



AMALGM

AMALGM

NEWSLETTER

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November/December 88

Alliance of Massachusetts Asian Lesbians and Gay Men

Gay Hong Kong: A Report

by Jack Lo

Jack left Hong Kong 13 years ago. Like many who came out only after emigrating to the US a trip back to his home city was an important opportunity to see his boyhood romping grounds from a fresh perspective. Here is his report.

*"Wish for a place where love
will not be destroyed,
To cover the place in me
Wish someday, when there's
no need for pain
The forbidden color will
flourish, beyond my dream."*

Translation of a Hong Kong song with gay allusions, "The Forbidden Color"

The scene

Among the skyscrapers, lesbians and gay men in Hong Kong are isolated, scattered. Hong Kong gays and lesbians do not wish to be seen, because it is dangerous.

The most visible places where Hong Kong gays hang out are three gay bars. Two are located on Hong Kong Island, the other in Kowloon. Dateline is basically a men's bar and is unofficially divided into two sections. One area is primarily where Westerners and local Hong Kong gay men meet. The other side is filled with local gay men and a few drag queens. Many gay men go there with groups of friends. There is



some cruising. Unfortunately people who go there are very reserved and may be shy. Most people find it difficult to meet others. However once when I was in the bathroom urinating, there was a Chinese man who was staring right at my penis and attempted to grab my butt.

He appeared to be quite drunk. In "DL", some drag queens would try to catch the attention of gay men.

Around the corner from Dateline there is a well-known discotheque called Disco Disco. Thursday night is Boy's

Continued on page 13

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The AMALGM Newsletter functions as an open forum for Asian gay men and lesbians to articulate their issues of concern. We provide an organ for the cultural and political expression of all Asian gay people. Our other duty is to announce and report on the activities of AMALGM, the organization.

We welcome all submissions of essays, artwork, poetry, and fiction from Asian gay men and Asian lesbians. All views and opinions are welcome. The articles we publish do not reflect any one political ideology or cultural perspective. Unless explicitly stated none of the opinions expressed in these pages are to be taken as official positions of AMALGM or its officers. We want to hear from you our readers. Please submit.

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.

Our Hotline 622-6000 is out of operation. Please call Glay Day Bookshop 267-3010 to leave messages. We are working on getting a new hotline

Brunch Rap at Jin's

A get-together session for Asian gay men and lesbians only. Juicy gossip, serious discussions. Great food.

- Topic:** "Asians as Wallflowers"
Are we invisible in the gay/lesbian community.
- Do people look through you at gay bars and parties?
 - Do you feel you are not part of the action?
 - Do the people in popular gay books and magazines seem less and less like you?
 - Are you ignored at rallies and meetings?

Share your thoughts. Find a solution.

Place: 80 the Fenway Apt 51
Boston MA 02115

Date: Sunday, Jan 15 1989

Time: 1 p.m.

Donation: \$2 (Food provided)

Directions: Please call 262-6670
(Jin)

Request: Please call ahead to reserve a place so that proper arrangements for food can be made. Call before Jan 8.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 1
Gay Hong Kong
Page 2
Announcements
Page 3
Remembering our Names
Page 4
Speeches at Breaking Silence Slide Show
Page 6
Retreat and Advance in the Catskills
Page 8
Wild, Wild West
Page 9
"Pedagogy and Politics" at Yale: A Report
Page 10
People by Pacific Rim
Page 16

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halftones)*

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Remembering Our Names

Newsletter Staff

his long tapered fingers

guide my young hand curved around
bamboo brush pen

to form my name in chinese:

family name: *chiang*: from nothern china, we came
south on tamed wild horses and
became farmers

middle name: *wei*: shared by you and your sisters,
wisdom?

and your own *ping*: for peace or plains of green field

bits of characters:

grass, heart, three dots of water, woods, home

write again and again, your name,
that you may never forget it

from *Father* by Fay Chiang

This poem by Asian American poet Fay Chiang reminded us that as Asian people part of our cultural heritage is embodied in our names - names which have meaning, which speak of hopes and aspirations. Many of us do not use the Asian names we were given anymore but behind each name there is perhaps a story, an insight into a cultural past or a family's dream. We asked some of our readers. Here is what we found.

Kei Koizumi. My family name means Spring or Well of Happiness. My given name is Kei - Divine Gift. I was born on Christmas Eve, I was seen as a present from God.

William Loc. My family name Loc is Continent, something huge. My middle name See is imagination; my given name Tuk means moral or virtuous.

Pisan Aowsathporn. I don't really know what my Chinese name means. My Thai name Pisan means huge or big. Aowsathporn is made up of three parts - Gulf, Fame and Property. So together my name is something like Big Gulf filled with Fame and Property.

Lester Wong. Yuen Seung. Yuen is man or a person. Seung just means up. So together they mean a person headed upwards - like an astronaut. Or a man destined for higher things.

Loc Duong. A Taiwanese friend told me the Chinese character for Loc means young deer. In Vietnamese it means a "present". My parents were happy to have a boy. I have four sisters ahead of me.

Preecha Kownin. A friend of my grandfather's suggested Preecha who was a popular leader of the Province of Nakomayok in the late 40's. Kow means white and Nin is a black precious stone.

SPEECHES AT AMALGM'S "BREAKING SILENCE" EVENT

October 17, 1988



The Wedding Party. Trinity and Desiree (in white) celebrate their union with family.

Speech by Sharon Lim-Hing

Breaking silence. Coming out and organizing. This has always been difficult for lesbians and gay men. Fear of ostracism in the work place, loss of employment, loss of straight friends and relatives. These and other reasons keep us quiet and invisible in our glorious, restricted role of generators of income and shoppers.

However, as a relatively recent active member of AMALGM when the Asian Pacific Island Lesbian Network was and is being created, I have asked myself: why don't more Asian lesbians become involved? We know there are more than a handful of Asian dykes in the Boston area. I see what seems to be dozens of them walking around on

Mass Ave everyday—or are those just fashionable straight Asian women who have appropriated dyke styles as part of their wardrobe?

One restraining factor may be tradition. It is extremely difficult if like myself you neither speak nor read an Asian language to dig up evidence of Asian lesbianism other than that which was recorded for male titillation. Nevertheless, this is slowly changing. Trinity's slideshow is one example of this, and some of you might remember June Chan's slideshow on Asian lesbians shown at CelebrAsian last summer.

And when I say tradition may be holding back some Asian lesbians, I don't mean to imply that earlier immigrant groups to United States do not have rich, cultural traditions, as the *White Trash Cookbook* attests. But since some of us, not all of us, are third,

second or first generation immigrants, our tradition is embodied by ... living family members. For instance, I know that my father would be extremely angry or ashamed if he knew I was brandishing the respected Lim Hing family name about, as I am tonight.

Another reason for silent Asian lesbians may be the double minority status. I don't mean to exclude Irish, Portuguese, Czech, Italian, or Jewish or Catholic lesbians from this category. Certainly I'm happy to share this space with you. But sometimes when I'm walking home to my apartment in Somerville and some teenage creep calls me a Chink and runs away or drives off laughing, I wish that this one of my minority memberships were not so obvious. So maybe some Asian lesbians feel that they already have to live everyday with

Continued on page 5

SPEECH from page 4

what can feel like a burden, the burden of having "slanted" eyes or "yellow" skin ... being openly gay too would be just too much.

On the other side of double minority status is sexism. As Francis Wong's thesis on Asians in American movies from the twenties through the seventies shows, Asian women are often shown as passive, exotic sex toys not for Asian men but for white men only, while Asian men are depicted as asexual, if at all. In the past five years, we've seen a slew of Vietnam war films that show Vietnamese women in two roles: prostitutes in Saigon or villagers being gangraped by American soldiers. Independent filmmaker Alia Arasouglu argued, using *Rambo*, *Year of the Dragon* and *Angel Heart* as examples, that minority female characters in Hollywood films are attributed sexuality as long as this sexuality is carried out with

the leading white male protagonist, and often the plot requires that this liaison is instrumental to the destruction of her society.

From all of that, I can only speculate that some Asian lesbians may find some solace passing as straight Asian women, because at least our dominant culture reserves a role for them however circumscribed. And all of the above reasons to be silent really boil down to fear of being cast out—from family, from our Asian community, from the male-dominated culture which despises difference, whether of gender, color, race, religion, or sexual preference. Now why would anyone want to belong to such a culture I don't know. But here we are, so we may as well talk about it.

Some final speculations on the continuing silence of the majority of Asian lesbians around Boston... Are Asian

American gay men and lesbians too diverse to coalesce? The label Asian englobes people from the Indian subcontinent, from the two Chinas and Hong Kong, Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Philipinos, some Hawaiians—and many others. Asians can be fresh off the boat or people whose greatgrandparents arrived in the nineteenth century. Are our concerns too divergent? At the last AMALGM organizational meeting, some members complained about the perceived overpoliticization of AMALGM; they see the group as primarily social in nature.

To all the new Asian faces I see tonight, thank you for coming. To all the non-Asians, thank you for listening. Whether you have a political agenda or not, we welcome you to this and future events. □

CHANGE THROUGH INVOLVEMENT

SPEECH by Nusrat Retina

Good evening! On behalf of AMALGM, let me welcome you tonight to our event **BREAKING SILENCE**. My name is Nusrat and I will be moderating the program tonight.

AMALGM was formed in 1979 by two women and two men. It was known as BAGMAL (Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians), and lesbian representation in the group was minimal. In the spring of 1988, a bunch of us, Asian lesbians, joined the group and generated wimmin energy and visibility within the group. As a result, BAGMAL changed its name to AMALGM and changed its focus to be more inclusive of wimmin. Consequently, the week after the Gay Pride March in Boston this year, AMALGM made its first debut appearance to the Boston gay and lesbian community via **CELEBRASIAN** on June 18.

The energy and encouragement we received from this event reverberates through us even today and has generated an active and well defined lesbian contingent within our group. Since last June, the women at AMALGM have been thinking of ways to organize Asian lesbians in Boston. Our immediate goal is to form a Lesbian Caucus within AMALGM. We plan to host events, lectures, films, and socials exclusively by and for wimmin.

This is the first in the series of these events. This is the first time, we, Asian lesbians are breaking our silence of our own existence, claiming our rich, diverse, multifarious identities, speaking proudly of it and acknowledging one another.

Tonight we feature Trinity Ordone's slideshow which shows APL's (Asian Pacific Lesbians) all over the world

coming out and coming together, followed by a panel discussion with the speaker. We will start with introducing the theme Breaking Silence among Asian lesbians. Then our out-of-town guest, Trinity Ordone will present her slideshow. I'll then come back to talk about where we want to go from here in our movement in Boston. We will then open up the floor for questions from the audience.

So, up next is AMALGM friend, Sharon, to introduce tonight's theme...



I think the slideshow you just saw, projects that APL's are all part of a bigger picture, nationally and internationally. Part of the historic movement by gay people of color. It's also clear that we are strong, beautiful and talented people- with deep roots in our rich, cultural and ethnic heritage.

continued on page 7

Retreat and Advance in the Catskills

*The Second Northeast Retreat for Asian Gay Men
October 8 - 10, 1988*

by Jin Gui



It was a dark and stormy night as our car pulled into the back of Joyce's cabin. This was one of the two cabins on Don Kao's farm, the venue of the retreat. It took us six hours to get there, having lost our direction several times along the picturesque roads of upstate New York. As S.H., Jack and I climbed out of our cozy automobile into the cold and fresh blackness, hoots and cries greeted us. The other guys were there already. Our wrists suddenly became loose and swung wildly to return their calls.

Boxes of food were quickly dispatched to the cabin. Old friends were hugged, new ones introduced. We had a smaller attendance than the last retreat - 12 in all. Three men from Boston, one Rhode Islander, two New Yorkers, three Philadelphians, two Washingtonians, and a Canadian man from Mississauga, Ontario. 25 percent of those present were Malaysians; other countries of origin included Cuba, Indonesia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Philippines, India and the U.S.

Sleet was falling outside. The usually bright hues of

fall were muted as gray clouds hung low over the mountains. This was Saturday morning, everyone was off at a mellow pace. Only a few adventurous, brave, strong souls ventured into the cold wilderness. Others were lounging and lying down in idle conversation or fervent gossip. Loud morning noises were heard in the darkness as everyone "slept"... Our chief chef, Nicholas, prepared a vermicelli dish with shrimp and meat, oyster sauce, choy-som greens and bean sprouts. Steamed buns of sweet bean paste. Tossed salad with French dressing. Delicious.

The afternoon was spent in the almost completed cabin at the other end of the farm. The discussion was intense, thought-provoking and heated. The attic room provided a cozy, comfortable environment. The topics of discussion were familiar - coming out, inter/intra-racial relationships, parents, and standards of beauty. However the depth of discourse went beyond that of the first retreat. The new attendees supplied fresh views that provoked different avenues of thought.

Five hours and two aspirins later, the group disbanded for dinner. Chef Nicholas and his band of faithful helpers marched off to the kitchen. Others took strolls in the fresh evening air of the mountains. The sun was out; the fall foliage returned to their brilliant glory.

Dinner topped the lunch menu. Curried chicken with potatoes à la Malaysia. Stir-fried veggies with meat. Rice. Soup. Stories were swapped, many in delicious, intimate details. Tearoom experts told tales of wild escapades, then diligently taught willing students the techniques - shoe tapping, shadow reading, writing on loo paper. The best tearooms in each represented city were described, as well as international ones in London, Rome, Paris, Kuala Lumpur. After dinner a spontaneous discussion on AIDS broke out. To test or not to test, early intervention vs. unnecessary stress, denial vs. paranoia. After this somber and sobering talk it was a relief to be lying around the floor of the living room as Don presented a slide show on anti-Asian political cartoons. All twelve men later descended on the Maverick, a bar in the middle of nowhere. A few broken hearts later, a happy but danced-out crew came slouching back to the farm for a night of contented retirement.

Sunday was barbeque day. Ribs, chicken, weenies. The sun shone at first, but the sky soon clouded over and it drizzled. Everyone was frantically trying to cook the food over the flame, and running into the cabin to eat and warm up. The hungry group finally savaged the food despite the rain.

We all said our goodbyes that afternoon, but agreed to meet again the third weekend in May. □

CHANGE from page 5

I've been out as a lesbian for seven years, but only active in the lesbian of color movement since the past year. During the course of a short time, I've attended the Gay Asian Conference in Toronto, played at the Asian Lesbian Retreat in New York and brainstormed at the Regional Planning Committee meeting in Washington DC for the APL conference and retreat next year.

Throughout my networking, I'm finding how far we really are from our traditional images of being subdued invisible, forever voiceless! It is truly empowering to realize how much potential we have individually and the extent of energy when together. It also helped me realize that being at the critical juncture of being female, gay and a person of color, makes us perhaps the single most powerful and capable group to lead the way to freedom for *all* people!

Tonight, I'd like to invite you to share these experiences with me and other fellow APL's in the Boston area. Please note that there is no predefined form for participation. You can attend AMALGM meetings, join the Asian Lesbian Caucus, participate in planning the APL retreat '89 from Boston, contribute to our nationally circulated newsletter, become the lesbian archivist of the various events and literature that APL's are generating nationwide, or just keep in touch with us as friends for social mixers, birthday parties, and so on! You can even decide to simply be on the mailing list. It is up to you to get involved in any way you want.

I want to thank Jacquelyn for her technical direction and flyer design, Sharon for her publicity and organizing, SH and Jack for their help and support, and Trinity for being wonderful, supportive and resourceful in coming to Boston. I want to thank GAMIT for co-sponsoring this event. Last, but not least, I extend my appreciation to all of you

who showed your concrete interest and support by being here tonight.

Remember that Asia is the continent of the 1990's and that each one of us is rightfully proud to be Asian, lesbian, gay ... and to be ourselves! □

GET INVOLVED!

During October 8-10, 1988, a group of wimmin met for the first Asian Pacific Lesbian Retreat Planning meeting in DC. The occasion? To host the first retreat/conference by and for Asian Lesbians from the United States. Wimmin from Boston, New Haven, New York, Chicago, Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington DC got together to plan this exciting event!

The original inspiration of this retreat "APL Network '89: Coming Together, Moving Forward" came from a \$3,000 grant from the March on Washington committee. The event will be open to *all* lesbian-identified Asian women. It has been scheduled for Labor Day weekend (Sept. 1-4, 1989) in San Francisco. It will include warm-up exercises, workshops, sports, cultural shows, banquets, meetings and closing sessions.

As a result of the regional planning meeting, the Boston area APL's are gearing up efforts to represent ourselves in the retreat. Some of our immediate goals are participating in T-shirt and poster designs, networking, workshop ideas and facilitation and fundraising events for APL's who need assistance to attend the retreat. Please call 926-3850, if interested.

Wild, Wild West

by Sam Aowsathporn

It was almost a year ago that a dear friend of mine, Glenn, went West to live in San Francisco, California. I was very excited this past August to be invited to visit him. Not only because I miss him after not seeing him for a year, but also because I had heard so many things, good and bad, about San Francisco and about California in general that I was anxious to see for myself how the other half lives. I wanted to find out if there really was a "gay city" which readily accepted gay Asians as part of its community in the heart of granola country.

I left on a Friday night late in August during the East Coast heat wave and I looked forward to the relief and mild weather that Central California was known for. I also was looking forward to exploring the San Francisco night life as well as the typical tourist things - the Golden Gate Bridge, Chinatown, and the Napa Valley to name just a few.

I was not disappointed. Only moments after disembarking from the plane I was at a gay restaurant on the "gay side of town" and I found myself comfortably a part of the unique gay lifestyle. I was proud to be a part of it and felt safe in knowing that gays are the majority and gay Asians are a visible slice of that. I was also



The Author in San Francisco

surprised to see how many gay Asians there were in San Francisco and how easily they seem to fit in with their non-Asian contemporaries. Unlike my experiences in the East Coast, the non-Asians I saw did not treat the Asians as if they were from another planet, but rather as another diverse part of the gay community. The common thread that bound them together was their sexual orientation and not their racial background. It was not an obstacle to be both gay and Asian - to be separated first by race and then because they are gay. In San Francisco, I observed that the practice of racial segregation or discrimination did not exist, and the "natives" saw me as one of their own.

Although most of the Asians I spoke with were born in America and saw themselves as Americans with a common cultural background they did not seem to group themselves together as the Asians here in the East do - sticking mostly with their own kind - but rather they saw themselves as Americans first and were accepted that way. Perhaps it is the sheer numbers that make the West Coast Asians feel secure.

Another aspect of my San Francisco visit that I enjoyed was the freedom to be myself, openly gay. Many of the restaurants and stores are gay-owned, and there are twice as many gay bars and other entertainment. It is really comfortable to be just the way you are without concern for what people may think or say and to not be looked down on. I saw kissing, hugging, and holding hands in public but never did I hear any derogatory comments like "faggot". People seem freer being gay and for a change it seemed the straight people

continued on Page 16

“Pedagogy and Politics” at Yale

A Report by Bret Hinsch

The Lesbian and Gay Studies Center at Yale celebrated its second year of existence with an ambitious and extremely successful conference on “Pedagogy and Politics” held the last weekend of October. The two dozen panels at the heart of the conference provided a forum for thoughtful discussion and original ideas on the whole spectrum of matters relating to homosexuality. Included among these events were several presentations of interest to gay Asians and Asian Americans.

Issues regarding Asian Americans brought out the practical side of those participating in the conference. Connie Chan of U. Mass Boston and a long-time AMALGMite took part in a discussion entitled “Coming Out: Class and Culture”, in which she described

the unique social, family and cultural problems faced by lesbian and gay Asian Americans confronting their sexual identity. Don Kao of *Project REACH*, a friend to many in AMALGM, spoke at a more politically oriented panel, “Lesbians and Gays in Progressive Politics: Coalitions Across Difference”. This discussion covered issues such as political organizing among minorities and the complexities of coalition politics.

Academically oriented events tackled a range of subjects dealing with the many manifestations of homosexuality in Asia. Jennifer Robertson of the University of California at San Diego gave a fascinating account of the relations between cross-dressing and lesbian sexual roles among the actresses in the

Japanese Takarazuka theater. In contrast, Jose Cabezon of Ohio State took on a less worldly topic in his overview of homosexuality in Buddhism.

The conference was even fortunate enough to have a full panel devoted to gay history in Asia. Vivien Ng of the University of Oklahoma opened the dialogue with her insights on male homosexuality in late imperial China, gleaned from legal records and popular literature. Paul Schalow of Rutgers gave a general overview of the forms of homosexuality practised by men of Tokugawa Japan. And Sandra Buckley of McGill University surprised the audience with a multimedia presentation relating the themes of pornography

continued on Page 16



*Two Women by Suzuki Moronobu: an early Ukiyo-e print (from *The Other Face of Love* by Raymond de Becker)*

People

by Pacific Rim

This is our new PEOPLE column where we chatter about and otherwise batter people in the news. If you have any choice pieces of gossip please send them to People Column AMALGM Newsletter P.O. Box 543 Prudential Sta. Boston MA 02199. Nothing is too tasteless to be considered.

Cosmetics Tips from Ms Chung

NBC news correspondent Connie Chung, certainly the most prominent Asian American face on the national scene reveals her secrets of success in the November issue of *Vanity Fair* (the one with "Dangerous Jane Fonda" on the cover).

Her main problem growing up, she says, was "not developing..." "I look like a small letter L with long feet". Only after going to college did she develop some "form", but "the hips were the only thing that created definition". Salvation, however was soon at hand. "Then I discovered eye makeup, and I transformed myself from a refugee/boat person into someone who was finally presentable."

Is this tongue in cheek or a poke in the eye (done up with make-up of course)? Boat people, take heed. That \$1 million a year Network Television job is just round the corner from the nearest cosmetics counter.

Tuff Diver

Greg Louganis, Greg Louganis. Can we claim you as one of us - an Asian/Pacific gay man. Rumors abound about the "sexual orientation" of Louganis on and off the diving platform. Now that his 15 minutes of fame have come and gone we can contemplate more soberly the bikini stuffer that he really is.

In interviews during the Seoul telecast, Louganis revealed his traumatic early days when he was

taunted for his Pacific heritage - his father is Samoan. He was called "nigger" in school because of his dark skin. Was he perhaps sissy/fag baited as well? Louganis doesn't say. He does reveal that he has given up smoking, being sensitive to the fact that he is a role model for young boys and men. Recently Greg became an AIDS buddy to young children with



Not Bette Davis' eyes

AIDS. If rumors bear out Louganis should consider his role model potential for Asian/Pacific gay men as well. How about doing

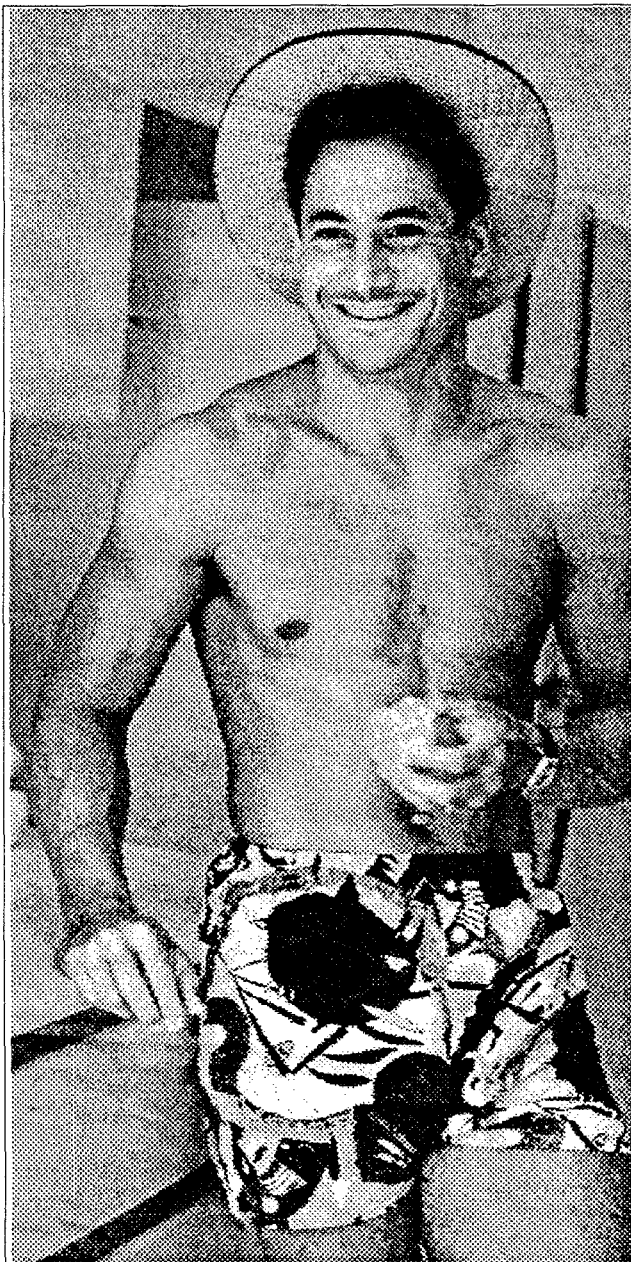
a safe-sex ad for us, Greg? Working title - How to dive head first into a condom.

B. D. Butterfly

West = male + power + domination. East = female + victim + subservience. David Hwang's Broadway hit and Tony award winning play *M. Butterfly* explores these themes and then inverts the formulas - a classic examination of East/West, male/female, white male/Asian male relationships. B. D. Wong plays Song Liling, a male Peking Opera star who, while spying for the Chinese Government, lives with French diplomat Rene Gallimard as a woman and then his wife without his catching on. All this time Gallimard is living out his fantasy of owning a pliant, dutiful Oriental mistress - a Madame Butterfly.

B. D. is magnificent in the role switching male/female, servant/dominatrix, victim/aggressor with great art and mastery. He won a Best New Actor

continued on Page 11



Does he wear eye-liner?

People from page 10

Tony Award for the role. How come we have not heard more of him in the gay/lesbian media? In the cast notes B. D. makes it a point to say that he is proud to have worked on the second *Salute to Sondheim Benefit* for AIDS Project Los Angeles. Will the gay community ignore even its stars when they are not white enough?

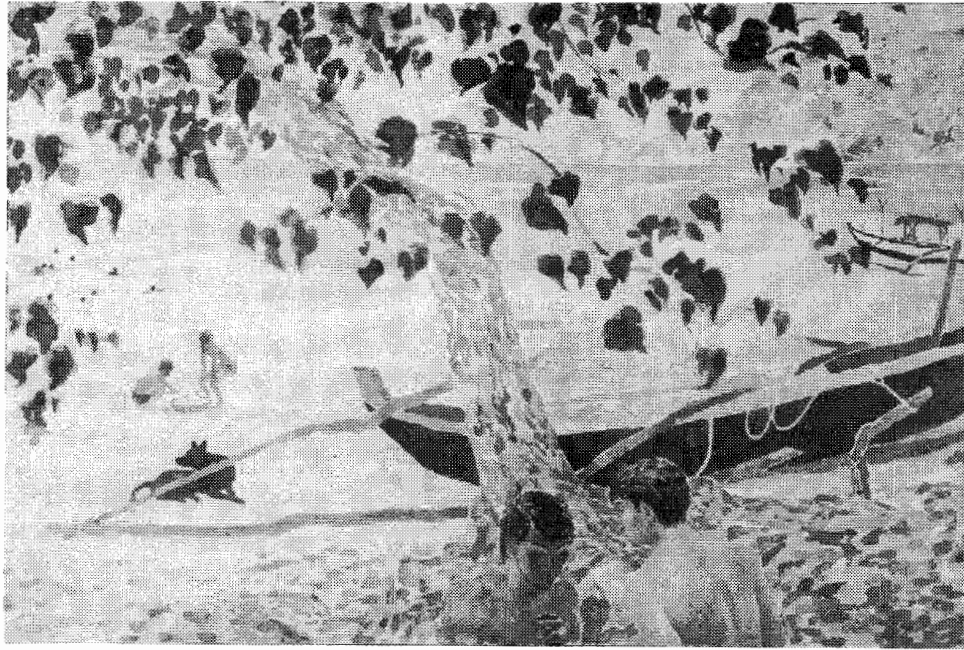
The Last Empress?

With the failing health of Japan's Emperor Hirohito much attention is now focussed on the impending transition to a new imperial era under now Crown Prince Akihito. The present era in Japan is Showa (enlightened peace) which began on 25 December, 1926 when Hirohito became emperor.

Controversy surrounds the enthronement ceremony, *daijosai*, in which the emperor undergoes a ritual where he is first transformed into a woman, then impregnated by the gods (using what technique?) and emerges as a god himself. Opposition parties have refused to approve the financing of the *daijosai* from the national budget. There is concern that right-wingers may use the revived notion that the emperor is a god to rally support for the militarism and facism of the early half of this century. Personally I believe the ceremony should just stop right after the sex change. After all, as all my friends tell me, who wants to be a mere god when one can be an Empress? □



B. D. Wong: He wears eye-liner in *M. Butterfly*



Water Color by Paul Nagano

*We believe that the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha have a special meaning and relevance to our community and we to them.
Let us join and grow together.*

**Buddhist Association of the Gay and Lesbian
Community
P.O. Box 1974
Bloomfield, NJ 07003**

This organization was founded earlier this year. If interested, please contact.

Hong Kong gay activist and author, Sam Sasha is seeking donations to publish his translation of Andrew Hodges and David Sutter's consciousness-raising pamphlet "With Downcast Gays". Sasha estimates that he will need US\$600 - \$700. You can send your contributions in US currency to:

Ng Siu Ming
G.P.O. 1560
Hong Kong

The translation will be published on a non-commercial non-profit basis.

Night - there is no cover charge for men. Most other busy nights at "DD" are also filled with gays. There are a few lesbians and a small number of straight people go to "DD" as well. The decor and music are very up-to-date. There is a lounge show, music video clips, and a Kala OK machine which plays the instrumental track of popular songs. Some patrons would pick up the microphone and sing along to their favorite pop tune. People in this bar seem to be more relaxed and able to enjoy the party atmosphere. I have seen some cruising going on. However, according to some local gays, meeting others can be very difficult.

On Kowloon Peninsular there is the Waltzing Matilda, a mixed bar with straight clientele, Hong Kong gays and Westerners. Most Hong Kong gays who go there are interested in meeting Westerners. There is also some hustling activity at the Waltzing Matilda.

Other areas where gay men hang out are the public toilets. A local gay man has actually mapped out 24 public toilets where gay pick-up occurs, noting the "busy hours" at each particular toilet. However pick-up or sex at the toilets is very dangerous. Undercover police often raid and arrest gay men for public indecency.

There are three gay bath houses in Hong Kong but sex on the premises is not possible. Instead young masseurs

employed there are available for after-hours services. Of course for a fee. There are also a few motels where gay men rent rooms by the hour to have sex with their partners. However Hong Kong police often raid these establishments. There is also a fancy gym used by many gay men. I hear that there are often sex scenes in the locker room.

The Middle Bay is a beach where many gay men go during the summer. There is cruising on the beach and often sex among the rocks.

For Hong Kong lesbians there are no women's bars, except for Disco Disco where a small number of lesbians go. Some lesbians hang out at hotel coffee shops while others remain within their own social circles. Lesbians have informal circles known as TB (Tom Boys), as well as TBG (Tom Boys' Girlfriends).

Due to cultural and economic pressures, most Hong Kong gays and lesbians live with their families. As a result it is difficult to find a place for privacy. Some gays and lesbians would take weekend trips to islands such as Lantau where they rent a place to enjoy a romantic weekend or perhaps wild sex with their loved ones. There are only a few lesbians and gay men who are rich enough to afford their own place.

For lesbians and gay men in Hong Kong, there are very few places where they can feel safe.

The Life

"Met in Public Toilet: Gay Police arrested for Rough Sex in a Hair Salon - sentenced to Six Months". "The Cure for AIDS - Stop Homosexuality". "Union faces dilemma due to article on Gays". These are some of the anti-gay newspaper headlines in the Hong Kong press.

Homosexuality in Chinese means love between the same sex. However in Hong Kong, some consider homosexuality a disease which can "contaminate" youth. Sodomy laws brought over by the British can condemn offenders to a life sentence.

Hong Kong morality is a mixture of Western religious influences and Chinese traditional values. The economic pressures of a highly competitive environment, a lack of security over the transition to China's rule in 1997, as well as the incredible emphasis on personal material advancement contribute to the general low consciousness and apathy of Hong Kong citizens about public affairs. More than a century of rule by the British has seen little agitation for change or self-government. The only representative body is the comparatively recent Legislative Council which only has an advisory capacity in law making. The Governor, appointed by the British Crown is still the foremost legislative authority.

The majority of gays in Hong Kong live double lives. During the day, they hide their gay identity while at night they take off their masquerade to live a moment of reality. Places frequented by gays are dangerous and subject to police surveillance. In public toilets gay men must be cautious in striking up conversations with others. At gay bars, public toilets and bath houses where gay men are more visible, police often spot check for identification and papers. Names collected are said to find their way onto a vice list. Many profes-

continued on page 14

Hong Kong from page 13

sions and businesses are prejudiced against gays. Government employees face dismissal if their gay identities are revealed.

Marriage is a major social pressure from the families of Hong Kong gays. Some gay men marry and have children to fulfill this family obligation. Their spouses, in consequence, become victims of this unfair social system. Relatively younger gays are considerably freer from this pressure.

Ageism is also a characteristic of Hong Kong gay life. Local gay men over thirty-five express their difficulties in meeting partners unless they can fulfill the material needs of younger gay men.

Because of the insecurity, prejudice and the severe sodomy statutes a

constant problem for Hong Kong gays is blackmail. A sensational case involving the blackmail and suicide of a British Government officer in the early 80's highlighted the vulnerability of most gay men.

There are no laws in Hong Kong criminalizing lesbian sex. However since 1984 discussions of lesbianism have focussed on their "demoralizing" influence on society. In general Hong Kong lesbians and their gay male counterparts do not move in the same circles. Many gay male social activities do not seem to attract lesbian interest. Due to family and societal pressures lesbians tend to be more hidden and closeted than gay men. Lesbians rarely participate in the nascent gay move-

ment in the colony.

Gay Politics: A Brief History

Hong Kong's anti-homosexual law was introduced in 1865 by the United Kingdom following Victorian Law. Since then the law has never been changed although in Britain homosexual acts have been decriminalized for persons over the age of 21. Hong Kong gay politics can be documented as far back as 1931. In that year, Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, the

owner was arrested and charged with operating a gay business. The managers of the Art Center, Mr and Mrs Tang, initiated a petition drive to legalize homosexual acts between consenting adults. For the first time, an English play with overtly gay themes, *The Spitting Image*, was produced at the Art Center. In 1980, a Hong Kong discotheque publicly advertised Thursday night as gay night. The owners were penalized by the government who refused to renew their liquor license. Local gay writer, Sam Sasha (pseudonym) published the first piece of Hong

Kong gay literature in Chinese - *25 questions about homosexuality*. And the first Chinese gay play, *The Hidden Tide*, was performed in public. In 1982 a Committee on law reform focussing on laws regarding homosexuality submitted its official report on Hong Kong gays. During



Disco Disco on Hong Kong Island

renowned sexologist and homosexual rights activist, publicly discussed the causes of homosexuality on Radio Hong Kong during his visit. At that time there were such groups as the Coconut Group, the Mushroom Group and the Rainbow Group. These were primarily attempts by gay men to create their own social circles. In 1977 legislative council member Mr. Hobley proposed amending Hong Kong law to be in line with United Kingdom legislation where sodomy between consenting adults has been decriminalized. This proposal was rejected. In 1978 the Hong Kong Police's Special Investigation Unit (S.I.U.) was formed, resulting in a tremendous increase in prosecutions against gay men. In 1979 a gay bar

the next two years, there were massive debates, petition drives both pro- and anti-gay, and citizen opinion surveys. In 1983, a group of Hong Kong gays sent a petition to the United Kingdom requesting the renewal of the homosexual law reform effort. They also sought support from overseas gay organizations. In 1984, Sam Sasha published *the History of Chinese Homosexuality* - a survey of homosexuality from the earliest dynasties.

Gay politics today

Societal pressure and oppression prevent many Hong Kong gays from involving themselves in gay politics. Many feel helpless and discouraged;

continued on page 15

Hong Kong from page 14

others devote themselves solely to social activities and remain apathetic.

There are currently about 20 local gay activists undertaking the difficult task of gay liberation in Hong Kong. The *10% club*, a group formed 2 years ago is the only active gay organization. The group was initiated by Alan Li, one of the moving forces behind the *Gay Asians of Toronto* in Canada. The initial purpose of the *10% Club* was to provide a social outlet as well as to promote consciousness-raising among Hong Kong gay men. Since this was the first formal gay organization in Hong Kong, it initially received tremendous response. The members of the *10% Club* have organized many social events and produced plays such as *The Story of Two Boys*, *Itchy Bitchy Darling*, *The Outsider*, and others. However with the return of Li to Canada a decline in the activities of this group has occurred.

The Hong Kong Government is currently drafting the Basic Law which will serve as the foundation of the legal and constitutional system after 1997 when the territories revert to the Chinese Government. As a result gay activists are anxious to see that anti-homosexual legislation are not part of the Basic Law. Currently the options before the government are:

- 1) to leave homosexual acts illegal and punishable by up to life imprisonment,
- 2) to reduce the sentence to a maximum of 2 years, or
- 3) to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults over 21 years of age.

In the process of law reform the Hong Kong Government has released the Green Paper which is an official request for citizen opinion. A final decision will then appear as a White Paper.

The Government is currently studying the results of responses to its Green

Paper. Some 900 submissions have been received which is the largest public response to the issue of homosexuality in the Colony's history. The responses are said to be split 50/50 for and against law reform. Based on these results the government will decide whether to sponsor a bill for law reform. The *10% Club* has come out publicly in support of law reform and is lobbying the largely homophobic Legislative Council which has an advisory role in passing legislation.

Support for law reform has come from educators, artists, social workers, feminist organizations, intellectuals, academicians, health professionals, and the media. Opponents include religious fundamentalists, traditionalists, and neo-Confucianist elements.

Hong Kong gay politics is going through a turbulent and exciting phase. Discussions of homosexuality both pro- and anti- have reached a mass audience on an unprecedented level. Although many citizens of all sexual orientations may still be apathetic about gay issues, increasing levels of liberal support for gay rights have been generated. Students of Hong Kong and Chinese university have set up forums for the positive discussion of homosexual issues while at least one prominent religious leader has come out in support of law reform.

The media too has generally adopted a positive role. Some newspaper reporters have actually acquainted themselves with gay social circles in order to report on the experiences of gays. Their reports are mostly sympathetic to the oppression of gays and lesbians. They emphasize that gays and lesbians appear no different from straight people. Hong Kong Television has produced the first documentary about homosexuality. Radio stations have arranged interviews with Hong Kong gays and drag queens.

The opponents of law reform generally hold ignorant, stereotypical views of

gays and lesbians. They use Western religious morality, Chinese family values and the spread of AIDS as their arguments. They often employ offensive language against gays during public speaking. Some feel that current homosexual law is cruel but they believe that reducing the sentence to two years maximum can provide a chance to "cure" homosexuals.

The activists working for law reform in Hong Kong seem to have reached the professional and intellectual elite. However there appears to be a need for a concerted effort to start a dialogue with all Hong Kong residents. For gay people themselves there is also the issue of consciousness-raising. Middle-class gays live in fear that their homosexuality, if discovered, would jeopardize their careers and embarrass their families. Lower and working class gays and lesbians are concerned about making a better living. They do not feel that the passage of legislation would benefit them or improve their homophobic living environment. With the impending reversion of Hong Kong to the Chinese government in 1997 and the desire to live in a more gay tolerant environment many of all classes are seeking ways to emigrate.

Without a sense of dignity and self-worth many gays and lesbians in Hong Kong cannot see a role for themselves in the gay movement. The president of the *10% Club*, Mr. Lai, said that he is planning on reorganizing the club to include consciousness-raising activities. During an interview, gay writer Sam Sasha expressed his wish that gay liberation in Hong Kong should include the notion of human rights. His vision of gay liberation stresses the importance of human dignity. He also expressed the wish to see Hong Kong as the starting point of gay liberation in Mainland China.

The seeds of gay liberation have been planted in Hong Kong. The fate of the gay movement depends on the determination of Hong Kong gays and lesbians themselves. □

Wild West from Page 8

were out-of-place and may have felt ashamed. One day when I took the subway a straight couple had got on the train and they felt embarrassed as they were greatly out-numbered by the gays on the train. I felt both sorry and embarrassed for the couple on one hand as I know what it is like to feel out of place. And yet, on the other hand, I felt quite good because I wasn't alone and I didn't feel isolated anymore. I know that we were all together in a large community and I was proud to be an Asian in America. And for this reason alone I thought my vacation to San Francisco was well worth it and I hope to go back to the City by the Bay very soon. □

Yale from page 9

and homosexuality in Japanese comic books. By juxtaposing Japanese rock music with the slides of violent sex in ukiyo-e prints and cartoons, she led the audience to see sexual themes in Japanese pop culture as a unity. The audience's many challenging questions for the speakers were clear proof of the enthusiasm these talks generated.

This was only the second conference by the Yale Center, and this annual event promises to grow in numbers and quality. Since the Center thrives on different points of view, it welcomes participation from all members of the gay community. If you would like to be considered for future panel discussions, or if you just want to be on the mailing list to receive information about next year's conference, write to LGSCY, c/o Prof. John Boswell, Box 2585 Yale Station, New Haven CT 06520.

Calendar of Events

Jan 15, Saturday 1 p.m. Rap-Brunch at Jin's. Topic of discussion: "Asians as Wallflowers: Are we invisible in the gay/lesbian community?" See announcement on page 2. Call Jin (262-6670) for more information.

Jan 17, Tuesday 7:30 p.m. Forum on U.S. Immigration Law and Law Reform. Congressman Barney Frank and immigration lawyers will provide information on applying for legal status, recent changes in immigration requirements, and other legislation in the works. Also facts about HIV testing requirements. Sponsored by Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) and AMALGM. Call GLAD (426-1350) for more information.

Place: Room 222 University of Mass. Park Square Campus, 250 Stuart Street Boston.

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