No Silence for Domestic Violence

Chloe Poon

There is an old Chinese saying that says “the bad things that happened in the family should never be spoken about outside of the family.” Unfortunately, domestic abuse is considered as one of the “bad things” that should never be discussed outside of the family and the saying is still applicable in many Asian cultures today.

In MA, the number of domestic violence incidents rose 300% in the past three years (Jane Doe Inc). According to the National Coalition against Domestic Violence, one in every four women will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime. An estimate of 1.3 million women are physically assaulted by an intimate partner each year. Comparing the national statistics to the data gathered in community-based studies compiled by the API Institute on Domestic Violence, 41-60% of Asian women reported having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner each year. Comparing the national statistics to the data gathered in community-based studies compiled by the API Institute on Domestic Violence, 41-60% of Asian women reported having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner each year.

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About Spectrum

Spectrum is a newsletter with articles on social, economic, and political issues related to Asian Americans. It is published once a semester, but accepts submissions at all times of the year! Those who are interested in submitting a piece can email the editor at cherry.lim@tufts.edu.

About Asian American Alliance

Asian American Alliance (AAA)’s mission is to bring all members of the Tufts community together by fostering an environment for instituting political changes concerning Asians and Asian Americans, enhancing the social interactions among all students, and creating a better understanding of Asian and Asian American identity at Tufts. All students are welcome to bring any issues to our board. Please contact us via our president, Yin Lin at yin.lin@tufts.edu.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Tufts,

I hope that this edition of Spectrum finds you well. Only a few more weeks and we’ll be free! This semester has been a very exciting for all of us here at AAA and at Tufts. With the midterm elections to key legislation in Congress to the selection of our own president, it can be hard to keep track of it all. I hope that after you read this, it will spark your interest in Asian American issues and you’ll see the relevance and importance of them in today’s world. As the political arm of the Asian American body on campus, Asian American Alliance is here to help you learn and do more. We hope that you’ll get in touch with us soon!

Sincerely,

Cherry Lim, A11
Every Halloween, the Asian American Alliance (AAA) collaborates with the Leonard Carmichael Society (LCS) to bring in a group of 1st graders from Chinatown’s Josiah Quincy Elementary School to participate in the annual LCS Halloween on the Hill event.

This collaboration is significant because in the past, the event traditionally only served children from the Medford/Somerville area. Historically, the club has supported Boston Chinatown community because it, too, is a part of the larger Tufts community, accommodating both the Tufts Medical and Dental Schools. This year, AAA was able to bring in a group of about 50 children for yet another successful day of Halloween fun. Funding for busing was generously provided by the Tisch College for Active Citizenship, and to better serve a majority of ethnically Chinese parents at the JQUS School, permission slips were even translated into Chinese characters.

The event itself was held on Saturday October 30th, 2010 and lasted from 11am until 3pm for general volunteers. Registration was hosted in the Carmichael Hall lounge, and from here group leaders met the children under their care for the day and began their Halloween adventure around the Tufts campus. The schedule for the day included events such as trick-or-treating at various dorm buildings, a performance by the Traveling Treasure Trunk, Tufts’ only children’s theater troupe, and a magic show by current Tufts senior, Marcell Babai. Volunteers and children alike were costumed from action heroes to princesses and witches, creating a festive and engaging atmosphere.

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Never Perfect: The Role of Race and Culture in Defining Beauty

Jocelyn Chan

A workshop presented at the 2010 Boston Asian American Student Intercollegiate Conference (BAASIC)

Look into the mirror; what do you see? In today’s society, it has become socially acceptable to respond to such a query with a litany of self-criticisms as regular dinner table talk. Beauty has become a currency, and the proliferation of media presents a growing need to discuss the startling results that occur when body image, race, media, mental health, and culture are conflated. When I had initially

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partner during their lifetime. Of those women, 32.1% said that they “kept quiet.” 44.8% of women surveyed reported that they or other Asian women they knew to have been abused did “nothing” to protect themselves. Only 15.7% called the police and 9.0% obtained help from an agency. Many do not believe in intervention or only believe in intervention within friends and family members, rather than seeking professional help. A recent Harvard School of Public Health report also notes that, based on the MA homicides due to domestic violence between 1993-2002, people born outside of the United States were three times more likely to die of domestic violence homicide that their US counterparts.

Traditionally, only physical violence is considered as abuse. Other acts of abuse, such as emotional, financial, verbal, and identity abuse, are often dismissed and are not seen as abuse. Not only is there often a lack of understanding of domestic violence, seeking help outside of the family is often perceived as a disgrace to the family because of the stigma that private matters should be handled internally. Sometimes, immigrant survivors have no other family connection besides their partner in the country and/or have no knowledge regarding the community resources available to them due to isolation by their batterer. Leaving their spouse would means starting new lives with limited or non-existent English language skills and possibly leaving their children alone with the abuser. In addition, survivors’ immigration status and fear of deportation also plays an important factor in their decision to get help (Many are not aware that they will not be deported for seeking help from domestic violence). Even when survivors do seek help, most mainstream human service agencies present cultural and linguistic barriers to Asian families.

Domestic violence abuse is not just an issue of physical violence. Therefore, next time you hear a peer or friend using sexist/racist language, even jokingly, speak up against it. Challenge any acts of patriarchy and boycott media that reinforces and contributes to stereotypes. Changes start within our communities; together, we can strive to eliminate violence and to empower and provide hopes to those who are in the midst of relationship violence.

To request workshops or trainings on domestic violence and/or cultural competency, please contact: Qingjian Shi (Director of Education and Outreach) at qjshi@atask.org or 617-338-2350 x 234. For more information, or join our flock at Facebook.com/ATASK or www.atask.org.

About the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence
The mission of the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK) is to provide hope to survivors and prevent domestic violence in Asian families and communities. ATASK is New England’s only provider of linguistically and culturally appropriate services and programs for Asian survivors of domestic violence. For domestic violence victims who are unsafe, helpless and hopeless, ATASK offers a safe haven, help and hope over fear.

Chloe Poon is a senior majoring in Community Health and Chinese.
In September, the Council of Fashion Designers of America awarded all of its three prizes for best new designers of the year to Asian Americans for the first time. Among the recipients was Jason Wu, a Manhattan-based, Taiwanese-American designer, most famous for creating the white organza gown worn by Michelle Obama to the inauguration balls. The First Lady has worn his designs on several other occasions, even appearing on the cover of Vogue in a magenta silk dress created by Wu. Wu’s success reflects the growing prominence of Asian Americans in the fashion world. In the 1980’s, only a few Asian Americans, such as Anna Sui and Vera Wang, had achieved success in the industry. By contrast, at New York’s Fashion Week this September, twenty-five Asian American designers were featured, including Phillip Lim, Derek Lam and Alexander Wang. Furthermore, the creative aesthetic of these Asian American designers is very diverse; no one style can be defined as “Asian American”. For example, the urban style of Alexander Wang is markedly different from Derek Lam’s classic sophistication.

It appears that Asian Americans will remain at the forefront of the fashion industry. Major design schools are enrolling increasing numbers of Asian and Asian American students. Between 1998 and 2008, the number of Asian American students at Parsons School of Design tripled. At the Fashion Institute of Technology, 23 percent of the students are of Asian descent. Some claim that the increase of young Asian Americans interested in pursuing...
Asian American Alliance

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fashion can be largely attributed to a cultural shift in the Asian community that allows them to pursue less traditional careers. More Asian parents today understand that success can be achieved outside the fields of medicine or business. Of course, this is not the case for everyone. Phillip Lim, a Thailand-born designer, did not tell his parents before changing his major for business to fashion merchandising. However, with the success of these Asian American designers, fashion may become a more acceptable career path in the eyes of Asian parents. Hopefully, the number of Asian American designers will only continue to rise as a result.

Kay Lowe is a sophomore who is undecided.

Halloween on the Hill
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Overall, this year’s Halloween on the Hill made for a long but rewarding day. The 1st graders all seemed to enjoy themselves and the volunteers seemed to really connect with their kids. My personal favorite part of the day was the magic show, and hearing the kids’ reactions to what they were certain was impossible. It was also especially great to see the means of partnership among the many different student groups on campus and the greater Medford/Somerville and Boston communities. Halloween on the Hill is a fun and worthwhile experience that allows Tufts students to give back to the local community. I would definitely recommend this event to anyone who has not yet gotten the chance to experience it!

Joseph Ha is a junior majoring in Quantitative Economics.
signed on to co-facilitate a workshop regarding these issues as presented by Regina Park’s documentary “Never Perfect”, I was not sure of its reception or the level of interest it would generate. However, the sheer number of people that packed the room, sat on the floor, and lined the back wall presented an awe-inspiring show of the significance and relevance of this topic to people our age today.

Indeed, the sobering statistics present a compelling case: as reported by the Department of Health and Human Services, Asian American adolescent girls have the highest rates of depressive symptoms of all racial and gender groups and Asian-American women ages 15-24 have the highest suicide rate of women in any race or ethnic group in that age group. One study has shown that as young as the fifth grade, Asian-American girls have the highest rate of depression so severe, they have contemplated suicide. In regards to body image specifically, between 2004 and 2006 the American Society of Plastic Surgeons noted a 58% increase in plastic surgery amongst Asian American women; moreover, the most commonly requested surgeries were eyelid surgery, nose reshaping, and breast augmentation.

With these facts in mind, we watched “Never Perfect”, which traces the journey of a 27-year old Vietnamese American woman in her decision to undergo a blepharoplasty, the surgical term for the increasingly popular Asian double eyelid modification surgery. While some may argue that such decisions are utterly individualistic, Park’s documentary provides the framework for analyzing how this cosmetic procedure has been disseminated through history, and how it has to be contextualized through socio-political, racial, and historical lenses. Originally the unintended outcome of a surgery invented to cure the inward turning of the eye after infection, a Japanese doctor named Mikamo Hotaru designed a purely cosmetic procedure to produce the much-desired double eyelid crease in 1896. In his first article detailing the procedure he remarked that, “I hope that you try this procedure and the beautiful young ladies become much more attractive. Appearance is by all means one of their greatest concerns” This “[great] concern” and wartime gender dynamics are given as the primary reasons for the spread of cosmetic surgery in Asians. For after the establishment of military bases, red-light districts, and wartime brides, Asians females were greatly fetishized, which led to an increased awareness of Western beauty ideals. In fact, after the Korean War of the 1950s, plastic surgeons offered free cosmetic work for Koreans – many of which were prostitutes who specifically stated that they felt they would make more money if they looked more Caucasian. The distinguishing facial features, specifically the eye and nose shapes, were then studied and replicated.

Out of sheer curiosity, I asked the workshop how many people knew someone who had gotten the double eyelid surgery; nearly 80% of the room raised a hand. Thus, the effects of the blepharoplasty legacy can be seen today, as cosmetic surgery and the quest for the ideal becomes progressively more normalized. As one professor laments in the film, Asian-American women are often their own harshest critics, yet mental health is a highly taboo subject amongst the community. However the startling statistics speak for themselves, as they point to how the de-stigmatization of Asian-American body image and mental health issues is of not only paramount importance for the future, but also the present.

Jocelyn Chan is a junior double majoring in Art History and Chemistry.
Masquerade: A Charity Ball  
Yin Lin

On Saturday, October 23rd, 2010 Tufts University’s Asian American Alliance hosted its first intercollegiate charity semi-formal with Harvard Asian American Alliance, MIT Asian American Alliance, and MIT Chinese Students Club. The event was held at the Sheraton Commander Hotel located in Harvard Square and attracted over 500 college students.

The event raised over $1,800 for the Chinatown Library Campaign, which aims to have a branch of the Boston Public Library in the Chinatown neighborhood. While there are 25 branch libraries in Boston area, Chinatown has not had a library in over 50 years ever since the original branch was shut down due to construction. We hope that our contribution will bring the Chinatown Library Campaign committee one step closer to achieving its goal.

Special thanks to DJ Zeus and DJ Aja for donating their time to this worthy cause. Tufts AAA hopes to hold this highly successful event again next year so don’t miss it!

Yin Lin is a senior studying Economics and Chinese.

Current Asian America

What’s going on in the Asian American community

Surrogate Valentine

If you went to our Voices concert, not only did you miss an amazing performance by the talented Goh Nakamura, you also missed a chance to catch a sneak peek of Surrogate Valentine. From the director of White on Rice, Surrogate Valentine stars Goh as himself while he a life on the road, navigating friendships and relationships. Goh also has a song of the same name, so make sure you check out both when they hit screens near you!

DREAM Act

Also known as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act is a proposed piece of federal legislation that allows for minors that arrived in the US illegally to obtain citizenship through serving in the military or attending an institute of higher education. Have you called your congressperson to ask for their support? The congress switchboard number is (202)224-3121. Call today!