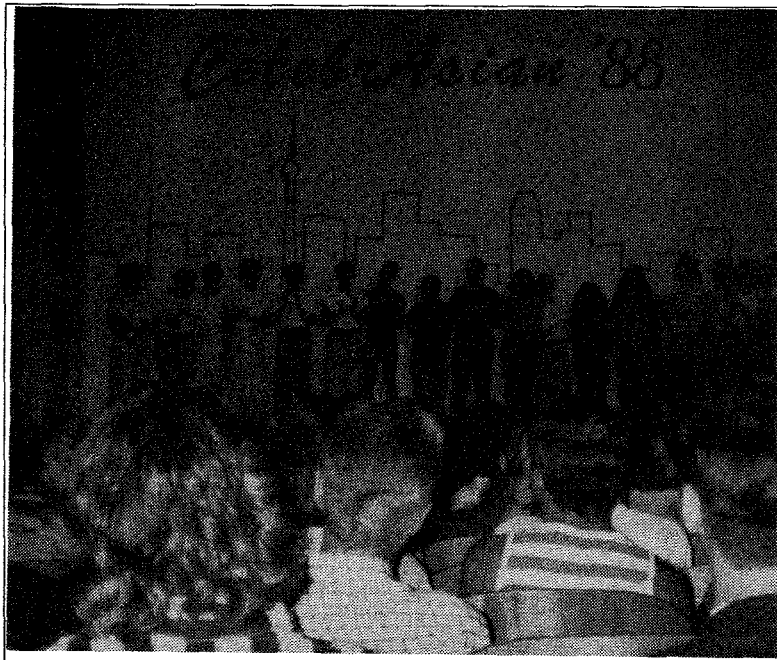
### The Workshops

There were four workshop sessions over two days with about four workshops scheduled simultaneously per session. At the end of each session all participants re-grouped to summarize their discussions.

*AMALGM* members were active in leading workshops. Nusrat was called upon on short notice to chair the workshop for gay men and lesbians interested in returning to live and work in their home countries in Asia. From the summary it appears the participants had an engaging exchange on issues of living with traditional expectations, forming support networks and so on. Jack Lo on the other hand co-chaired a discussion on "Asian Gay Sexuality/Gender Stereotype" which was also well attended.

# Asian Lesbian/Gay Conference in Toronto

by S.H.



The audience and performers at *Celebrasian: The Show* photo: Mary Dougherty

## Reaching out to Straight Asians

Another workshop which I did not attend but had wanted to was entitled "Reaching out to the Straight Ethnic Community". This discussion was led by Olivia Chow, an elected member of the Toronto Board of Trustees for Chinatown and a long-time supporter of GAT. Olivia suggested that written material especially by credentialed professionals was a good way to educate and outreach given traditional Asian respect for education and professional status. The discussion however also emphasized the importance of one-on-one personal contacts as an effective way to bridge the gaps. Olivia offered herself as an intermediary in these outreach efforts. Other sympathetic straight friends like her, she emphasized could be used more effectively.

## Asian- and American-born

Of the workshops I attended the first dealt with issues facing North American-born Asians. I think what motivated this workshop was the feeling

among those who were born and had grown up in North America that their sense of culture and ethnicity whether Chinese, or Japanese, or Filipino was more tenuous and fragile compared to their Asian-born counterparts. In Toronto where the majority of GAT members are recent immigrants from Hong Kong the schisms between Asian-born and American-born inevitably develop. The discussion that ensued was refreshing in that it brought up the diversity of cultural backgrounds of the participants. Among us were fourth generation Japanese-Americans from California, South Asians who had grown up in British colonies in East Africa, Indian Christians and twice-transplanted Chinese from the Caribbean. We realized that in the aftermath of Western colonialism throughout Asia and Africa no one can claim to come from a "pure" ethnic culture. Even those who grew up in Asia understand the depth of Western influence in their home countries; Hong Kong after all is a British colony. Rather than worrying about the purity of our ethnic backgrounds we concluded that it was

more important to ensure that the gay communities in our local areas truly reflect the "impure" mix of diverse and different cultures and traditions that we live with everyday.

## The San Francisco AIDS Project

A second workshop that got me thinking was the presentation by GAPA on their AIDS-related work in San Francisco. GAPA activists Donald Masuda and Bang Nguyen came prepared with statistics and pamphlets in many Asian languages. Their statistics were sobering - although starting from small numbers Asians in San Francisco had shown a 70% increase in the incidence of AIDS in the last year alone. They also presented numbers on the breakdown by Asian ethnic groups of people with AIDS in San Francisco - the only city where such statistics are kept. GAPA members have worked on AIDS education efforts with an agency of primarily straight people who specialize in drug abuse among Asians. Their experience has taught them that gay people must always be involved from the start in all planning and implementation of programs of AIDS education and prevention. Otherwise the need of gay men and bisexuals - the primary groups affected by AIDS are likely to be ignored. This was an important lesson they wanted to impart to conference participants. I reflected on the lack of attention paid to AIDS among AMALGM members. Perhaps Asians still feel that AIDS is a disease affecting only white, black or Hispanic men. Yet in the last few months alone I have known personally of at least two Asian men who have died from AIDS-related complications. I resolved to begin raising the issue of AIDS prevention and education when I got back to Boston.

*continued on Page 10*

## ASIAN LESBIAN AND GAY ANTHOLOGY

Deadline 31 December, 1988

Submissions are solicited for an anthology to be published by a collective of Asian Lesbians and Gay men.

Asians and Asian Americans are encouraged to submit manuscripts about the lesbian/gay experience. Manuscripts may be in the following suggested forms: essays, short fiction (up to 5,000 words), poetry (no more than five poems), brief excerpts from plays, novels, letters, journals, narratives, interviews. Other formats (songs, illustrations, etc.) are welcome.

Manuscripts may include but are not limited to the following experiences of interest: coming out, identity, family, relationships (same race or different), sexuality.

All manuscripts must be typed on 8 1/2 x 11 white paper with the contributor's name on each page. Please include address and phone number. Manuscripts should be sent in duplicate with self-addressed stamped envelope.

Send manuscripts and inquiries to:

*Asian L/G Anthology*  
*clo F. Chang-Muy*  
*P.O. Box 53074*  
*Washington, DC 20009*

## NEW NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

The *AMALGM Newsletter* is now being published once every 2 months. On alternate months we will send you a calendar to keep you informed of on-going activities.

Please help us by sending in your suggestions, creative work and by renewing your subscriptions if you are informed that they have run out.

## SUBMIT! SUBMIT!

The Newsletter seeks your input! Send in

- short stories
- reviews of books, movies, music
- poems
- opinions
- vacation and party snapshots
- drawings, sketches, cartoons, artwork

We look forward to printing your ideas, your images; we want to publicize your creativity. Send your submissions to:

*AMALGM Newsletter*  
*P.O. Box 543*  
*Prudential Station*  
*Boston MA 02199*

*Or call 622-6000 for oral submissions.*

Deadline for Nov/Dec issue is November 25.

## RECIPE COMPETITION

In conjunction with the *AMALGM Social Activities Committee* the Newsletter is sponsoring a recipe competition. Send in your favorite recipes - the ingredients must be available locally and must not cost more than \$10 total. We will host a pot-luck party where the entries will be prepared by randomly selected cooks then consumed and judged by the attending masses. The winning entries will be published in the Newsletter. The first prize is a 3-issue subscription to the Newsletter. Deadline for submission: Dec 31, 1988.

## MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING

*AMALGM's* General Meeting of August 28 1988 was called to discuss general directions for the organization. About 20 people attended including about 8 lesbian members. The meeting took place at Jack Lo's.

After round-the-room introductions the first discussion revolved around whether *AMALGM* was primarily a social group or an organization with a political agenda. This deliberation focussed on the Newsletter which some felt imparted a particular political flavor not representative of the whole organization. It was decided that the Newsletter should explicitly state that all articles are individual expressions, not official *AMALGM* positions.

Apart from this the general consensus of those present was to continue with the mix of "social" and more serious activities that have defined *AMALGM* so far.

The following proposals resulted from the meeting:

- reorganize the newsletter committee
- create an outreach committee
- create an advisory committee
- appoint a new cultural/social/educational program coordinator
- form an *AMALGM* theater group
- form a women's caucus.

Other projects suggested include:

- bringing Asian lesbian movies to Boston
- beginning AIDS education work with a memorial service for a local Asian gay man who died recently.
- starting a series of informal workshops
- preparing for *AMALGM* Open House 1989.

*recorded by S.H. □*



*Retreat continued from page 3*

of kindergarten: there was me facing thirty kids. They looked big and unfriendly.

After setting up our tents and devouring a heavily carnivorous lunch, Debi, Nusrat, Barbara, Karín, Nadia, Jacquelyn, Annie, and I went on a little hike.

"Look, it's nature!" a lesbian announced with irony, with joy. We moved through a field of wild thyme bearing tiny purple flowers.

We crossed the stream, some jumping from rock to rock, some walking barefoot in the cold, shallow slime.

"Why are your wet socks hanging from your pocket?"

"It's a new bar code."

"She's sheparding us," someone said of Annie the dog's random movements.

Under the cover of a forest, Nusrat gently persuaded a frog with a big stick, "Hop along, hop along."

"I have to pee!" Someone leapt into the underbrush.

"Camera! Camera!"

"Stand up so we can see you!"

Our communion with nature was cut short, so that we were back at the farm in time to participate in a meeting for Asian lesbians. This meeting was very loose, and not much was said. However, it straggled over 90 minutes; by then people's bodies had begun to drift away. . .

Meanwhile, the Latinas had been salsa-ing all day and kept it up well into the night. These women displayed incredible energy. A few non-Latinas tentatively tried the new steps. Around the fire, a more sedate group sat and talked. I remember Donna and her intense sense of humor. She told us stories of many disheartening experiences, which it seemed to me, she had turned into chapters of self-empowerment.

The next morning, it was raining. The Boston contingent was making

breakfast on the porch of the house being renovated. Annabel was sucking on a Bud. Annabel's bright spirit. We talked of our dissatisfaction with the looseness of the retreat and the difficulty of striking up a conversation with strangers. We huddled around our baby bagels, eggs and cereal; it was cold and continued to rain. Although we were grateful to June and Mariana for making the retreat happen, we felt that at least one formal workshop or meeting for everyone at the forty-strong retreat

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*...muscular lesbians began kidnapping single women...*

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was necessary to help break the ice. If you want something, you should ask for it or you'll never get it, right?

Well, I don't really know what happened next. I think at the time I was balancing on my haunches over the pit. The sack of lime kept me company in the constant drizzle. I could see women standing around cars talking, and I wondered if they could see me down at the latrine. Later, I heard that some individuals were offended, for various reasons, over the expressed need for more organization. It is tiring to write and explain each party's stance, so let me just give you the short cut.

The cold and the rain herded us all into the little house. Cooking, eating lunch, cleaning up, card games, the informal raw sex workshop, a game of *Scruples*, and having to do it together in a small space forced us to interact, so we didn't need a more formal setting. Women began to look less frightening and more friendly to the kid in me, and I to them. We, the uptight Boston group, had felt the urgency to meet as many lesbians, who had come from New York, New Jersey, D.C., Ohio,

even Philadelphia, as possible during the short weekend. As it turned out, time was the remedy; everyone started to relax and enjoy each other's company.

That night the box of anonymous compliments/"piropos" was passed around the packed living room. Each lesbian would take out one note at random and read it aloud. Laughter, clapping, and hoots greeted each flattering remark, and turned crisp, innocent, little sentences into wet innuendos. The party under way, novices and experts alike were salsa-ing in the living room, while the peach game was steaming up the kitchen. Established couples had to move the fuzzy, tender fruit up from their stomachs to their chins using only body pressure and wiggling.

"Hey, this games isn't for couples, it's for singles!" someone cried, and immediately muscular lesbians began kidnapping single women and carrying the sweet, shy things into the kitchen.

That night, we went to sleep to the sound of owls hooting, Karín giggling, and the wind flapping our tent fly. We were oblivious to the fact that in the cramped, sweaty quarters of the house, Daisy's six-woman fantasy was being played out before the cool, observing eyes of JiSun. If we had known, we would have peeped through the windows.

The next day, back in Boston, Jacquelyn and I both felt irritable, depressed. How difficult it was to concentrate on work, to have to deal again with racism and the male-dominated, rushed work-a-day world. . . □

Conference: from page 7

### Informal Gatherings

Outside the formal workshops there was plenty of time to mingle - to make new friends and renew old acquaintances. The workshops themselves already imparted a certain intimacy with people sharing their personal lives, their intimate experiences. The locals were unfortunately a bit frantic taking care of organizational tasks and preparing for the Celebrasian show. However there was ample time to get to know out-of-towners who came from places such as Chicago, New York City, Ithaca, Montreal, Ottawa and suburban towns near Toronto.

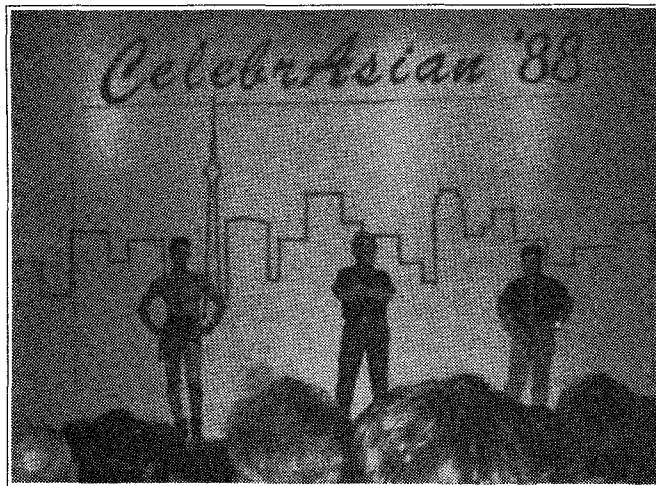
### Celebrasian '88: The Show

A highlight of the conference was the cultural and variety show on Saturday night - Celebrasian '88: The Show. GAT's Celebrasian performances have become an annual cultural event for the gay community in Toronto. Their creativity and energy had inspired AMALGM to put on its own CelebrAsian Massachusetts this summer which had been quite a success for us as well. Celebrasian Toronto style is something else though. Most readers of the newsletter in Boston I'm sure have never been in an audience which is some 500 strong, 70% gay/lesbian and Asian and 100% applauding performances by, for and about gay and lesbian Asians. Also consider the number of people involved in the production - the performers, stage and lighting people, writers, costumers - the ability to get so many involved said a lot about the gay Asian community in Toronto.

### The Show within the Show

The concept of Celebrasian '88 was itself more ambitious than ever. In addition to the many different performances of song and dance and drag that

were scheduled over the three-hour-long show there was to be a unifying play tying everything together. This play unfolded over several scenes interspersed with the variety performances. It told the story of - what else - a bunch of GAT-types trying to put together a show like Celebrasian. The cast of this show within the show are led by an egoistic, tyrannical producer insistent on getting his own way. Ex-lovers get involved, there's lots of bitchy infighting with fashion queens and gossip



AMALGM performers: (from left) Jack, Rick and Nusrat  
(photo: Mary Dougherty)

queens going at each other tooth and nail - a combination *Dynasty* and *A Chorus Line* where everybody camps it up in good fun and often in Cantonese. You have to see it and AMALGM members probably will soon because GAT has sent us the tape and a Celebrasian '88 video evening is in the offing in the near future.

The part in this play which I sensed most captivated the audience was a scene in which Ah Kit, one of the "cast" has to deal with his parents who are visiting from Hong Kong. Ah Kit is young and cute (boy is he cute) and lives with a considerably older white lover. Their relationship is loving but has its contradictions around age and power and economic status. The parents' visit brings out the hidden conflicts. Ah Kit, very much in the closet, tries to pass off

his lover as his landlord. Albert, his lover resents being ignored and taken for granted. The parents meanwhile are griping about Ah Kit's older brother having married a "Foreign Devil". Ah Kit's father has also found some of Albert's pornography and is visibly interested. The hilarious and the serious meet in a delightful mix. Judging from the audience's reactions many of the themes touched on - relationships with parents, affairs with older, white men, coming out to the family - all struck notes of recognition. This was certainly the most popular part of the play.

Another scene has caused some controversy in Toronto. In this part of the story the egocentric producer has disappeared and is later seen alone in a hotel room composing a letter to his mother. He has come down with AIDS and is trying to tell this to his family while coming out to them at the same time. A recent letter to Toronto's gay newspaper, XTRA, complained that this treatment of AIDS was gra-

tuitous and out of context. I certainly don't think so. The producers of Celebrasian I think took a risk injecting this somber and rather painful scene into an evening of otherwise hilarious, campy goings-on. With many other sub-plots developing simultaneously in their mini-soap opera the ability to treat the issue of AIDS and people with AIDS substantially certainly poses a challenge. Nevertheless having an Asian character coming down with the disease does remind the largely Asian audience that Asian gay men are by no means immune to AIDS and have to be aware and educated like everyone else. Also in a later scene we are shown the producer's friends and ex-lovers and cast rallying around him to support and comfort him ending his self-imposed isolation. Certainly not a hopeless way of treating

*continued on Page 11*

Conference: from page 10



The GAT dancers twirl away (photo: Mary Dougherty)

the issue of AIDS as suggested by the letter to XTRA.

### The Classical Meets the Campy

In addition to the play there were the performances themselves. These ranged from the classical to the campy and of course included the classical and campy as well. On the classical side there was Happy Wing from Montreal in the Bamboo Dance. Suspended in mid-air as he propelled himself along with the aid of a 12-foot long bamboo staff - he was a vision of classical Chinese beauty attired in a discreetly suggestive open vest and skin-tight red pants. Still in the classical vein I think although he was in drag Shamash Bapoo of Khush performed an Indian dance replete with darting eye movements and jerky head motions, adhering strictly to the classical form. The performers from the Asian Lesbians of the East Coast gave us two quite different dances. Dressed in white skirts and bedecked with garlands the two women solemnly exchanged vows to the strains of the Hawaiian Wedding Song. These were two women tying the knot to a traditional song. Camp or classic? It hardly seemed to matter with the enthusiastic audience. Their next offering

transcended either category. It was just torrid. With blurring hips gyrating to pounding drums the dancers vibrated to a driving rhythm from Tahiti drawing wild screams especially from the lesbians present. On the campy side count Tom Tran and Alan Li who sang the Cantonese Operatta called *The Purple Hairpin*. The music was classical but the delivery was definitely classic camp from Tom's exaggerated patrician manner to Alan's bright falsetto and equally bright green *cheongsam*. The way Alan kept his arms at his side may have seemed like a theatrical gesture to many but it was to keep his falsies (hastily improvised from a couple of t-shirts) from slipping, he told me later. Alan is also the overall producer of the Celebrasian show and received some of the warmest appreciation from the audience. Also squarely on the campy side was the Helping Hands Theater of Toronto, a group of Filipino drag performers who specialize in benefits for the gay community. They performed a selection from *Evita* and a Liza Minelli scorcher - *City Lights* - celebrating city living and disdaining clean country living. A definite crowd pleaser given the evening's audience.

AMALGM's Nusrat, Jack and Rick contributed their own piece of perform-

ance theater. Called *Elevator Mind Games*, three people in an elevator - an androgynous punk (Jack), a short-haired boy/girl (Nusrat) and a butched-up construction worker in hard hat and boots (Rick) - cruise and mis-stereotype one another. We hear their thoughts as they check one another out totally misreading each other's visual cues. A very New Wave affair wildly appreciated by the audience. The performers have promised to recreate the piece for a future AMALGM event.

### A Challenge to Conventional Gay Culture

The evening did drag a little (no pun intended) at a few points but all in all I think the producers of Celebrasian '88 have again triumphed in the cultural realm. Most of us in North America have come to associate gay culture with theater or novels or movies that deal exclusively with the lives and experiences of gay people who are white and Western. Celebrasian '88 shows that you can produce witty and entertaining and meaningful gay theater and performance focussed on Asian gay people and drawing on other than Western traditions. The evening's performances were first and foremost just that - a celebration of the lives and experiences and creativity of gay Asian men and Asian lesbians. It was a celebration for ourselves - for the gay Asian community in Toronto and for gay and lesbian Asians in general. However the larger implications for gay and lesbian culture in North America are quite profound. Gay culture must be inclusive reflecting the traditions and experiences of its multi-ethnic components - gay and lesbian Asians are making sure that this is the case.

### Conferences can be Fun

At the end of Celebrasian: the Show, there was Celebrasian: the Dance, a chance to boogie and relax and enjoy for both locals and out-of-towners. The music was hot and so was the cruising.

continued on Page 12

Conference: from page 11

The heat and tension were palpable. I'd best leave that description to others.

Those who disdain the formality and seriousness associated with Conferences should check out the Asian gatherings. They are fun and educational, believe me, even if you don't attend a single workshop. There will likely be another North American gay and lesbian Asian conference in 1990. San Francisco has expressed an interest in hosting it. Also there is the Asian Lesbian Conference scheduled for California next summer. And don't forget to watch out for the video viewing of *Celebrasian '88* in our Calendar. And remember that *Elevator Mind Games* might be re-enacted soon at one of our functions. □

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Choosing Children from page 5

Sure! If you love children. And you have to love children. We wanted children badly. It wasn't as if we were ambivalent. We were so happy when we got pregnant, and when the child was born. And it was still really, really hard once we had the children. So, I think you have to really want them to put up with all the hardship that you don't realize you're going to have until you have them. You have to give up a lot of yourself, but you get rewarded with a child. We, I'm sure, are biased, but I think our children are wonderful! I think they're real cute and exciting, very curious and very happy, enthusiastic children. Enthusiastic about everything. They get enthusiastic about getting up in the morning and starting the day. They love to do new things. You don't have time to brood or get depressed when you have kids; you have to go, go, go with them. In a way it's like living your childhood again. You get to play with toys, and do other things. It's a lot of work, work, work, but I think it's worth it. □

## EVENTS OF INTEREST

**Nov 9 - Nov 29: Ethnic images in the Comix.** An exhibition of "ethnic" characters in comic books which also examines the impact of comic-book stereotypes on the thinking of adults and children. Sponsored by the *Anti-Defamation League* and the *Asian-American Resource Workshop*. At the Boston Public Library during library hours.

**Nov 12 - Dec 15: Nagano Watercolors: West Sumatra and Bali.** 26 paintings by Paul Nagano, celebrated Boston artist and *AMALGM* subscriber will be on view at the *Pucker Safrat Gallery* 171 Newbury Street Boston. Paul invites all *AMALGMites* to the opening **Nov 12, 3-6 p.m.**

**Now Playing: Salaam Bombay** opens **Nov 21** at the *Nickelodeon Cinema*, Boston. Independent feature film directed by Mira Nair depicts the life of street children in Bombay. In Hindi with English subtitles.

## AMALGM EVENTS

**Nov 20: 1:30 - 5 p.m. AMALGM party** with Open Bar at Paradise Cafe - 180 Mass. Ave. Cambridge (across from MIT). Video showing of excerpts from *Celebrasian '88: The Show*, the variety show by *Gay Asians of Toronto* held this past summer in conjunction with the first North American Gay and Lesbian Asian Conference. (See report on page 6). Video will begin at about 3 p.m. followed by *Improvisational Theater* from *AMALGM's* newly formed Theater Group. Open to all.

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