Yisei Celebrates the Centennial
I recently spent the Spring ’03 semester abroad in Seoul and ironically enough, it was while I was outside of the U.S. that I truly felt like a Korean American. Surrounded by a new Korean German roommate as well as Korean Japanese, Korean Australian, Korean Spanish, Korean Italian, and Korean Russian classmates, I was stunned by our striking similarities and relatively meager differences. Of what I might call our “two part identity labels,” it is the first half that we all shared and the second half that distinguished the Moscow girl from the Osaka boy from me, the Miami girl. It was precisely because our Korean backgrounds so powerfully tied us all together that I found myself clutching on tighter to that latter portion of the label, that American bit that completed the picture by adding the color and filling in the details of who I am.

editor’s note

In issue after issue, Yisei has showcased the voice of Korean undergraduates at Harvard. And Korean has translated into Korean American because, simply put, that is the part of Korea and the Korean people best known and represented on campus. But Yisei is a term merely defined and understood as “second generation” and is meant to identify the offspring of first generation Korean émigrés, whether here, there, or anywhere. So in this issue, we look a little beyond the boundaries of America, stretching our literary necks into the broader global arena from where we might be surprised to see how notable of an impact this rather small Asian peninsula has made. Like an international group of Yisei experiencing modern Korea and simultaneously looking back to where it has come from, this issue looks around the world today and traces influences back through geography and time to Korea as well.

With this issue’s theme, Yisei also commemorates the Centennial of Korean Immigration to the United States and adds to the yearlong national celebration. We honor the anniversary and the contributions of Korean immigrants and their descendants, especially that of the pioneers who landed in Honolulu on the 13th of January in 1903 and paved the way for the 2 million Korean Americans who now engage in various ways and aspects of American society.

So where is Korea? The fast answer can be looked up on a world map. The better answer follows: in the memories of émigrés; in the hearts of Koreans all over the world; in the lyrics of pop songs and the spirit of some promising athletes and artists; in images of a mass of red t-shirts in a stadium; in the stories told and printed about a war and families separated; in dynamic and intimate immigrant communities; in gadgets reflecting technological advancement and economic prowess; in the faces of people like me, stunned by our heritage and links to the rest of the world. In an age where boundaries are fading, we can still trace where Koreans have crossed them. For most of us here at Harvard, that means the immigration of our parents and our identities as Yisei. We have much to celebrate, so please take a moment and join us.

—Anna Hyojin Joo ’04, Editor-in-Chief
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Yisei Magazine: Voices of Koreans at Harvard is a bi-annual publication spearheaded by Korean-American undergraduates and directed towards the Harvard community at large. Since 1988, Yisei, which means "second-generation" in the Korean language, has been dedicated to serving as a forum in which Koreas and other Asian students can share their experiences, opinions, and literary talents. Each issue carries a broad theme, but the magazine always maintains a diverse collection of personal essays, short stories, interviews, poetry, news articles, photography, and artwork composed by students at the College. Yisei is proud to represent Harvard's Asian-American community as its only student-written publication and to present the ever so human, eclectic, and powerful voice of its contributors—often those who find their own uniqueness within the greater phenomenon of the shared Korean-American identity. For more information, please email us at yisei@phx.harvard.edu or visit our website at www.lcs.harvard.edu/yisei.

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paying respects to a korean american pioneer
by jane y. kim

Dr. Sammy Lee.
A pioneer.
A medallist.
A funny-man?

"What, were you expecting someone taller?" Sammy quipped as he walked into Fong auditorium. We laughed at that, and he kept us laughing throughout his talk. A guest speaker for the Korean Association's Centennial celebration this January in commemoration of the 100th year anniversary of Korean immigration to the States, Sammy radiated confidence, almost as though he were still on the high platform from which he performed his medal-winning dives. And boy did he make us giggle. I don't know what it was, exactly, but laughing at Sammy's jokes made me proud, made me feel the deeper sentiments regarding the Centennial that I'd been fishing for earlier on in the week. Something beyond the hip-hip-hooray hoopla that I had found myself resorting to.

Why was a belly-aching laugh also a proud moment?

A funny-man. I don't know how much this means to you folks, but a halabuji, a guy who almost looks like my grandfather (in that he's comparable in age—I'm not being finicky here), or who at least has the aura of my grandfather (who will always make me feel like I'm a little four-year old girl again), and also manages to make me want to pee in my pants from laughing so hard, is an amazing find.

I don't know what to say. I don't want to say that his easy humor surprised me, even though it sort of did. After all, for the sake of my Korean American brothers, I should refrain from declaring myself starved of humor from that sliver arena.

But there was something about the Ease with which he delivered his lines, a comfort with us, with the auditorium, with his shoes, perhaps, which left him just about one of the most natural presences I've heard speak. Maybe I'm just used to expecting a stiff "businessman" type or a fatherly "church-elder" type of Korean man to step up to the podium at
any celebratory Korean event. Not that I've been to many. My stereotype here is flagrantly outdated, no doubt, but the fact remains that this stereotype still hovers in my caffeine-induced thoughts after 100 years of assimilation, cultural pride, mainstream achievement, and whatever else you want to call our collective time here. The man that took over in my hometown church my senior year in high school and spearheaded some type of "youth revitalization" program for our high school department was a Princeton-educated, accent-bearing, overbearing man. Whenever he got up to speak, whether it be for a sermon or for announcements, I cringed, not because of the accent (although I winced at the plenitude of inappropriately affixed definite articles in his speech), but because of his forced jokes, his attempt to be "in" with the 16 year olds he was facing, his futile, though good-intentioned wish to be well-informed about his youthful congregation. I didn't dislike the guy. But inevitably, his image, as well as others of different but similar people, comes to mind when I take "Korean speaker" and "podium" and stick them together.

Then came Sammy Lee. I was in love. No longer did good speaking have to be limited to young second-generation Korean American MBAs giving inspirational talks to younger KA kids about "making it" in the big world. Finally.

I don't want to downplay his achievements. He is a great man. He coached Louganis, danced with him in his own living room, was a second dad to him, reared a handsome young son himself, imparted some of his charisma in front of coverage cameras before diving. He wowed crowds with clean, fantastically clean dives, with barely any splash. He was a bit of a showman with a lot of grin. I learned all this from old footage
that he showed in the middle of his talk. And I appreciated it. He was, and is, a huge milestone for us.

But what kept reverberating in my head after he spoke, were his one-liners, his sarcastic humor peeping out between his phrases, peppering his speech as if he couldn’t help himself. He acted as though he were comfortable in his shoes, in the auditorium, in front of us. There didn’t seem to be any pretense.

So a gold-medallist can be funny. Big deal. But he’s my grandfather’s age, I remind myself, nudging myself in the rib. Achievement and good looks and wit. Damn, he was a good package, as good as they come. He was also one of my predecessors.

We could all be like him. We could become more Sammy Lees, more Jane Kims (ha, we are more, seriously...do you know all three of us?), more Skyler Chos and Dan Changs and HeeJin Lees. We could be Derek Kirk Kim, online comic strip genius. We could be my friend in China, learning three Asian languages impromptu. Or my friend at SD, creating a new chapter to an Asian sorority on her campus. Or great orange-peelers, like myself. We could be a host of things, people, positions, greats. The next century that comes around for us here in Mee-Gook, these States will no doubt be host to a Korean American Pulitzer winner, a piercing, incisive talk show host à la Oprah, an Ivy League president, an award-winning illustrator...We’ll cover all the ground we haven’t yet, and though I take blame for the sentimentality in which I indulge at present—which I assure you comes rarely in culture-specific undertakings, from my experience—I also ask permission to volunteer all of your shoes, whether they be Kenneth Coles, Pumas, Jimmy Choos or tattered, old Converse like my own, with your feet in them, to step along in Sammy’s footsteps. Take inspiration from this man, who managed to be dignified, driven, and divertente all at the same time.

Somehow, a belly-aching laugh became a proud moment for me as a Korean American.

Jane Y. Kim ’05 is an English Concentrator in Pforzheimer House.
CHILD PRODIGY. WINNER OF THE FIRST PRIZE AND THE CONTEMPORARY

Music Prize at the Fifth Rostropovich International Cello Competition at age eleven. Cellist and Harvard Class of '06 Han-Na Chang began her musical studies at the age of three on the piano and switched to the cello three years later. Fourteen years later, she is now acclaimed as “one of today’s most outstanding young instrumentalists.” These titles were more than enough to make me fuss over my two-line e-mail, hoping that this Korean celebrity will agree to meet with me for an interview. To my pleasant surprise, she replied promptly and eagerly, agreeing to meet me in Hilles Library.

First we chatted some about her life as a student. She did not hesitate to rave about her experience at Harvard—“I got the impression that college life would be strict, all about studying. Instead, Harvard is alive with all kinds of interesting people and ideas.” Her only complaint about her life here at Harvard is that her room is too small. Otherwise, she absolutely loved all her first semester classes; she was taking some quite interesting ones, like a Freshman seminar on Faust and another class on Tolstoy—she is currently
considering literature a possible concentration.

"Lots of musicians I work closely with tell me to go to a liberal arts college because it's a once in a lifetime experience. I'm really happy that I'm here." Fortunately, not only is college proving to be a learning experience, but also one that is allowing her to grow as a musician. Han-Na has found that her intellectual endeavors at Harvard are not mutually exclusive with her passion for music, but rather, complementary. She explains, "There is a parallel between understanding the past through a writer and doing the same through a composer. I hope that understanding the culture the music comes from, I will be able to become a better performer."

Although she has successfully managed to be a Harvard student on top of being an internationally renowned musician, without doubt, she still places music as her "number one priority" when it comes to making a choice between the two. Outside of her classes, she still manages to maintain a daily practicing routine of five hours minimum. Although she finds it "easier than expected" to keep music as a major part of her life, Han-Na admits having to make small sacrifices to achieve bigger goals. While she admires the vibrant and dynamic campus, she herself has not had time to participate in any extracurricular activities. Even more seriously, she needs to do a lot of touring, which translates into a lot of long trips and missed classes. In the fall, she confesses that she missed a few weeks of school, but was able to catch up. This spring, however, she is going on longer tours around the world, and will be taking the semester off.

As an internationally influential Korean-American herself, she spoke of the increasing role that Koreans are playing in the international world—"Through musi-
cians, artists, athletes, and on a more local scale, doctors, lawyers, and other talented people, we are conveying the value of Koreans to the world.”

Despite her international presence and experiences, Han-Na admits that she is still a Korean at heart. She has been living in the United States for about ten years now, and she realizes that when she goes back to Korea to visit, she looks at many things with an “American perspective,” but she also declares a strong connection with her Korean side—“my heritage and where I’m from, I’m Korean. I read a lot of Korean books and listen to traditional Korean music.” Indeed, she passed the classic test for being a true Korean—when asked what she thinks of the dining hall food, laughing, she admitted that it’s not too bad but she has often experiences intense cravings for kimchi.

She notes how important her sense of her identity as a Korean is when she says, “Understanding my culture and where I come from makes an important foundation of who I am.” Han-Na hopes that the future, too, will hold something that will allow her to discover herself—“[This semester,] I spent a lot of time adjusting to Harvard, finding a balance between practicing and studying. When I return, I hope I can do some more self-exploration to find myself, figure out who I am and what’s important to me.” At an institution where students’ love-hate relationship with Harvard results in self-conscious complaints that pervade everyday conversations too often, Han-Na’s genuine enthusiasm was like a breath of fresh air. As we parted, I was in admiration of not only Han-Na Chang the virtuoso cellist (as I had already been before I stepped into Hilles that afternoon), but also Han-Na the freshman at Harvard, the Korean-American, and the person. I wished her the best of luck with her plans for the spring, and we exchanged goodbyes and promises of future encounters when she returns next fall.

Joo-Hee Chung ’05 is a Literature concentrator in Cabot House.
PURSUING THE DESIRE TO CREATE

When I was in kindergarten, I knew I wanted to be an artist. In school, although I excelled in academics, it was in art class that I was happiest. My parents never discouraged my interest in art, but they never fully encouraged it either. In their view, art was a hobby and nothing more. It has taken me fifteen years to come to terms with my dream of becoming an artist and to truly embrace it.Ironically, Harvard is where I have developed my different interests in the arts.

Early Experiences~

Although I had opportunities to do art here and there, it took a spot on the back burner to other things, and I never studied it seriously. My parents were more interested that I develop in other areas, like sports and the violin. I hated sports all together, and despite my father's hopes that I would become the next Sarah Chang, it took far too long for me to realize how rewarding practicing the violin could be. And then, of course, there was school, in which my parents naturally expected me to my best, but I also had quite high standards for myself. All these different activities did not lead me away from art. Rather, I'm glad my parents gave me this exposure like typically ambitious Korean parents, for it has allowed me to develop more fully as a person and as a result, I have more experiences from which to draw inspiration than if I had done art alone.

Although uncertain of which college I wanted to go to until junior year in high school, I wanted to be able to get into a place of my choice. My life was already centered on school, violin, student council, track, and church. I didn't have enough confidence in my art to believe it could take me somewhere. To the delight of my parents who thought that medicine was the optimal profession, at one point I wanted to become a doctor when ER was big and I thought George Clooney was hot. However, volunteering at a hospital (and after George Clooney left the show), helped me realize it wasn't something I wanted to do.

Somewhere around the same time, I watched a Korean drama about a guy who wants to become a singer and a girl wants to become a fashion designer and how they fall in love, a complicated story like most Korean dramas. Because it was filmed before the big IMF crash of the Korean economy, the cinematography is very romantic, and there are BMW Z3s all over the place. I loved the show and was inspired to pursue fashion design. Furthermore, this drama was followed by “Tomato” and “Model,” both dramas that glamorized the fashion industry and continued my interest in fashion.

My mom thinks that I wouldn't have gotten into fashion had I not seen this Korean drama, but I disagree. Ever since I was little, the female human form intrigued me, and I always doodled female figures during class. The show probably did spark my interest, but fashion fit perfectly with my fascination with the female form.
Early on, my parents informed me of the poverty-filled miserable lives of artists and advised me to pursue a career that would guarantee me a steady salary, a sensibility shared by many first generation Korean-Americans who lived in a post-Korean War Korea. My parents never gave up the 1970s Korean mentality that was suspicious of frivolity and luxury. Nevertheless, my parents, hoping that I would eventually return to my senses and pursue the path of one of the ‘ps’—(??, ??, etc.), treated my interest in fashion as a phase and reluctantly allowed me to further investigate. I began to peruse Vogue and took a class at Parsons for high school students. I’m pretty realistic about certain things, however, and my research of the industry provided me with a couple of conclusions: 1) the success rate of fashion designers is around two percent, and 2) many successful fashion designers encounter serious financial difficulties due to a horrible business sense. I wasn’t prepared to throw away everything I had worked for in high school so I could go to design school—not that I even had a portfolio to apply—and be someone’s assistant designer bitch for ten years and then maybe have a mediocre career of my own.

Instead of going to design school, I decided to go to a top-notch university to learn about business and otherwise get a well-rounded education. Because I wasn’t ready to make any kind of definitive decisions about the rest of my life, I figured that if I went to a college that was strong in all areas, I couldn’t go wrong.

In the meantime, the summer before senior year in high school I spent five weeks at Aspen Music Festival, the gathering grounds for some of the world’s most talented musicians—not that I was one of them—and where my friends taught me to love music. Music teachers also told me that the strength of my playing was rooted in my musicality. I found a new passion for music. In my last year of high school, I met a boy named Dylan, who wanted to start a band with a violin. We got together with his friend Scott, a drummer, and my friends Graham and Arjun, and put something together for our class’s superlatives awards ceremony in January, the “Academy Awards” and even wrote a couple more songs and performed several times. Incidentally, the president of Electric Lady Studios, originally owned by Jimi Hendrix, happened to live in our town. Sometime after the Academy Awards, he donated 24 hours of studio time to our school district PTA’s Goods and Services Auction. Normally, studio time at ELS costs $500 an hour, but by placing the winning bid we got 24 hours for $500. Recording and mixing four tracks in the same studio as rock stars was a surreal and amazing experience, one that made me want to join a band in college.

Upon early acceptance, I visited Harvard that winter. That weekend, I met some members of the Korean drum troupe, and I even snuck into Cultural Rhythms, which was hosted by Matt Damon that year. I definitely wanted to be a part of Cultural Rhythms when I came to Harvard. Then, I spent the summer before coming to Harvard, in Korea, which had changed and developed since the last time I was there.
While instilling in me a sense of Korean pride, the visit also made me feel a sense of loss. Although I looked like the Koreans I met, I felt like I had somehow been cheated out of the Korean cultural experience, only getting the distilled Korean-American version. Thus, I was determined to be involved in Korean-American activities on campus when I returned to Harvard to connect to Korean culture.

Experimentation with Fields

All of the different experiences I had the year before I came to Harvard planted seeds for my career here. Upon coming to college in the fall of 2000, my plan to pursue a joint-concentration in Economics and Visual and Environmental Studies (VES), flopped because the Economics department doubted that there would be anyone who could read a joint thesis required of joint concentrators. Because I didn’t declare myself as a VES concentrator, I didn’t get into the drawing class I applied to in the fall. So like a good little freshman, I took Ec 10 and Expos, and still on my Korea high, I took FC80 and Korean 102a. I also joined the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, became a Korean Association freshman representative, wrote for Yies a bit, and joined the Han Ma Eum Korean drum troupe.

With my classes other than Korean being pretty miserable and finding orchestra restrictive to my artistic impulses, I had trouble adjusting to college life. Spring semester, I went crazy. I hated Ec10, so I resolved to take classes that would allow me to follow an alternate career path that guaranteed financial stability, turning to the dark side of the pre-med by taking Chem 20. Furthermore, deciding that college was my last opportunity to pursue art, I finally declared myself a VES concentrator and got myself into a painting class. To top off my course load, I took Music 93r, a chamber music master class for HRO members.

The ridiculousness of being pre-med as my backup plan for life soon became obvious, and a bad experience with Music 93r involving a fight with some close friends turned me off to orchestra and playing classical music. At the same time, I loved painting and started becoming comfortable with the idea of doing VES. In terms of my Korean activities, drum troupe and the performing in Cultural Rhythms and Arts First were still fun, so I started to take on a bigger role in the drum troupe, learning the gwenggari (the hand gong) and thus leading the group as the ?? At the end of the spring, I was weary and broken by freshman year, feeling lost and unsure of myself. I hadn’t been pursuing the things I was actually interested in.

When by a stroke of luck, I obtained an internship at Marc Jacobs, my favorite designer, I worked there for a month before I couldn’t take it any more and quit. I learned a lot about the industry, but I was tired of just doing the drudgework. Furthermore, the internship disillusioned me towards fashion because I saw the sweatshops and other dirty aspects of the glamorous world of fashion. I still doubted myself and had to explore other options before I committed to fashion hardcore.

Upon returning to Harvard in the fall, I took more economics courses because I had pretty good mathematical and analytical skills and wanted to explore the world of finance. Moreover, I also took
a mixed media VES class that taught me a great deal about being an artist and making art, forcing me to think about my art for the first time. My extracurricular activities also began a process of gradual change. I quit HRO, and meanwhile, the boys in the drum troupe taught me how to lead in preparation for the future of the troupe after their graduation. Unable to turn my back totally on fashion, as publicity chair on KA, I used my board position to postpone the annual Culture Show to the spring so I could incorporate a short fashion show into the program.

Although I loved my VES class fall semester, my other classes were pretty miserable, and I was confused. The desire to prevent my parents from being worried about me being an artist burn on the streets after I graduated led me to take courses that I thought might help me get a job. Perhaps the emphasis of financial security is not uniquely Korean, but I have always associated it with being Korean because it is what I have learned from my parents. Trying e-recruiting confirmed my suspicions that I wasn’t cut out for business. With another economics course, I couldn’t find a painting class that fit my schedule, so I took silkscreen and sculpture, but I wasn’t passionate about them.

Experimentation with Art~

Three weeks before the Culture Show, because I only had a limited skill in sewing, I didn’t know what I would do. First, I asked different people to lend me their hanboks. Then I started playing around with ideas of identity by manipulating images with silkscreen and deconstructing techniques. With a bunch of Korean girls to model the clothes, I threw something together, very last minute. I decided that the idea of the fashion show would be the evolution of Korean clothing and identity from traditional to present, when Korean-Americans have this dual identity. The fashion show wasn’t much, but it taught me a lot about putting on a fashion show. It also led to other things.

One of the models in my little show had a roommate, Nadia Johnson, who happened to be in the audience. She was one of the producers for BlackCAST’s annual fashion show, Eleganza, and asked me if I’d like to put my pieces in her show. I thought this would be exciting and agreed, although my pieces weren’t much. My roommates and I went to Eleganza together. I was very pleased with the way they showed my work; they made it look very hip. When we came out of the show, my roommate Michelle Young said to me, “Let’s put on an Asian fashion show,” partly in response to the fact that Eleganza is
always produced by members of Harvard's black community. To this I replied, "I don't know..."

However, the more I thought about it, the more the idea of putting on a fashion show appealed to me, and Michelle and I decided to take on this big task together. Nadia and Crystal Carpino, another producer of Eleganza, gave us information and advice about producing a fashion show, and as the spring semester came to a close, we began plans for our own show.

Meanwhile, after quitting HRO, I missed playing the violin because it had become a big part of my life after almost ten years of practicing. I had a couple of friends in the band Subject to Change, and I knew that at one point they had been looking for a new violinist, so I told them I was interested. After giving me a chance to play with them for Arts First, they eventually asked me to join the band.

At the end of sophomore year, I made some decisions upon reflecting on the past year. I realized I no longer take classes or do things because I felt like I should do them. Instead, I would do things because I wanted to do them. I let go of my silly ideas of taking classes that I thought would help me get "real" jobs in the future and decided to develop in the areas that I was passionate about. I started to become comfortable with the fact that instead of academics, my true passion was in the arts and performing, making the resolution to really explore these. I decided that the following semester I would take a painting class no matter what. I was determined to concentrate on the activities I was passionate about, namely, the band, the drum troupe, and the fashion show.

I missed Korea and wanted to go back again, but plans to work in a hakwon teaching English fell through, and I stayed at home in New York to work on my new project, the fashion show. That summer, I took a sewing class at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan, and Michelle and I went to SoHo to try to get designers to sign on for our fashion show. We wanted to expose Harvard to the cutting edge of fashion, which in the United States is located in New York City. We went all around SoHo, getting the corporate information of all the stores that were remotely interesting to us, divvied up the list, and called each of them up. Having talked to many of these companies in my efforts to gain an internship, I knew this would be no easy task, and it wasn't. We called about one hundred companies, endlessly playing phone tag, and in the end, we had less than ten working with us on the show. It took us much of the summer to get through to these companies, but we learned a great deal through the process.

Impulse to Create~

We named our show "Contradictions." In putting on our Asian fashion show, our intent was to show that, contrary to stereotypes recently highlighted by the Abercrombie & Fitch debacle and Juice Fong's Spring 2001 FM article "The Invasian," Asians
could do stuff that was hip, not just science and computers. We originally planned to try to get cool Asian
designer clothing, but we soon realized that doing an Asian show would only
perpetuate stereotypes about self-segregation and decided to make the
show open to all ethnicities.

We worked out the logistical and administrative details to finish up
arrangements with the companies that had agreed to lend us clothing
for our show even when fall soon rolled in. Once we got to school,
we worked on getting groups to agree to perform in our show, and
we asked students of different ethnicities to lend us their traditional
clothing for one segment of our show. Then there was publicity and
the selection of models, auditioning a diverse group but also making sure
that Asians were represented. We wanted to make sure that Harvard
got to see beautiful Asians in our show. I also designed several outfits for the show, continuing my work
on Korean-American identity.

Meanwhile, leading and rebuilding the drum
troupe after losing over a half of our members was a
daunting task, but performing was still fun reminded
me of why I stuck with the it. Subject to Change also
performed several times during the semester, even
having the opportunity to play at Club Passim and
House of Blues, sounding better than I have ever before. We rehearsed every week, and I gradually became more comfortable with the band, especially as I helped write new songs. Drum troupe and the band made me realize how much I thrive on performing in front of groups of people.

Painting class and a contemporary art
theory class that semester made me excited about
being a VES concentrator. I finally felt like I was
learning to paint through the crazy ramblings and
instructive comments of my painting professor, and I was
starting to understand the insanity of contemporary art in the
theory class. I became truly excited about art, and I started to
consider a career as an artist.

The fashion show was in
early December, a week before
my twenty-first birthday. Starting the month before the show,
Michelle and I did nothing but prepare for the show, which was
fun in a masochistic sort of way and successful. I put DJ DOC's
"Run to You" in the show as my ode to Koreans. I believe we
were successful in our intent to portray positive images of
Asians, and I think some Asian students came away
from our show pleased that Asians were such a big part of it. I think Michelle and I are still kind of
reacting to what we did in the aftermath. It definitively took a long time to recover; I caught a cold
after the show, didn't eat or sleep well until I came home, and lost eight pounds between Thanksgiving and winter break.

Not only did it run us down physically but it also became such an overwhelming part of my
life. To fill the void, I am now doing costume design for The Sorcerer and designing clothes for
two other fashion shows, in addition performing with Subject to Change and drum troupe. People have been asking us if we'll do another show. We'll
see. The fashion show introduced me to producing shows, leading me to take an introduction video class, and I continue to explore different opportunities in the arts here at Harvard.

With one more year left at Harvard, the thought of graduating terrifies me. I realized as I was walking through the yard the other day that I really love being at Harvard. As I constantly think about the future, I keep trying to accept the fact that I don’t know what the future holds, and I struggle to become comfortable with uncertainty.

When I was in Korea briefly last summer, I found a widespread tendency in Korean society towards conformity. Once one person is successful in something, whether it is getting into Harvard or setting some new fashion trend, there is a scramble to follow that person’s formula for success rather than taking a risk to do something new. This characteristic among Koreans is what I attribute as the cause behind my parents’ lack of wholehearted support for my artistic endeavors. Their doubt causes me to constantly second-guess what I’m doing and makes me try to find alternate paths for myself. However, the more I think about things and try them out, the more I can’t deny that the only path I can follow is the path of an artist. **Maybe I’ll be a painter, or a fashion designer, or a producer, or a musician, but regardless of what I become, my impulse will always be to create.**

Furthermore, being Korean American is an important part of who I am. I may not be actively involved in Korean-American political and social activism, but issues involving Korean Americans nevertheless concern me. I want to affect positive changes by pushing the envelope in the arts. By discovering new ways to become involved in the arts, I am determined to create opportunities for other Koreans while also reinforcing positive images of Korean Americans in American society. The 2002 World Cup was great for Koreans because it was a way for us to show that we are a force in the international arena. Through my artistic pursuits, I hope to represent Koreans as innovators at Harvard and beyond.

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*Janet Kim ’04 is a Visual and Environmental Studies concentrator in Kirkland House.*
As a relatively sheltered youth I had limited exposure to American mainstream pop culture, defining my social life with my studies and video game systems. Not until a sudden epiphany hit me in junior high did I make any effort to keep myself updated with the desultory chaos that was comprised of Billboard charts and box office reports. It was hard keeping up with what was “in” and what was “out”. In seventh grade I realized that no matter how hard I tried to convince myself otherwise, I was on the path of the social pariah, the road to loserdom, the trail to the land of dorks. I set out to keep myself in the know, and flooded myself with Puff Daddy and Notorious B.I.G, the nonstop supply of teenage chick flicks, John Woo movies, Usher, Kai...the list went on and on, as I found myself a slave to the entertainment industry, hypnotized by the adverse grip of ads and jingles and trailers and television previews. I trained my eyes and ears to pick up on the latest trends, that which was popular and acceptable...and after a year I found myself utterly sick of the crap I was listening to. The songs were repetitive and unoriginal, the artists unskilled and untalented. The percentage of quality movies made was horrifyingly low.

As I found myself lost in a state of perplexity and disillusionment, my friend handed me his CD player and played for me the new album he had bought. I heard three angelic voices, digitally altered and perfected, accompanied by synthesizers and electronic drums, and found myself abashedly drawn to such quirky melodies. Listening to S.E.S.’s “I’m Your Girl” was the beginning of a journey, as a new trail was set out before me. Such was my first experience with Korean music, an experience that would lead to a whole new lifestyle of entertainment and a newfound devotion to gayo (Korean pop). Over the coming months I began to expose myself to this new growing phenomenon at a time when a unique style of pop was making its mark on the South Korean community and would, in the coming years, impact the world as a whole. Subsequently I found myself free from the drudgery of American music and the crap that was being produced monthly by no-name pretty boys and boisterously half-naked skanks.

We have thus come at a crucial juncture in Korean entertainment, when artists and talents are no longer chosen for their physical appeal; the days of “training” singers are over; this is the time of talent, the reign of the chosen and skilled. Hit songs are produced with a grain of salt and an insightful ear; performance dance choreographies are becoming more rigorously challenging and physically demanding; hit groups that became popular through the grace of their good looks have begun to work on their musical abilities and, as of late, have mastered them; movies are being made with a sense of originality and sensitivity. Over the past decade, Korean entertainment has expanded its horizons, impacting the lives of many devout and loyal audiences (not the least of which is this particular author), in Seoul and beyond. More importantly, this phenomenon has finally begun to reach American shores, fittingly, at the mark of the Korean immigration centennial anniversary.

Perhaps this revolution began with the boy-band monster known as H.O.T. (High-five Of’Teenagers). The ludicrousness of the acronym was no obstacle for these five young talents, who set a mark in Seoul by becoming the new hip face
features

of Korean entertainment. Despite several issues concerning plagiarism (their first song, "Chunsae Hoo Ae," was considered a blatant rip-off of a Cypress Hill hit), with each album released, H.O.T. constantly redefined both themselves as musicians and Korean media as a whole. After five albums, a Japanese movie and original soundtrack, and their own product line, H.O.T. managed to become more than a music group—it became a pop culture phenomenon. Since their break-up, each singer has gone his separate way; two of them have formed solo careers, while the other three have formed the new group J.T.L. During their time together, H.O.T. managed to spread their appeal to countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and especially to the United States, where not only Korean-Americans but society as a whole was exposed to their music, as is evidenced by their participation in the MTV Music Video Awards. Fellow boy band group GOD was similarly asked to participate in the MTV Music Video Awards, as was duo CLON.

The SM Production Label, which created H.O.T., has produced similarly influential groups such as the now-disbanded S.E.S., the three-girl group that made their mark in Japan and China not only through musical performances but through other such media as theatre (member Shoo performed in a Japanese musical in Tokyo). There's also BoA, the young teenage prodigy who was the first Korean to reach the top slot on Japan's music charts and constantly advertises for not only Korean products but Japanese merchandise as well. She is currently on leave in New York, being trained by Americana musicians and dance choreographers to perfect her skills. The SM family has had performances in China, Japan, and the U.S.

The influence of Korean music is steadily extending itself to the global community at large, in which gayo (Korean pop) is praised as the best form of Asian music. Korean music has also steadily become more Americanized, incorporating the plethora of genres and styles available in the best of American pop music into their songs and performances and appealing to a larger audience base, including the American community. Whereas a decade ago the majority of Korean pop stars utilized a strict dance/pop style, such as Roo'Ra and Kim Gun Mo, we have today artists who experiment with the punk rock/grunge style, Limp Bizkit-esque rap-rock groups, R&B/soul singers, and rappers who revel in a unique style that has made Korean hip-hop one of a kind.

The popularity of Korean-Americans has also increased the allure of Korean pop. Singers born and raised in America but fluent in the Korean language have utilized their uniquely dual perspective on both Korean and American musical styles into their music. Artists such as J, Yoo Seung Jun, Brian from Fly to the Sky, Kim Jo Han, Lena Park, Andy and Eric of Shinhwa, Joon Park of GOD, Danny and Teddy from JTYM, Perry, Jinsu, and dozens of other...
Korean-Americans have all succeeded in creating a new musical formula infusing the best American styles into Korean pop, generally in the realm of R&B and hip-hop.

The international appeal of Korean entertainment is beginning to palpably reveal itself. Recently, superstars Uhmm Jung Hwa and Kim Gun Mo were asked to participate in a special interview on worldwide news channel CNN, to share their experiences as singers with host Dalton Tanonaka on the special corner “Talk Asia”. In 2001, R&B duo Brown Eyes was invited to an online chat with superstar Michael Jackson on his website, michaeljackson.com, to discuss issues such as world peace and their common interests on music and the arts. Several months ago, new hit singer/actress Jang Nara was invited to a VIP seat at the MTV Music Video Awards. This past summer, Korean music was exhibited to the entire global community at the Korea/Japan World Cup, in which stars Brown Eyes and Lena Park teamed up with some of Japan’s most popular singers to sing the World Cup theme “Let’s Get Together Now,” which was recorded for the event and performed at the closing ceremonies.

The importance of Korean singers in modern Korean culture has led, however, to many disturbing realizations and occurrences. Several years ago, Korean television company MBC produced a news report claiming that most popular gasoos (Korean singers) were slaves to their producers and their contracts and were being manipulated by the businessmen who owned their production companies. A group of singers subsequently banded together and boycotted MBC, refusing to perform in any of MBC’s weekly music performance shows. The report alone suggests that gasoos in general are in the business of music not for the intention of proliferating quality art but to make money and steal from their audiences. Whether or not this is true, it just reinforces the idea of the role that gasoos play in defining Korean culture and the influence they have on the uncountable number of teenagers who remain loyally devoted, even at the cost of their self-dignity and academic success. At an H.O.T. concert, for example, when group leader Moon Hee Jun fainted on stage, a young teenaged girl committed suicide shortly thereafter in complete shock and disbelief, similarly shocking the rest of the world.

The sad truths behind the entertainment industry sadly show that Korean music has become a permanently ingrained part of society. The creativity that has blossomed over these past years has come in constant conflict with these sad tragic events. The truth of the matter is, however, that no matter what doubts can be cast upon music as a whole, entertainment will always have its dark sides, its second face, the world beneath that which is shown. In the midst of this sad truth one must praise music for what it is: the language of life, produced by and for people, and as Korean music continues to grow and influence and make its way into the international community at large, our favorite gasoos will continue to do what they do best: touch us with words beyond description, bless our hearts with the melodies of joy. Even today, I remain forever a loyal fan of gayo, of Lee Soo Young and Jang Nara and Jo Sung Mo and H.O.T., and continue to believe in the need for music in the world today.

Ted Lim ‘06 is a History and Literature Concentrator in Pforzheimer House.
For those of us who count ourselves lucky enough to be Quadlings, the stretch of Mass. Ave that leads up to the distant convenience of Porter Square is a bit of a mystery. Sometimes, we feel like pecking into the quaintness of its many boutiques. More often, we just stick our heads down and trudge until we hit Porter, where extra toothbrushes, mozzarella sticks, and mini-hammers can all be obtained at one fell swoop from Star market, McDonald’s, and True Value, respectively. Such clear-cut convenience certainly overshadows the adorably impractical specialty shops leading up to it.

The moral is already clear, of course. We should stop and peer in. Instead of automatically frequenting the big Starbucks by the Quad (which I succumb to all too often), or fulfilling your Korean food quota at Porter’s Kaya restaurant, take the time to try out the other options sandwiched in between.

It is in this little stretch of quaint obscurity that my two subjects have set up shop. Simon Yoo, a soft-spoken, smiling man in his thirties, owns the aptly named Simon’s Coffeeshop. A few meters down and on the other side of the street is Clara Byun, an older woman with a quick tongue, and owner of the Korean food restaurant Seoul Food. I sat down with each of them on different weekday afternoons and chatted with them about, among other things, the ins and outs of their businesses, their future hopes, and my bad Korean.

“The opportunity came up, and I took it.”

A slight man in his early thirties, Simon beams as he talks about his coffee shop. “The opportunity came up,” he says, “and I took it.” Arriving in the States as a 19 year-old boy fresh out of high school, Simon, along with his younger brother, was following in the footsteps of his father and sister, who had come over from Korea earlier. He went to college in Boston and studied economic finance, which led him to related jobs in various companies, and worked as the manager of a mini-mart before jumping at the chance to buy the coffee shop he now owns.

The coffee shop is cozy, its long and narrow space filled with vintage movie posters and small two-person tables. A long counter running length-wise down the left side of the shop lovingly crowds the tables to the right in a single file line of coffee cups, lap tops and bent heads. I met with Simon in the back of the shop, facing out towards the street while he turned his back, in a rare instant, on his customers to face my questions and me.
He's an optimistic man. Talking fluidly and openly about expectations, hopes, presentiments...he has never thought he cannot do something. For this he thanks his parents for having given him opportunities he wouldn't have gotten otherwise. He is a grateful Korean boy-man, youthful in his hopes, wise in retrospect. His sunny smile is like his mark of gratefulness, reminding me guiltily of my contrasting sullen expressions around the house this past winter break. Given the chance to ramble, he mentions his hopes for the next generation (i.e. me, you, the whole tweens crowd)—that we would be role models, take opportunities, learn lessons, continue resolving identity problems that hound our community, be unified, defy and create labels, learn the value of flexibility.

A long counter running length-wise down the left side of Simon's Coffeeshop lovingly crowds the tables to the right in a single file line of coffee cups, lap tops and bent heads.

Clara likes the fact that she deals mostly with Caucasian customers. It's more convenient, a cleaner transaction, she says. A no-nonsense woman who has learned to combine business and culinary arts and home-making skills into her restaurant venture, Clara Byun has a lot to be proud of. And she is—brusque but chatty, she is happy to talk about her experiences leading up to the opening of Seoul Food, as well as her opinions on Koreans, living in Boston, and her view of common sense.

Seoul Food's main decorations are framed reviews of the restaurant, published in various Boston-area newspapers and magazines.
Clara’s restaurant is geared towards non-Koreans; she says she prefers doing business in Boston with this perspective, rather than in a bustling Korean center like L.A.’s Koreatown, where restaurants are overwhelmingly and competitively geared towards Koreans.

Seoul Food is a simple one-room restaurant. Its main decorations are framed reviews of the restaurant, published in various Boston-area newspapers and magazines. Nothing speaks better than these glowing credits, except perhaps

On busy Massachusetts Ave., facing competition with small fashion boutiques and quirky hair salons, Seoul Food has been able to hold its own.

a verbal compliment passed on to me, by a customer who was eating as I was talking with Clara. “This place is good,” he stated emphatically, tilting his head towards mine as if divulging a secret. “Trust me.” And Clara’s Seoul Food really is a secret that she’s been working on. On busy Massachusetts Ave., facing competition with small fashion boutiques and quirky hair salons, Seoul Food has been able to hold its own, and despite its no-frills exterior, it remains one of the quality food places in the area. I have determined, and correct me if you think I’m wrong, that that has come to be because of Clara’s small-business attitude, the idea that cultivating relations with customers is paramount, alongside having good food.

Success to both these Mass. Ave mainstays must be an internalized process. Granted, both have had to learn to deal with their neighbors, and commercial success is of course a necessary component of staying in business. But the contentment, the happiness with their little shops, the drive that has led to these situations, seem to have been the reasons for their longevity in the world of the small business. The small business, isolated in the middle of white-collar Cambridge, is a refreshing change from the so-called messy Korean-Korean interactions inherent to Koreatown’s business spirit. The do-it-yourself vibe is strong, and it has worked. I think. And they think. And so the customers think. So next time you find yourself in the area, don’t put your head down and race ahead to Porter. Look up and go in. Eensa and buy a cup of coffee at Simon’s. Take your roommate’s parents out to Seoul Food. Support these small businesses, so they can continue in like ambitious manner, to the beat of their own Korean drummers.

Jane Y. Kim ’05 is an English concentrator in Pforzheimer House.
I remember the first Korea game, how crazy I thought it was to stay up all night to watch a soccer game. I was happy that the World Cup was being co-hosted by Korea, but I must admit, I wasn't planning on losing sleep over it. But that night, when I first laid eyes on the stadium literally packed with people, all wearing the team color red and waving Korean flags high in the air, something stirred inside of me. I can't even explain it, really, but I felt so drawn in by this unity, this sense of belonging, as if the players and fans, and all the Korean people watching in their homes were not just strangers, but individuals that shared the same blood with me and my family.

I was actually quite worried at first that the frenzied energy of the Korean fans would erupt into some form of violence, and that the U.S. media would make exaggerated reports and create negative views of Korea here in the States. However, I was very impressed, along with the rest of the world, how polite and courteous (and even supportive!) the Korean population was, as a whole, to the foreign visitors and team members. Actually, impressed doesn't accurately describe how I felt; I was extremely proud of my people, my native homeland.

With each game that I watched, each picture and camera shot of the stadium and the streets I realized more and more that this World Cup was much more than just soccer to the Korean people. In their eyes and in their cheers, I saw something more than a passion for sports; it was something much deeper, something much more important.

It might not be easy for us here in the U.S. to understand without knowing a little bit of Korean history, but the tears and shouts of joy were those of a people who had been attacked by neighboring countries all throughout their history, who regained their freedom from the unimaginably cruel and degrading Japanese invaders only 57 years ago. The generation of the Korean independence movement has ended, but their pain and joy still echo in the hearts of their children and grandchildren.

I think that is what we all saw during the World Cup - the excitement of seeing one's country not only being represented in an international tournament but also hosting it, the pride that one feels when their country's team plays above and beyond anyone's expectations... All for the love of their homeland, our homeland, our free, independent, country that we can call our own, that we will fight till the end to keep from having it taken away from us ever again.

*Sang Ah Lee is a grad student.*
"So, where are you from?"
"Kenya."
"Yeah?.... Kenya?"

This was how many of my conversations began during Freshman Week. As someone who had spent his life moving between different countries spread over many continents, I had trouble deciding how to answer the mandatory Freshman Week inquiries about where I was from. There was no one place where I grew up, no one place that I considered 'home'. On the other hand, the question "Where are you coming from?" had a more straightforward answer; I had just flown into the U.S. from Kenya, where I had graduated from my high school in June. So, to make my life easier, I decided that my answer to any question concerning my provenance would be that I was from Kenya.

I was of course aware of the incongruity between my obviously East Asian appearance and my claim to have come from Kenya, and frankly, I loved it. Furthermore, I knew that it was more likely to make an impression during that extraordinary week when everyone was being introduced to thousands of strangers. What better way to grab everyone's attention than to claim to be from Kenya? It should not be surprising that almost without exception, I was asked to elaborate on how I had ended up in the East African nation that few could locate on the map.

If the question had been about "what" I am, culturally and ethnically, there would not have been the slightest ambiguity about the correct answer – I am Korean as is my entire family and all my known ancestors. Korean is my first language and the language I speak at home. So to follow up on my claim to come from Kenya, I would often point out that I am the sole representative of the Koreans in Kenya at Harvard, and quite possibly the first ever. The typical question to follow would be, "How many Koreans are there in Kenya?"

"Around 500," I would answer, which tended to surprise most
people. Having come to Harvard in the autumn of 2001, I had spent only two years in the country. However, most of the 500 or so Koreans in Kenya spend a considerably longer time there, and they all have their own stories to tell, many of which are far more interesting than mine....

A Brief History

The story of Koreans in Kenya inevitably begins with the story of a hotel on the outskirts of Nairobi, the luxurious Safari Park Hotel. The site of the hotel was originally used by the British military as officers' barracks. In 1962, the Spread Eagle Hotel was opened on the site and was patronized by weary tourists on their way to and from Mount Kenya; in 1967, the hotel was renamed the Safari Park Hotel. At some point, a Korean businessman, a certain Mr. Chon Nagwon, comes into the picture. He apparently developed some ties with some of the close aides to Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya. Soon Chon was able to obtain permission to convert one of Kenyatta's mansions, Njiru Country Club, into a casino. In 1974 he bought fifty percent of Safari Park Hotel's shares with the money he made running the casino, and he became the full shareholder in 1977.

Now Korean-owned, the Safari Park Hotel began to employ several Koreans in many of its positions—as managers, tour guides, and cooks. It took me some time before I began to understand just how central a role the Safari Park Hotel played in the formation of the Korean community in Kenya. Any Korean that I met who had been in Kenya for an extended amount of time was likelier than not to have worked at the Safari Park Hotel at some point.

One of the most interesting cases was that of Lee Ki Jin (Yi Kijin), who now runs a security company called Lee Security. He was already something of a legend in the Korean community when I came to Kenya, but when he stopped a bloody robbery attempt against his company about two years ago, his status as a folk hero was sealed.

The Story

Mr. Lee was a taekwondo master who became Chon's bodyguard and came to Kenya in 1975. He gave a taekwondo demonstration for an international exposition held in 1976, where his martial arts skills caught the eye of an Italian who was visiting Kenya. The Italian hired him as a bodyguard for his son, and he spent the next year in Italy fighting the mafia in Naples and Milan. When a 280,000-shilling (around $40,000 at the time) robbery shook the Safari Park Hotel,
Chon met Lee in Rome to convince him to come to Nairobi once more to solve the case. Thus, Lee was back in Kenya, this time for good.

Lee solved the case and met his future wife, another Korean who was working as a casino dealer at the hotel. He then opened a taekwondo dojang in Westland, a Nairobi neighborhood. More than a hundred Kenyan children showed up, and Lee had to scramble to obtain taekwondo uniforms with the help of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lee also found the time to instruct the Kenyan presidential guard and the Kenyan police. He frequently defeated karate masters in exhibition match-ups. All in all, he did more than anyone else to popularize taekwondo in Kenya—at the expense of karate. Koreans who have lived long in Kenya say that there used to be many more karate halls years ago that have now been replaced by taekwondo dojangs.

In 1984, he quit his job at the Safari Park Hotel and started the first-ever Korean restaurant in Kenya, the Koreana. In April of 1998, he closed the restaurant and started Lee Security. So when I came to Kenya the next year, he became known to me as the “Lee Security guy.”

Lee was coming back from the bank after withdrawing the money to pay his employees’ monthly salaries when the attempted robbery took place. Just as he got off his car in the company yard, three armed men surrounded him. Pointing a gun to his head, one of them demanded his car keys. As Lee handed over the car keys, the man let off his guard for a brief moment.

With one motion, Lee knocked off the gun from the man’s hands and kicked him cold. Before the others could react, he took hold of the man’s body to shield him. Another man fired, but it was his accomplice who was hit. Then, he too was overpowered by a powerful kick. The third man was similarly taken care of. The watchman at the gate, who was in league with the three armed men, tried to run, but was overpowered by Lee’s employees who had entered the fray by then.

The story was carried in Kenya’s major daily newspapers, The East African and The Nation, and was talked about for months afterwards in the Korean community. What was going through Lee’s head when the three men had him at gunpoint? He thought that this could not be happening in his own company yard, of all places. A security company cannot be robbed like this, he recalled thinking. In the end, Lee had saved not only his own life and the monthly pay for his employees but also his company’s reputation.

Lee maintains that at any given point he was planning to stay maybe a couple of years more in Kenya before moving back to Korea. It is now almost three decades since he first came to Kenya. He is happily married, with two sons, and now he has lived longer in Kenya than in Korea. In this respect, he is not unlike many Koreans in Kenya, who come to the country thinking they will stay for a short while and end up making Kenya a long-term home.

There is no shortage of remarkable life stories among the incredibly diverse community of Koreans who decide to call Kenya home—doctors, missionaries, taekwondo masters, photo studio owners, casino owners, restaurant owners, grocery store owners, tour operators, etc.
When I went back to Kenya for winter break freshman year, I had a chance to see Mr. Lee in person one final time at a Christmas celebration held by a Korean church in Nairobi. He is an unassuming, kind-looking man; I found it impossible to picture him as a lethal taekwondo master who single-handedly stopped an armed robbery. Yet he was about to throw another surprise at me. After a series of Christmas-themed plays put on by Sunday school children had entertained the crowd, Mr. Lee stepped up on stage with an acoustic guitar and a harmonica to give a solo musical performance. He fingerpicked his slightly off-tune guitar in an unhurried rhythm and started to sing a gospel number. His lyrical voice was that of a seasoned Korean folk singer, while his harmonica solos recalled Bob Dylan. His performance drew a great applause. “Full of surprises, that Mr. Lee,” I said to myself.

It might not be the biggest or the most tightly knit Korean community abroad, but the Korean community in Kenya is definitely full of surprises, even for Koreans who have lived in Kenya for several decades. There is no shortage of remarkable life stories among the incredibly diverse community of Koreans who decide to call Kenya home—doctors, missionaries, taekwondo masters, photo studio owners, casino owners, restaurant owners, grocery store owners, tour operators, etc. My family left Nairobi in February 2002 and now lives in Athens, Greece, which means Kenya is no longer a suitable answer for the question “Where are you from?” Nevertheless, having however briefly been part of the Korean community in Kenya, I will always be tempted to answer “Kenya.” Actually, I do answer that I’m from Kenya from time to time.

Brian Park ’05 is a Mathematics concentrator in Eliot House.
Investing in the Young Generation: 
The Future of Science and Technology of Korea

By So-One Hwang

If investment in the future generation and the advancement of education are good measures of the development and progress of a country, South Korea has a bright outlook. In the summer of 2002, several other Korean Americans at Harvard and I had the opportunity to attend an expense-paid scientific conference in Korea called the Young Generation Forum, which gathered thirty-eight college and graduate students from the U.S. and thirty from Korea. The program was organized by the Korean Federation of Science and Technology Societies (KOFST) and the Korean-American Scientists and Engineers Association (KSEA) and was a part of the greater annual science conference “World Congress of Korean and Korean-ethnic Scientists and Engineers (WCSE) 2002,” which united Koreans from all over the globe – even Uzbekistan. This free trip to Korea and the success of the program was made possible by the sponsorship of Korea Science Foundation and Hyundai Motor Company and the enthusiasm of all its organizers and participants. The conference occurred in the same summer as the 2002 FIFA World Cup, South Korea’s success at which became the model of the country’s spirit and achievement. The young generation could even be called the “World Cup generation.”

The objectives of the YG Forum were “for the young Korean scientists, engineers, and specialists at home and abroad to contribute to the advancement in contemporary science and technology, to understand the current scientific and technological development in Korea, and to establish cooperative networking.” To facilitate the accomplishment of the second objective, we were given a VIP tour of some of the important industries and institutions in Korea and even included attending the WCSE Banquet & CEO Forum at the Seoul Renaissance Hotel. At the banquet, YG Forum members met Minister of Science & Technology Dr. Young-Bok Chae and President of Samsung Electronics Yong-Woo Lee. If the incentive of most of the participants, particularly from the U.S., was to enjoy a free trip to Korea and enjoy the social scene with friends, there was no disappointment, as the program organizers understood this attractive point and encouraged it. By balancing the program with special lectures, presentations, and tours, with student forums and sufficient time to live up the social life with friends from the same school, other Korean Americans, and students from Korea, YG Forum gave the participants “the opportunity to enjoy Korean fraternity and rekindle affection of the motherland” as it was aimed to achieve. Furthermore, by giving the overseas students the flexibility in purchasing their own flights, the program allowed the participants to extend their stay in Korea to tour on their own or visit family. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of visiting Korea for the first time for many – those who were adopted as babies, were born in the U.S., or had moved at a young age and had
never returned since.

I was born in Korea and moved to Boston when I was seven, so my memories of Korea were fairly outdated. Because of the informative aspects of the program, I returned to the States with a fresher and keener eye for popular Korean products like Samsung and LG electronics, especially cellular phones, and Hyundai and Kia automobiles. I can feel proud when I see these products become trendy and more common not only for the sake of ethnic pride and nationalistic sentiments but also because I am impressed by their quality and technology and the companies' commitment to research and development. Having an R&D expenditure of 16 trillion won, Korea ranks eighth in R&D expenditure in the world. Despite the past IMF crisis and the uncertainty of upcoming political and economical stability of Korea and Asia, for me personally, the organizing of special – and now annual – events like the YG Forum serves as testimony to the success of the Korean industries. Moreover, Korea has progressed far from the war-stricken, struggling, and survival-mode to recognizing the potential in international networking and having the resources to invest in its young generation.

Although the event was mainly based in Seoul, the program included a tour of industries and institutions all over the peninsula. We visited Hyundai’s Namyang Research Center and Asan Plant, Research Institute of Industrial Science and Technology (RIST), POSCO (Pohang Steel), and POSTECH. The trip concluded on a more cultural note with a visit to the Bulguksa Temple.

Hyundai made the cover story in the December 17, 2001, issue of Business Week in “Hyundai Gets Hot: How Hyundai Motors is using shrewd pricing and better quality to claim its piece of the global highway.” The article highlighted the new leadership of CEO Chung Mong Koo, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Citation by the Automotive Hall of Fame in Detroit, Michigan, the second Asian to be given this recognition. Having exceeded its goal of being among the world’s top ten automakers by 2000 by currently being number eight, Hyundai aims to be among the top five by 2010. The company has progressed far since its first proprietary passenger car, Pony, to the modern luxury car, Equus. While the Sonata sedan is the most popular Hyundai vehicle, the company released the Sante Fe SUV in 2000 and developed Korea’s first ever hybrid electric vehicle, the Future Green Vehicle-II. A highlight of the tour was to see one of the very few full-scale wind tunnels in the world that is used to conduct aerodynamic and noise tests. Even as the official sponsor of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, Hyundai represents and supports Korea in the greater global scene.

At POSCO and RIST, as well as at Hyundai, great emphasis was placed on the protection of natural resources and other environment friendly technology. Although I have not toured as many
industrial facilities in the U.S. to be able to make a fair judgment, I attributed the commitment to environmental safety to Korea’s much more limited resources compared to larger countries. Thus, this was also a good demonstration of Korean science and technology’s investment in the future.

RIST is a privately operated research foundation that focuses on the areas of iron and steel, environment, and energy. It was established to administer POSCO’s technological development and to lead national industrial development programs. The industry, research, and the academic POSTECH form a tri-force in the southeast city of Pohang. Also in this part of Korea, the participants were able to enjoy the seaside and fresh hwe (Korean sashimi).

The forum discussion with POSTECH students as well as generally interacting with the students from Korea helped both parties better understand each other’s educational experience and culture. POSTECH was modeled after Caltech and is a unique university compared to others in Korea. The campus is beautiful and has dorms in a fairly secluded setting. The other famous tech school in Korea, KAIST (Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology), is in an urban setting and is called the MIT of Korea. Although English was the official language of the program, a language barrier existed at the beginning because neither was immediately willing to try speaking the language that was more uncomfortable. In the discussion about ways to improve networking among Koreans and Korean Americans, language and communication was the primary concern for many in considering pursuing careers in each other’s countries. Moreover, the differences in the academic experience affected the social cultures and, even to a certain degree, the perspectives on life. The famous or rather even infamous rigor of academics is a common Korean stereotype that comes from both a long historical tradition and the more recent rapid changes in the way of life for Koreans in the past century.

I would be undoubtedly biased and wrong to call Korean students unhappy because my judgments would be based on the American social scene and images of happiness. However, most Koreans agreed that a majority of students there become burned out by the time they graduate from high school. A great deal of the academic pressure comes from the drive to raise one’s socioeconomic status and to avoid manual labor. The struggle of a rapidly developing country may require this phase of extreme diligence to catch up with more developed countries, but the historical culture also perpetuates it. Furthermore, most agreed that the Korean educational system emphasizes memorization whereas the American system encourages creativity. Although many Korean students wanted to see a change in their educational experience, the collaboration of the technical and innovative skills of the two groups could produce great results and also help each other grow in the area of one’s weakness.

In one of our events, Professor of Sociology Emeritus Dr. Kyung Dong Kim of Seoul National University made an important point that as the West has contributed democracy and capitalism to the world, the East also has merits from its culture to offer. We as Korean Americans are in a very advantageous position to benefit from the best of both spheres and then to give back and make a
yisei

mark on society. The whole program concluded on a great note with the message from Dean of Planning & Coordination of KAIST Dr. Soon Heung Chang. He stressed that the three important factors for success are ideas, networking, and passion. This was his personal view on life, but I believe that the YG Forum succeeded in building friendships and furthering all three areas.

Because of the success of YG Forum 2002, the program of 2003 included a wider participation from ethnic Koreans from Germany, U.K., Japan, and Canada in addition to the original U.S. and Korea. My older sister, One, attended this year’s conference and came back with the news that it will be further expanded to include China and Russia next year. She believed that the greater diversity was an added asset to this year’s program. Finding the difference in cultural identity among students surprising and interesting, a Korean participant noted that the third generation Korean Japanese identify themselves as Koreans but that the Korean Americans think of themselves as Americans. This view may have been assumed because the Korean Japanese representative was also the most outspoken about helping Korea.

Although it is uncertain how many of the participants will pursue careers in the motherland in the future, I hope that opportunities like this will improve the communication and networking of Koreans all over the world. Although many ethnic Koreans are citizens of other nations, the accomplishment of Koreans is a contribution to other Koreans all over the world. However, active collaboration is more important in strengthening Korean unity and sense of identity than an act in the mere name of Korea. The trend now is toward globalization and internationalization, but perhaps this is the beginning toward a refocusing on our roots, even if it is not always in geographical terms. A better future in science and technology and in empowering people with a cultural identity lies in bridging the geographical and social barriers to achieve unity. Koreans in Korea and other parts of the world should invest in this exciting potential.

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Where we are: Reflections on a Centennial
by Paul Kwak

THIS YEAR, Korean-Americans celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first wave of Korean immigration to the United States. According to The Honolulu Advertiser, "records show sixteen Koreans had come individually by 1902, but [January 17, 1903] marks the beginning of the first wave of Korean immigration to Hawai‘i and the Mainland." Since then, the significance of Asian immigration to the United States has been well articulated by scholars, and the history of peaceful American inter-ethnic cohabitation has been littered with challenges and sociopolitical obstacles. The world has borne witness to the Japanese occupation of Korea, World War II, the Korean War, and other such events that have linked Korea to the global political community.

We remember not these events specifically, but commemorate the first moment of passage in 1903 when Koreans first arrived in this country. This is less a celebration of individual fortitude and more a remembrance of collective achievement. This centennial commemoration seems to me not so much a celebration of their journey, but a reflection upon ours: an opportunity to consider how far we’ve come from Hawai‘i (literally and figuratively), and to consider what the next hundred years might hold.

If anything, I submit that the most lasting and important contributions that immigrants make to the fabric of a nation are cultural, insofar as culture is extricable from politics. Immigration forces a provocative heterogeneity in the imageric landscape of a people; this, of course, has proven true not only about the Asian waves of immigration but about earlier European immigration. The new faces that inhabit America have prompted consideration of "the other" and how one constructs a viable E Pluribus Unum, one from many. In addition, with globalization relaxing the traditional frontiers of communication and exchange, America is increasingly confronted with questions about the extent to which she microcosmically represents the world and to what extent America can have a distinct national culture.

But as we contemplate these sorts of universal phenomena, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand and extract the contributions that a Korean presence makes in America. Even in the year 2003, one would be hard-pressed to demonstrate that the general American population is sophisticated enough to under
stand the differences between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures (aside from their culinary distinctions), let alone lesser known Asian cultures like those of Laos, Indonesia, the Phillipines, Thailand, and Vietnam. It seems not altogether clear what a specifically Korean consciousness brings to American society.

Ironically, this reluctant indivisibility of the Asian sub-populations has resulted from a necessity for coalition-building and political influence. But there remain the tired examples of blatant ignorance; a recent though not at all uncommon conversation proceeded as follows:

"Are you Chinese?"
"No."
"Are you Japanese?"
"No."
"Well, then what are you?"
"Korean."
"What's that?"

What, after all, does it mean to be Korean-American as opposed to Asian-American?

Appallingly, this scenario was not taken from the halls of a Midwestern elementary school, it occurred on the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts, world capital of political correctness and home to throngs of enterprising young Asian premedical students. What, after all, does it mean to be Korean-American as opposed to Asian-American?

Our first task, indeed, in commemorating one hundred years in America, is to ask unapologetically and honestly to what extent we wish to be distinct from the Asian-American population. This question is not nearly as simple as it seems. Certainly, no yisei enjoys the ignorance of their peers who ask them for expert advice on cooking Moo Goo Gai Pan, and the singular success of Chinese martial artists like Jackie Chan and Chow Yun Fat can be irritating. In addition, Rick Yune, a Korean-American actor, seems not a pioneer, but a token. Most Korean-Americans cannot even name a famous Korean-American celebrity, but more tellingly, the general population fails miserably at this test. Except in New York and
California and other random isolated locales, it is difficult to find a restaurant that serves Korean cuisine without sushi on the menu.

But to what extent, really, would the alternative be desirable (let alone viable)? Perhaps in reaction to this reality, chef Ming Tsai has led the movement in fusion cooking, creating at his Wellesley, MA restaurant a pan-Asian palette of taste sensations and experiences. Indeed, the term “pan-Asian” grows in frequency of use. Moreover, to invoke the oft-cited Eric Liu, from his groundbreaking memoir, The Accidental Asian, identity politics put American society at the risk of “ethnosclerosis,” a hardening of the walls that divide us, leading ultimately to the death of fluid national culture.

This is a particularly problematic tension, but it is difficult to imagine anything more worthy of careful consideration, with specific regard to the way Korean identity enters this equation. Let us begin with one item we have already considered. In America, image is everything, and (perhaps sadly), our culture derives normativity from media—the images and messages it sends forth over television and radio, and in print. Even today, advertisements are overwhelmingly “white” in their models, and the inclusion of Asian models still smells ever so slightly of tokenism. Television and film is even more abysmal, from Margaret Cho’s sitcom flop to Rick Yune’s limited exposure in traditionally stereotypical movie roles to Raymond Lee’s flash-in-the-pan coverage on NBC’s Fame. Arguably, there are no images, or at the very least, there are not enough images and Korean American faces on the national consciousness.

**Stereotypes are easily upheld when there are is a dearth of alternative**
iconography; imagine, for a moment, a Korean-American evening news anchor, a Korean-American late-night comedy talk show host, a Korean-American quarterback in the NFL, a Korean-American president. We allow “white” American culture to be normative precisely because our collective exposure to and experience with white culture—its music, its people, its personalities—so far outweighs that with any other ethnic group. We are acquainted with a lesbian Irish talk-show host (Rosie O’Donnell), we are fascinated by a blonde material girl turned pop diva-matron (Madonna), we know that Jerry Maguire and Ethan Hunt can be the same person (Tom Cruise). We know these things and people because we are witness to the complexity and nuances of their personality on the big or little screen. Until visual media more fully embraces the changing face of America, these questions to which we have been seeking answers are not likely to be resolved.

There are, however, some areas in which more expedient resolutions seem promising. Music has long been a medium of cultural and artistic exchange, and there exists a growing fascination with Korean pop music in America. Receptivity to the possibilities of fusion, or at the very least, of interest in non-traditional styles of music could prove fruitful. In addition, a similar appreciation for that which divides and that which unites across boundaries of food and cuisine has potential for at least creating a proxy awareness of Korean-American culture.

As we commemorate this centennial, it is important to draw all of America into these celebrations. If we aspire truly to a unified and coherent national identity (and this, I think, is worthy), this centennial is not just a celebration for Koreans, but for all Americans. We must contemplate the ways to achieve an appropriate balance between tradition and the future, and understand the ways the past hundred years direct us toward the next hundred.

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Paul Kwak ’03 graduated with a degree in History of Science.
It was muggy outside, but cool in the kitchen. The wet air brought the smell of the moist earth and the grass in with it through the screen in the open window above the sink. A small boy sat at the weathered wooden table, his head cradled in his arms. Each breath came in a gentle puff through thin, flared nostrils and after they flattened out, it escaped in a voiceless sigh. The eyelids fluttered in a barely discernable blur, occasionally revealing thin almond slits embedded in their glossy white casing. One of his small feet swung lazily back and forth, barely brushing the cold white linoleum. A gray plastic fan sat at the end of the fading cream counter, whirring without any definitive rhythm, playfully brushing the cool air against the pearly beads of sweat that lined the dozing boy’s forehead, bending them into straining, shivering humps.

A middle-aged woman stood at the stove, head peering into a large metal pot, stirring oval shaped rice cakes in a cloudy, light brown broth with an old wooden spoon. The steam poured back into her face, but she didn’t seem to notice. With her nimble fingers, she popped open a small plastic container that sat on the counter, dipped her free hand in, and periodically sprinkled strips of boiled egg and dried seaweed into the pot. Sometimes she had to stop to dab at her moist forehead and brush the slick strands of wet black hair from her eyes. When she didn’t feel like stopping, she would pout and poke out her lower lip, blowing at her forehead. Her eyes focused intently on the contents of the pot. The smell of the earth coming in through the window and the scent of the tangy, salty stew in the pot mixed and spread through the room.
Across the table from the boy, a middle-aged man read a newspaper. He crossed one leg over the other, switching legs and clearing his throat from time to time. As he read, he occasionally reached up to push his steel-rimmed glasses off the dark depressions developing in the skin on both sides of his nose. And in the intervals between adjustments, he would run his hand through his thinning gray hair, just to make sure he wasn’t missing anything. The thin paper rustled softly as he turned the pages, staining his thumb and index finger with the black ink. Sometimes he looked up and glanced at the woman; she felt his eyes, and looked back at him. When their eyes met, he re-crossed his legs, looked back down at his paper, and silently nodded his approval. She turned around to check up on the stew, gripping the spoon a little more tightly, and stirring a little more quickly.

Soon enough, everything was ready. The woman took out some embroidered cotton place mats from the oak cupboard next to the stove. After setting them on the table, she took out three pairs of wooden chopsticks, three spoons, and three forks, arranging them carefully next to each mat. Finally, she took out a smooth blue ladle and put it in the pot. The fan blew the steam back in her face as she walked to the table and set the stew on a gray stone disc in the middle of the table to cool. But just as she got ready to sit down, the man cleared his throat and nodded toward the sleeping boy. The woman gently shook the boy’s shoulder and whispered, “Ee roh nah. Chonyok mokk jah.” One eyelid fluttered, his shoulders heaved, and he groaned in weak protest.

“Ee roh nah. Come on.”

“But I’m tired...”

The woman gently shook the boy’s shoulder and whispered, “Ee rroh nah. Chonyok mokk jah.”

The man took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand. He was tired too. “Come on,” he said. The boy’s eyes opened into thin slits, and he slowly raised his head toward the distant voice.

“I count to ten. Hana... ddu... set...”

The eyes slowly widened; by around eight, they were fully open. He yawned, smiled triumphantly, and swung his idle foot down toward the floor. Another year and he would probably be able to set both feet flat on the ground. The woman exhaled and sat down.

And with that, they ate.

_Taeho Lim ’93 graduated with a degree in Economics._

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The Melting Pot: Coffee Granules  
Jane Y. Kim '05
american chunhyang

I. The Boy, at the window
Looking out at the close dark, he tells her
Korean stories that once made her stir:

This tale occurred long ago, when a
Girl waited, true and faithful to her man,
Who left to seek a sun, some better place.

The waiting turned to suffering under a
Implacable rich man who demanded
Her love. The white winds packing snow into
The branches and roofs bore no hint of him
Who had received her word to wait.

I’ve treasured your word, and I will bear mine
Out, even if we can’t see how we’ll rest.
It’ll come, like the sound of rain in the eaves
Of our house that we do not own yet.

A house warm as sun, rooted by staircase,
Colored so the arrowing birds that race
The winter to Australia will map
Us with the near lake, the far stars.

Nearby the corn fields rustle full-husked,
Or dream in winter rows, gray earth unsown.
The acorns crunch, slow fog lifts on blue hills,
Ponds thick with rippling fish, refracted oaks.

A different country is now our home, a land
Where we will make all of this true by hand.
The line of laundry gently beating the
Moon is ours, since we are American, too.
II. The Girl, at the sink
Easy for you to say.

You can always leave for a lazy walk,
Looking for work. You have that excuse,
But you are worse than a woman for talk.
You only roll those autumn words around
Your tongue like dice, as if we should applaud.

Such talk of a house, when we live in this,
Warm and cozy, maybe for rats. Can you
Find your way to fix the windows, the roof?
I have no sleep because of the drafts.

I learned a new English today, and it is crap! Yes, crap!
You keep me here all day, afraid I'll collapse,
From what?
Poor country, yielding each fall only needs.

Our house will not materialize because you said or tried.
You might do something for once, the dishes,
Or not speaking. I'd trade all my dreams
For money, tickets home, or coffee with cream.

I cannot be a good wife in a bad land.
Again you stand by the window,
Thinking ahead a thousand days,
And I worry for heat and water tomorrow.
III. The Boy, at the table
My fault, yuh-bo, not the land's, I believe,
As you must. Don't let the night defeat
Our own vision of wide possible streets.
Take to bed, I think your headache will fade.
Sleep shortens the waiting, and ends in dawn.

IV. The Girl, at the door
Sleep? What I should sleep, when you dream enough
For both of us? Take me somewhere not here,
Or I go back. Because it's what we
Lose to be American that I fear.

I will not leave you, never doubt that.
But I can't see how you're going, or where you're at.
This place is not what I heard or believed. To eat,
We sweat too hard and much for two days' ease.

Your poem's very nice,
But it lacks the verve of things,
The true fall of light, the unseen speech of
My love, plain as pain, the whiteness of rice.

Maybe tomorrow, if the wind stills
And our checks have cleared,
You can tell me again
Your story I love to hear.

I'm going to bed. Don't come to me tonight.
I want some dreamless sleep.

Taeho Lim '03 graduated with a degree in Economics.
To be redeemed from fire by fire — "Little Gidding."
T.S. Eliot

Ext. A Love Scene - Late Afternoon

Around three in the afternoon, he couldn’t resist anymore, so he left work at Kinko’s early, stealing out the back door. He headed straight for his spot, a perch on the Getty Center’s southernmost balcony. Night rain had raked the smog from the air like a hanging slap of water from a bucket knocks soap suds off a car. The late afternoon sun gently powdered the low ridges to the east, and the beachline south to where the sky dipped behind Palos Verdes. He sucked at his cigarette and exhaled into the bleached light, thinking he’d have to call his parents tonight. This time he’d tell them he’d found a job in a publishing firm (well, making copies was almost publishing), and yes, of course, he was diligently attending UCLA Extension.

But in the streaming sunlight and the unequivocal clarity of magic hour, such personal organizer concerns melted away. Whenever he came onto this balcony, a startle and tremble always passed through him, as if he had found the city’s secret pulse for a moment. He had felt this kind of soul-shudder only once before, when he first saw Grace, but that had faded; his passion for seeing Los Angeles revealed—the glinting tongue of the 405, the mansions on the low hills, the view wider than the eye—had, if anything, intensified over the past three years.

Into the air he unspooled a litany of visions with a preacher’s fervor: Jews and whites would one day fear and adore his films, wishing that they had one-syllable surnames; Konglish would be the new ebonics, an urban poetry honest and authentic as the heavy iron press in a dry cleaner—and he would be the catalyst, the alchemist who transmuted yellow skins to Oscar gold. He had come back west for this sun-suffused air, leaving the gray caños of New York for the chaparral of Hollywood. The dream still ran free before

The Last Hah

by Dan Song

him, but every now and then, on these days with the light cascading down, it drifted closer, beckoning through the afternoon.

Int. Stripped - Day

The modern, marbled lobby that he followed an attractive assistant through impressed him; when corporations took care of interior design, surely their inner workings were likewise smooth and efficient. He was shown into a room, where he shook hands with a bespectacled, young producer of uncertain race. The man’s tan skin nearly glowed, as did his sleek suit. On the desk a pile of scripts, bagels and coffee cups, and two cell phones fought for space.

"Mr. Hah, thanks for coming down." It was almost a question.
He smiled with his cheeks. “Call me Will.” Though there had been no invitation to take a seat, he sat down, tentatively, wondering if he should give the man his resume yet.

The producer looked at him over his black plastic glasses.

“Sounds good, Willy. I’m Roger. I’m a creative director in charge of four reading depar” Will heard only a

The dream still ran free before him, but every now and then, on these days with the light cascading down, it drifted closer, beckoning through the afternoon.

mash of words. Leaning back with his hands together, Roger continued rapid-fire, “No doubt you’ve wasted money on Scripting Wicked Killer Scripts or taken some Pierce College screenplay seminar—seriously, I don’t understand the retard who takes these classes, no offense. Just think about it: if these seminar teachers know what they’re talking about, why the hell would they be at Pierce and not at Musso’s? I’m sorry, it’s just a pet peeve of mine. Don’t take a stupid class, just sit your ass down and write the fucking thing. Anyway, let’s get to business. As I’m sure you’re well aware, you know that no one except your mother will read unsolicited scripts—”

“My mother would probably be the last person to read my script,” Will muttered.

Roger paused, his almond eyes startled. “Your mother is probably the last real bitch?”

“No no, never mind, go on, please.” Will suddenly became vastly interested in sawing his tongue off with Roger’s butter knife. His face flamed and his skin itched.

Roger paused before saying, “Your script was actually lying in the recycle bin when one of our readers randomly picked it up. Lunch reading for her, Lucky Break for you.”

Will didn’t budge or breathe.

“Real lucky for you. Your story is just incredible stuff, the Godfather in San Francisco, this fusion vibe you’ve got going on,” Roger grinned. “Ang Lee and I’ve really been looking for something like this for awhile, something epic but personal, with the war and the love and family violence and, really, I’m ecstatic about what you have here. We need an

Asian story to really catapult Asian consciousness, our common experience, into American culture, and this stupendous epic you’ve got is IT. I’ve been searching for in the dark for years for something with this punch and daring, not to get over-dramatic. I believe in this script, I really do.”

Will pinched himself violently before he could blurt out, “Uh, me too.”

“Willy, what I’m telling you—you know what I’m saying? we’d like to option this piece. Willy? You undabstand dah words that ah coming out ob my mouth?”

Obviously, Will didn’t for a moment. Then in an electric, overwhelming astonishment, he gasped and stammered and started up in his chair like someone had cracked him in the shins. “That’s, I’m so Roger, thank you, that’s wonderfultastic—I...wow, I don’t know what to say!”

Roger grinned right back.

“No one ever does. Now all we need to do is shop talk with your agent about actually buying the script.” He pressed a button on his phone. “Janice? Could you ask Stefan to come up here?” To Will, Roger said, “Stefan’s one of our artistic directors, he’s absolutely great, you’ll love him.”

Will immediately disliked Stefan, who was the most riveting, gorgeous half-Asian Will had ever seen in his life. “My God, if only I were gay. What a preening prick,” muttered Will as he took a copy of his script and sat back down.

“Will! I can’t tell you what a pleasure it is to meet the genius behind the words, finally.

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I’m as excited as Roger to get right to work on this.” Stefan didn’t really speak; he launched his words from his perfect lips, his perfectly cleft chin that bore just the slightest, sexiest hint of stubble. Will wondered vaguely how any of the women in the office could concentrate on anything besides Stefan’s arresting gray eyes, exquisite cheekbones and cosmopolitan charisma. Stefan’s ear wax probably had more virility and virve than Will’s entire lifetime allotment, and—

Will snapped back to attention suddenly. “Sorry Stefan, could you repeat that last bit?”

“Sure, I was just saying that the artistic integrity of the work would probably be better served if we moved the story to Frisco and eliminated all the stereotypes in the script.” Stefan smiled so warmly at Will that he blushed with jealousy. “The drycleaner, the overbearing parents, the drama about what career to—god, it’s just so done.”

Roger nodded his head in agreement. “Willy, what we’d like to get from from you now is a revision taking into account Stefan’s suggestions. I completely agree that we want to stay clear of Asian stereotypes as much as possible. I don’t think we want to perpetuate these anymore.”

“But, the drycleaner is integral to the story, you can’t—”

Stefan broke in, “I understand your attachment to it, but it’s very easy to change it to say, why don’t we make them business owners, restaurant owners like the Sopranos?”

Will’s dislike of Stefan began to change into distrust, the way a gazelle regards an apparently disinterested lioness. An ill-defined but no less urgent apprehension began to build in Will’s stomach as he said, “The Sopranos? That’s not what I had in mind at all.” “We know,” Roger said. “But revisions happen all the time. It’s no big deal, just part of the process, and I know you’ll get acclimated and accomplished at rewriting, since you’re such a great writer already. You’ve got to be able to come at things in totally different perspectives, like octagons or prisms splitting light.”

“But when light splits in a prism, it’s still light, not something completely different. And I don’t know what you mean by the octagon analogy, but essentially, the essence of the thing hasn’t changed,” Will replied. Stefan and Roger exchanged slightly confused looks. “I completely appreciate your suggestions, Stefan, but I can’t reconcile some of your ideas with my story. See, The Godfather and my story, they’re both about the American Dream—”

“Oh, fuck!” Stefan exploded, rolling his sapphire eyes. “No American Dream, please, that’s exactly the thing I’m certain will kill the fire of the story. Besides, do you think the American public gives two shits about what kind of white picket fence these destitute yet resolutely hopeful Chinese immigrants want? It’s so cloying I want to puke.” Even the obscenities dripped like warm honey from Stefan’s mouth.

But Will began to warm to his defense. This gorgeous bastard wasn’t going to hijack his story. “Stefan, if you had such a problem with the core of the screenplay, what exactly did you see in it that was worth bringing me in and saving the script from becoming recycled newsprint?”

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Roger cut in before Stefan. “Willy, there’s not a reason to get defensive.”

“Stefan’s suggesting that we turn the whole thing around into some monster, I don’t even know exactly what he’s suggesting.” Will rode right over Stefan’s protest that he was not trying to take anything away from Willy. “Look, I feel very strongly about the drycleaners, since that’s the whole autobiographical part of the thing, OK? Structurally and thematically, it just works, the motif of cleansing and attempted cleansing, trying to hide your crimes...”

Stefan said, “Yes, we fully realize all that and the complexity of that is exactly what can be helped by what Roger and I suggest. I know the drycleaners and who knows what else in the script is very close to your heart, but sometimes that means you have to let it go, Willy.”

“My name’s not Willy!” Will enunciated vehemently. “His voice began to rise, and the intent looks on Roger’s and Stefan’s faces turned from neutral concentration to colder recalculation. “I’m very sorry, Roger and Stefan, because I appreciate so much your wanting to make this movie, but I don’t think I can accept much of what Stefan is proposing.” For several seconds, the three men looked at the desk, finding nothing but uncomfortable silence in the woodwork.

Roger cleared his throat. “Believe me, I don’t think this little conflict is irreconcilable. I think both you and Stefan have good points. Further discussion right now might be a little too heated, so why don’t we just get you signed and we can meet in a couple of days?”

Shaking his head, Stefan said, “Actually Roger, I’m really glad I was able to meet Will. I don’t think we can work this together. I’ve known a lot of amateurs like Will, and they’re not going to budge, even when it’s in everyone’s best interest. It’s totally unfortunate and true.”

Will’s head whirled in outrage, and his temper flared. The confusion boiled over into white indignation at Stefan’s pristine smile, pristine teeth, pristine and putrid opinions. Suddenly

INT. ROGER’S OFFICE — DAY

WILL HAH’S fist dislodges two pearly teeth from STEFAN’s mouth. Beautiful, glistening blood splatters across ROGER’s impeccable Versace suit, the stains vivid as *kimchi*. Without thinking, Will grabs Stefan by the shirt and screams at him, “You don’t know me! You don’t know what I’ve been through, what my wife suffers, what kind of stress I have! You’re nothing but a pretty blond boy who tries so hard to be beautiful when you don’t know anything about art! Did you go to Yale drama, and pay for it all by yourself, and write a dissertation on Asian American social mobility?”

Stefan’s head lolls weakly in the blast of Will’s tirade. “I can’t believe you come in, take a cursory look at something that I’ve worked my ass off on for the past five years, and presume to instruct me on what the story really, truly is about.”
Roger bellows for security. “Get out of my office, you little prick, get out!”

Collecting his jacket and script, Will storms out of the room, bowling over the pretty assistant in the hall. He starts to trot, then sprint through the marble lobby toward his car, the BMW 328i he rented just for today, running from the confusion and expletives, from the pang of foreknowledge that regret will strike with the relentless vengeance that a desperate, ardent dreamer’s conscience can muster. He drives blindly to the Getty, and cries for sin and error.

**Ext. Choice of Pyre or Pyre – Night to Day**

“It wasn’t your fault,” Grace consoled him while they threaded the throaty Third Street buzz of a Saturday night. Above the seashore murmur of the crowd, small flames danced in the trees, flames that deflated into plastic electric lights if anyone cared to look closer.

Hands in pockets, head bent forward, Will ignored the woman next to him. He wondered if he hated her. He hated everyone else he saw. Three years out of Yale without a single real opportunity, until yesterday—the shame of lost chances formed a choking bolus in his throat, a ball seething with guilt and self-pity. Will remembered that he hadn’t called back home yet.

“Will, sweetie—” Grace said in her best imitation of his mother. Will plopped abruptly on a bench, turning his back to her. She stared him with liquid eyes. “Hon, I know it’s hard to not sell your script yet. But you’ll keep trying and we’ll get it someday, though. I believe in you.”

Driven wild by her incessant clichés, he snapped, “Leave me alone.” He realized too late that she was expecting his anger. She smiled wanly, probably thinking that she was sympathizing with his deepest angst. He didn’t hazard a guess at what she was feeling, because he wasn’t feeling anything. On second thought, he corrected himself. He felt numb.

The stores, the neon and the distant blat from a panhandler’s clarinet needled his brain. It was too much, really, to expect from a City of Angels. Angels were intangible, unattainable, inherently beyond human pursuit. Like his script, or his dream. What kind of thing was he chasing, Will sighed to himself, rubbing his shadowed cheeks and allowing Grace’s cool hands to take his. His eyes traveled along the large storefront windows, focusing on a massive Rage against the Machine poster of some old Buddhist monk burning.

“I love you,” Grace said. He looked up at her, touched in spite of his flailing frustration.

Will woke slowly, still drowsy with her scent.

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The far wall was shrouded in hazy, narcotic blue from the first stirrings of the morning. He opened the window a crack, tasting the air’s sharp tang of rose and palm and ozone. A faint red line, like a visible feeling in the dawn sky, was blossoming under the black leaves of the apartment yard roses.

The script, all one-hundred-and-thirty-three pages of revisions upon revisions, lay mutely on his dresser, yielding nothing to his gaze. Every morning for the past year, he had stared back at it, hoping that the phone would ring with magic and relieve his burden. Was that so much to ask? Not just for him,
yisei

but for Grace, who had returned to stripping to pay the rent and the copying bills. It wasn’t fair that she gave up everything for his pet passion and had become the favorite girl for yuppies who came in to unwind after poetry slams. She had never said anything in reproach, as if the generations of women who had silently followed their man in forbearance weighed upon her lips. Staring east reminded him of his parents, whom he hadn’t called yet. They no doubt still complained at night about a Ivy education wasted on their only son and their slut of a daughter-in-law, whom they still refused to talk to. Stefan’s lovely face rose in his imagination, and Will wished to God he had smashed Stefan’s grin into the wall yesterday.

A soft but stern murmur from her side of the bed stopped his reach for the Smirnoff. As he went back to the window to watch the sun flit between downtown’s buildings, he felt like crying, so he did. He would make one last shot at selling the damned thing, then he would go back to New York and get a real job, like bricklaying. Or medicine, God forbid.

The phone’s yell shattered his thoughts, though he didn’t make any move to answer it. Grace moaned, “Gonna get that?” and smashed the pillow over her ears. Presently the answering machine picked up the call.

“This is for Mr. William Hah. My name is James Kim and I represent Mr. Stefan Jackson as Pacific Rim Pictures legal counsel. You are advised that Mr. Jackson has filed a restraining order against you, and that he will avail himself of all legal recourse at his disposal to seeking damages for injuries sustained in your vicious personal attack on Mr. Jackson’s mind and body yesterday. You can reach me at (310) 555-2389 if you wish to discuss a settlement. Otherwise, we will press both criminal and civil charges to the fullest extent of the law. Good day.” After the machine clicked off, Will held his head in his hands for some time. Some desperate, quiet thing awoke in him then, like the red dawn lighting the haze into a harsh glow. He would find his justification, silence the guilty and demanding voices, even if it meant—

EXT. HOLLYWOOD AND HIGHLAND - NIGHT

“Do you smell something burning?” Several people nod their heads. An insidious odor fouls the uncharacteristically humid air, yet doesn’t prepare the crowd for the shock. Will calmly sits in his shadow in the middle of the intersection, his eyes closed like he is dreaming. The crowd grows steadily on the sidewalks, making no move towards Will’s crackling, smoking mass. America’s obsession with the spectacular death is healthy as ever. It’s the bravest, most futile thing the crowd has seen, like something out of the movies. His body shines brighter than the streetlights, almost as bright as the flashing police lights.

A TOURIST from Cincinnati squeezes his way to the front of the straining crowd, hoping that at its center he’ll find someone famous. He sniff’s several times, unable to place the unfamiliar, sweet, meaty smell despite his taste for grilling. “Where’s the barbecue?”

INT. THE KODAK THEATRE - NIGHT

GRACE HAH ascends to the stage slowly, hampered by her dress and her own hesitation. The gold statuette feels cool, but nearly slips from her sweaty palms. She presses her lips in what she hopes is a smile, turning to the Kodak Theatre audience, and to the millions watching.
"I first want to thank the Academy for this award—it is Will’s and no one else’s.” That is the beginning of her speech and the extent of what she can read, as her tears blur the ink. Unable to look at her crumpled notes, Grace begins to speak what she first wrote in a spasm of rage and grief when she learned of Will’s posthumous Oscar nomination.

“Nothing, not his friends or family or fears, that could keep Will from pursuing the quickening life. And as many of us know too well, he ended that life, protesting the stifling of his dream.”

The page in her hand crumples further.

“Thank you for ensuring that his protest was not in vain, that his plea for recognition did not go unheeded. He always told me that he refused to be ghettoized as the Asian or ethnic writer; now, he is fully American, far beyond anything race could hold.”

“He always told me that he refused to be ghettoized as the Asian or ethnic writer; now, he is fully American, far beyond anything race could hold. He had such a finely attuned vision of life that life seemed impossible except through death. Will saw that we, and the Academy in particular, stumble through life, half-seeing, half-feeling, in half-reality, between plastic blood and living blood. Will lived so severely that death was attracted to him; he had a dream so intense that he became dangerous to life. He believed in the reality of Hollywood, for who can endure without a dream, and...thank you.”

Grace runs out of words, her emotions dry. Light-headed, she turns towards the wings. Behind her, the Kodak explodes of one accord to its feet—

Ext. The Ground of Our Beseeching – Late Afternoon

Grace detached herself from the gloom under the wet foliage and silently approached the newly laid headstone. The smell of night rain still dripped from slow shadows that coated the damp ground. Underneath the darkening trees of the City slit through with white-golden sheen, she cleared a small patch of dirt and laid a fire with lighter fluid and match. Into it, sheaf by sheaf, she dropped the pages of Will’s screenplay.

Halfway through, Grace started to speak, first tremulously, then with greater force. “I still don’t get it, Will. What did you hope to get from this—well, I know what?”

She sank to her knees. “I don’t know how to tell you. That guy you went to see, Roger, he made a statement after seeing you on the news, saying he wished he could still take the script, but he didn’t dare encourage a possible epidemic of charred aspiring screenwriters.” In a fit of helpless rage, she ripped and clawed at the remaining pages, and just as suddenly subsided. Shreds of paper mixed with ashes.

“How could you think that burn—how was doing that going to help, Will? They almost took it, exactly because you felt so passionate and stubborn about it! They would have bought it in a couple days, if you just hadn’t—"

Between two palms, the Getty Center gleamed white in the distance, high on its hill.

“You never even came to one of my shows. Who else was I working at the Pussykat Klub for?” Her sniffing shivered with regret. “At least I don’t have to go there anymore.”

The final torn page, she pressed to her lips, then tossed it into the flames that flared up then died, like blown smoke from the south side of the Getty, wind of a clear sky.

Dan Song ’04 is a History concentrator in Eliot House.
power of prayer

Taeho Lim

Our house holds Thanksgiving 365 days long.
She kneels, bird-boned, black hair thinning,
Before morning, before we eat, before we sleep,
The brick and mortar for a house complete.

—If I erase the faith, deny God’s good or great,
Or there in the first place when she prays?
Still
Food cools on the table, shoes potpourri
The air about the front door, and like a
Sheepdog, the gray roof faithfully herds rain
Into the gutters. No hand of God I see.
Still
My mom awakes and works too early after
Midnight for the past ten years, in neglect
Of the once fresh doug of her intelligence;
FedEx ships, not cultivates, ideas and books.
Who cares she studied Greek for a degree,
And used to love, but has no time to write.

Except, remove or deny her faith, and
Perhaps six years ago, a sudden night:
Slumping, her head slaps the counter, the
Lukewarm kitchen floor in the keening light—
Her knife she was slicing scallions with dives
quick as falcon talons into her shank,
Her bird-bones blackly sheared from straining
tendons,
A lonely collapse of the body from
Mileage, from no reasons to give thanks.

Then my brother, free of parental oversight,
Skips class and parole one, two many times;
I never get to college because my
Baby sister’s baby (was god in the backseat?)
Stretches our love’s resources to three
Generations. The money must be made,
And it’s certainly not blackbird-boned her,
Brokedown and caged,
Going nowhere except into hysterics.
Into another year dull and struggle.

Because she lacked a man to hold her? No,
The man goes missing too often to be
Integral to the story.

But that won’t be my mistake.
Thanks be to God, or these words reflecting
Lamplight here never grope the page.

Taeho Lim ’03 graduated with a degree in Economics.
Ewha educated Ji-Ah Park, artist, researcher and human rights activist, shares her artwork with Yisei. A visiting scholar at Harvard in the Women’s Studies Program, Park has participated in many exhibitions, from the touted Kwang Ju International Biennale in 1997 to the Subway Project, an international avant-garde art exhibition in Seoul in 2000 (alongside fellow Korean artist Nam June Paik). In addition to being an innovative video artist and sculptor, Park has actively worked with themes of feminism and done research in women’s studies.
Park suggests a new direction of her artistic efforts in a whole new interpretation on traditional Korean culture. It is aiming at interpreting that culture in the light of modernity, dwelling on its values and establishing her own status.
What Park is directly facing is the present, not tradition. She figured that tradition was merely a spiritual element that could be employed for creation. She placed emphasis on the spiritual and cultural standing of Korea in addition to her concept of womanhood in general.
artwork courtesy of Ji-Ah Park