

Podcast Themes Youth Advisory Board

Letter to the Reader

Dear Reader,

Voices of young people in today's culture are often misrepresented or underrepresented. Chinese American youth face many of their own specific challenges and often do not have outlets to express the varied issues that they face in school, on the streets, or at home. At the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), the summer 2008 Youth Advisory Board, comprised of eight Chinese American teenagers from around New York City, came together to explore and discuss different topics that they cared about. The YAB produced podcasts on topics related to the larger theme of 'Changes in Chinese Ameri-

can Youth Culture.'

For seven weeks, the YAB'ers met once (sometimes twice) a week in MOCA's gallery space. They chose the theme and their topics and split into pairs to interview, script, record, and edit for their podcasts. In the end, they produced four podcasts on the topics that they have described in the following pages.

Here, you will be introduced to the eight YAB'ers as well as the MOCA staff who

helped with the project. We hope you will listen to their podcasts and use them as a starting point to explore the issues raised in them. We also



hope that these podcasts will be informative and educational, and that they will encourage listeners
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Changes in Youth Culture

We decided to produce podcasts on an aspect of Chinese American culture with which we are most familiar, and to some extent, that we spend the least time thinking about. As the youth of this fast-paced era, we do not have many chances to slow down and reflect upon our own culture, which in turn is too busy changing to wait for us to catch up. Just as China has grown and changed in great leaps this past decade, the change in Chinese American youth culture has been similarly immense.

The customs of youth today are vastly different from the 1.5 generation before us - those who were born in China but moved to America for their teenage years and who are now generally in their late-twenties. Fewer youth today are dealing with the hardships of being first generation immigrants, yet problems exist all the same. The act of assimilating into American culture yet still preserving a Chinese heritage continues to be a difficult balance for many of us. The dominant Chinese stereotypes have changed since the 60's to the now prevalent "model

minority" stereotype, but just how true is it? How does such a stereotype affect the Chinese-American teenagers growing up today? On the other hand, many aspects of Chinese American youth culture have become much richer. No longer is contemporary Chinese music limited to love ballads; Chinese hip-hop has emerged as a genre with equally popular counterparts in Korea and Japan, as you see in one of our podcasts.

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YAB Podcast Themes

Dancing Back to China

Lily Liang and Winnie Huang first wanted to explore the preservation of Chinese culture by Chinese American youths. After brainstorming, they became extremely intrigued by the idea of adopted Chinese children learning more about their roots. Because these Chinese children are often raised by Caucasian parents, they live a different lifestyle than that of most Chinese American children.

Every Saturday, many attend traditional folk dance classes at the New York Chinese Cultural Center (NYCCC)

that enable them to develop their own identity as Chinese Americans. These classes enrich and leave a huge impact on them by giving them a greater understanding of where they came from. Through traditional folk dance, these children are able to gain a sense of the beauty and values of a country that many of them have never seen.

- Lily Liang & Winnie Huang

Credits: Lily and Winnie would like to thank the NYCCC, Lynn Hansell Perkins, Denise Dalfo, Karen Machung, Ella Perkins, Gemma Dalfo Zay, Alice Chacon for their help and support. The song used in the podcast was Flower Drum by Lei Qiang from Traditional Erhu Music, Vol. 2.



Asian Stereotypes: True or False?

Katrina Lee and Rena Mei worked together to create a podcast about Asian stereotypes. As Asian Americans, they are familiar with many of the stereotypes surrounding the population. They wanted to explore the different perspectives surrounding them: Which stereotypes were 'false', and to what extent were they 'true'?

They interviewed Asian Americans of a wide range of ages. Through their work, they were able to reveal how widely accepted many of the stigmas are. They also managed to explore Asian American reactions to the many labels that

exist. While discrimination may not be as blatant as it has been in the past, they found that stereotyping is still common. Although they scared away some adults who did not wish to be interviewed, they thoroughly enjoyed the creative process.

- Katrina Lee & Rena Mei

Credits: Katrina and Rena would like to thank Betty Lee, Sophia Ha, Jenny Wang, Freda Li, Ricky Dang, and Baiyang Chen for giving up their time to make the podcast possible. The song used in the podcast is "Learn Chinese" by Jin.

Chinese Music Through the Times

Using Chinese music as a medium for exploration, this podcast tries to understand how youth music tastes change from one generation to the next, and more importantly, how Chinese American youth view themselves. It explores the previous rejection of Chinese music by Chinese Americans and how eventually, the earliest genre of Chinese music, the Cantopop love ballad, allowed for the preservation of Chinese traditions like the Chinese opera.

The popular maudlin love-ballad genre eventually lost its appeal over time and now, pop rock and hip-hop share the top ranks in Hong Kong music charts; a reflection of greater

American influence on Chinese music. In addition, there are an increasing number of Japanese and Korean artists in the Chinese music industry. Ultimately, the change in music in the United States from 1960 to 2008 shows the changes in the Chinese American identity from one that was solely American to one that embraced Chinese as well as international influences.

- James Leung & Jason So

Credits: James and Jason would like to thank Uncle B, Manni Lee, Rena Mei, and Sammy Cheung for making this podcast possible. The songs used are *It's Raining* by Rain, *Everlasting Love*, by Leon Lai, and by Sam Hui.

The Chinese American Dream

People have always talked about the "American Dream" - whether it was about working hard to drive a sports car or finally paying off that mortgage before retirement. To many immigrants, America was the "land of opportunities." It was a place where they could earn money, a place for a "brighter future," and a place that drew immigrants away from the country they were living in.

Early Chinese immigration dates back to the beginning of the 1800s. The Gold Rush attracted many Chinese men who came to America, hoping to "strike it rich." In many cases, those dreams played out differently than they expected. Over time, the "American Dream" has evolved and the philosophies have been replaced. Today, instead of working hard in a factory to send money back to their families, many hope to achieve other goals, such as getting a college education.

Valinda Chan and PinChang Huang wanted to create a podcast that would give Chinese Americans a voice and a chance to share their own, "American Dream." Valinda and PinChang learned that there were a lot of universal aspects in peoples' dreams, such as family, education and the "hope for something better." Each story they heard was distinct, heartwarming and definitely worth discovering.

- Valinda Chan & PinChang Huang

Credits: Valinda and PinChang would like to thank Ellen Gee, Chris Kramer, Jonathan Qiaz, Sonny Sun, Charles Wu, Hayley Yee, John Yee, Andy Yu, and Mon Yuck Yu for allowing themselves to be interviewed. The songs used in the podcast is "Melodies of Life" by Nobuo Uematsu.

Meet the YABers!

James Leung



James Leung is seventeen years old and entering his senior year at Stuyvesant High School. He is the president of the music theory club, an active member of the piano club, and a regular tutor of math and physics. His hobbies include both composing and listening to classical music, and reading and posting on blogs. He is a big fan of Asian pop music and old school American music like Michael Jackson and Queen. This summer, he has worked with the Chi-

natown Youth Initiative's Summer Leadership Institute, in which he discusses topics like the Asian Identity and will participate in Chinatown Beautification Day. He is excited to be on the Youth Advisory Board because he wanted to get in touch with his Chinese heritage. Having grown up in a predominantly Italian neighborhood, he only recently became involved with the Asian community.

Jason So

Jason So, sixteen, is a senior at West Windsor Plainsboro High School South, NJ. He was born in a NYU hospital and lived in Brooklyn for twelve years. At his high school, he served Mayor Shing Fu Hsueh of West Windsor as the Youth Advisory Task Force chair. He is also President of the Junior Statesmen of America and served as the only Chinese American on his class council, as vice president. While he is fluent in Spanish

and also president of the Spanish club at his school, this summer he has immersed himself in Chinese culture, something he has never done before. He participates in MOCA's YAB and in his spare time, he fight gentrification with Chinatown Justice Project (CJP). He feels NYC's Chinatown is a unique place that should be preserved, treasured, and appreciated.



Lily Liang



Lily Liang is a senior at Stuyvesant High School. She was born in New York City but grew up as a toddler in China. Because of this, she has the mixed characteristics of both a Chinese American and also that of a Chinese immigrant. She is quiet, smart, and devoted to her family. However, she doesn't speak Chinese very well, nor can she read or write the language. She strives to assimilate American culture into her life as well as retrace her Chinese origins through watching Chinese dramas

and learning the language. She also enjoys digital photography, sketching, and volunteering at the American Red Cross. She increases public awareness of the need to prepare for emergencies and teaches life-saving skills to people of all ages. Collaboration with the Youth Advisory Board at MOCA has made her more aware of the issues surrounding Chinese Americans and the culture of Chinese people. She has enjoyed her time at MOCA and is excited to share her newly acquired knowledge through her podcast.

Katrina Lee

Katrina Lee is sixteen years old and will be entering her senior year at New Explorations Into Science, Technology, and Math (NEST + M) High School in the fall. Her family is originally from New York and still resides there currently. As a Chinese-American, Katrina felt that working on the Youth Advisory Board for MOCA would be a great opportunity to connect with her Asian heritage. Her hobbies include reading, dancing, and playing badminton. She

has not yet decided on a career path, but she has narrowed her life's goals down to two: having a successful job and a happy family, or becoming a ninja. Lastly, she would like to thank MOCA and YAB for the great experiences.



PinChang Huang



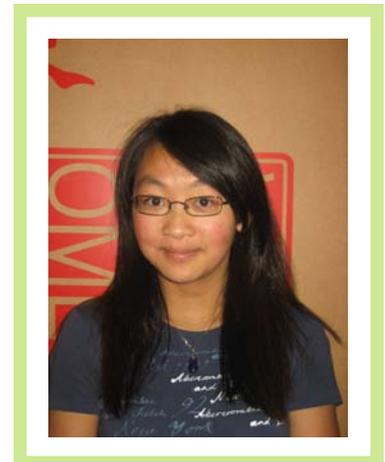
PinChang Huang is a freshman at Flushing International High School. She is from WenZhou, China and in 2004 she came to New York. Now she lives in Woodside, Queens. She decided to join the Youth Advisory Board in the Museum of Chinese in America because she wants to keep in touch with her Chinese cultures and wants to learn more about Chinese immigrants' history in the New York City. She considers her-

self a writer because she wants to share with others the experiences in her life and future as well as her views of the world and people in general. As a new Mandarin speaker in America, she enjoys writing poetry, plays, and lyrics. Her career aspiration is to become a great writer. She also likes to listen to music and read fashion magazines.

Rena Mei

Rena Mei is a rising senior at Stuyvesant High School. She is very excited to be one of the eight selected members of the Youth Advisory Board at the Museum of Chinese in America and is currently training to become a Chinatown walking tour docent. Her role in the YAB includes creating a podcast with another member, Katrina, specifically geared towards Asian stereotypes. Her other activities include Chinatown Youth Initiatives (CYI), being a youth volunteer, a youth services intern,

and Safety and Preparedness instructor at the American Red Cross in Greater New York, and volunteering at various different places in and out of school. Her involvement in Chinatown-related activities this summer has connected her more to her childhood neighborhood, though she currently resides in Brooklyn.



Valinda Chan



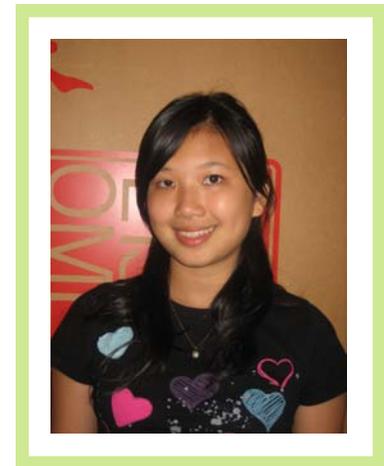
Valinda Chan is a rising junior at the Bronx High School of Science. In her early childhood years, she was a frequent visitor in Chinatown and nearby areas such as SoHo, Little Italy and TriBeCa. As a child young, she would complain about traveling with her family every weekend. However, her involvement in the Youth Advisory Board has led her to see Chinatown as a place other than a “smelly fish market that also sells cheap vegetables.” In fact, learning more about Chinatown has helped her to understand that a lot of what she thought was “rubbish” and “senior citizen talk” from

her grandparents was actually very meaningful and important. Valinda feels that learning more about Chinese immigrants in New York, Chinatown’s history and the neighborhood itself has definitely provided her with a new outlook on the Chinese communities and her own family, especially her deceased grandparents. Valinda is unsure of what exactly she wants to do yet, although she has a few ideas, but she knows that her Chinese heritage and knowledge are some things she will take with her.

Winnie Huang

Winnie Huang is a junior at Staten Island Technical High School. Raised by a traditional Chinese mother, she has always been connected to her Chinese roots. For the past ten years, she has attended Chinese language classes, and Chinese folk dancing classes. Recently, she wanted to give back the knowledge she has gain by being a member of her school’s Asian American Club, partici-

pant in the Summer Leadership Institute and coordinator of Chinatown Literacy Project. This summer, MoCA YAB has left her lots of memories, great friends as well as new insight about Chinese youth culture through her work in the podcast project. In her spare time, she enjoys running, dancing, drawing and going on swings.



Annie Shi



Annie Shi is a recent graduate of The Brearley School and will be attending Yale University in the fall. Her family is originally from Shanghai, though they speak Mandarin at home. She has thoroughly enjoyed her role as an Education and Development intern this summer. Her projects include a curriculum based on Chinese American history for an AP level Chinese class, as well as the YAB publication and podcasts. In her spare

time, she likes to read, cook and bake, transcribe, and travel. She dreams of living in New York, Paris, Morocco, and Shanghai in the future. She would like to thank the Youth Advisory Board for a great summer! She has loved getting to know the members on the board as well as familiarizing herself with the Chinatown neighborhood.

Katie Wang

Katie Wang is a junior majoring in sociology at Barnard College. As an education intern at the Museum of Chinese in America, she helped script a foundational draft of a walking tour exploring gentrification in Chinatown. Also during the summer, she worked with the Youth Advisory Board in their various workshops and on their podcasts. The YAB members have unknowingly furthered her academic interest in identity formation and A/P/A issues; especially because they have provided first hand

knowledge to certain issues that were discussed in her sociology classes. Her other academic interests include authenticity of ethnicity and identity and gender dynamics. In her upcoming year she will be exploring all these issues as Columbia University Asian American Alliance's Barnard Vice-Chair. Currently she resides either at 116th and Broadway or in Lower Westchester with her family.



Daria Ng

Daria was raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, but has been living in Manhattan for the past few years. She has been an educator at MOCA since 2003 before joining MOCA staff full-time in November 2007. She received an MA at Columbia University's Teachers College. At the Museum, Daria works closely with the Director of Education. Her responsibilities include developing education and public programs, designing educational materials, training and manag-

ing museum docents, and collaborating with area teachers. She speaks Cantonese and Spanish and in her free time, loves to read, write, watch movies, travel, and explore New York City. She also coordinates MOCA's youth programs, including this summer's Youth Advisory Board. She is happy to have met all the YAB'ers and has had a lot of fun working with them!

Letter to the Reader

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to think differently about Chinese American youth culture.

MOCA is expanding in 2009 to its new home at 215 Centre Street and there, will continue to have youth programs throughout the year. These programs will help youth to develop leadership skills, while also allowing young people to

interact with a global audience of visitors at the Museum and allow them to connect their own lives and stories to Chinese American history. We hope you will stay in touch us by visiting our website at www.mocanyc.org.

- MOCA Education Staff

Change in Youth Culture

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Because we are teenagers, most of the time, we are too busy living out our lives to reflect on the developments of our own youth culture. The process of creating these podcasts has given all of us a chance to slow down and examine all that has changed and developed in these past years.

- MOCA Youth Advisory Board, Summer 2008

Some Things Remain Unchanged

What are you?

I'm an American.

No, really, what are you?

As long as I can remember, I have always had that conversation with new friends, acquaintances, camp counselors, and parents. In the beginning the insistent questioning didn't bother me; I knew that people were curious about why I looked the way I did. However, the older I got the more the question, "What are you" opened a can of worms in my teenage mind. Any claims of being Chinese ended with my looks.

Visiting Chinatown was not a homecoming; walking along East Broadway, Canal and Mott, streets only familiar because of the Cantonese filling my ears I felt was conscious of not fitting in—of being an outsider. I didn't speak the language, live in the community, or wear the right style of clothing. I wasn't like those Asian teenagers I saw walking without parental supervision. I imagined them talking about what few Chinese-American friends I had talked about: immigrant parents, Americanization, Chinese at home-English at school—or some form of bilingualism, embarrassment over cultural differences that made interactions between parents and friends awkward.

All those experiences belonged to the Chinese-American youth who hung-out, lived, or spent an inordinate amount of time in Chinatown. I didn't have those experiences and somehow that meant I wasn't Chinese-American. Even now, in college, self-identifying as Chinese-American or Asian American is confusing and never simply an acknowledgement of my mixed ethnicity.

Being part of YAB, I noticed that Chinatown's elusive quality of making some kids Chinese-American to me was also unconsciously understood by other teenagers. Somehow, by spending time in Chinatown, either on the weekends with parents or on Friday afternoons with friends, the teenagers' Chinese identity was reaffirmed. Perhaps it's because in Chinatown, Chinese people become the majority, Cantonese and other Chinese dialects are spoken more than English, and Chinese food is the norm.

In some way Chinatown enables youth to grasp their Chinese culture in an environment where the Chinese are otherwise a minority; this culture while similar in certain respects is not exactly the same for each individual.

It's this special Chinatown quality that all the podcasts, whether directly or indirectly, touch upon. In the end, Chinatown is more than just a location.

- Katie Wang



On Identities and Shanghai Breakfasts: Some Thoughts

This summer, I traveled to China with my family in hopes of discovering the *true meaning* of what it mean to be Chinese. Just kidding. Rewind. My sentiments were not so terribly kitschy, but there was a distinctive moment this year when it occurred to me that I was not Chinese enough. I had begun to doubt my Chinese-ness. How can that be, you might wonder. Isn't she Chinese? I mean, that doesn't really...change...ever. Unless you're Michael Jackson.

What does it mean to be Chinese? An almost impossible question to answer, but one that plagued my mind all year. I am 100% Chinese; my parents immigrated to America from Shanghai back in the mid 80's, but I was born in America. Chinese was the first language that I knew, though my fluency in it was quickly replaced by English once I started kindergarten. At home, we speak Mandarin and eat with chopsticks. My mother cooks family style Chinese food every night, and we still celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. Yet ever since I started middle school, most of my friends have been white; I didn't have a cluster of Asian friends like most other Chinese teenagers I knew, nor did I desire it. And then I had other disturbing preferences...Why did I like France better than China? Did that predilection indicate something...*wrong* about me? I felt obligated to love China, and furthermore, I felt like I was betraying an intrinsic part of me. I was Chinese after all.

And so this summer, I traveled to China, determined to fall in love with the country. What I found was a reality that refused to fit my illusions and a different perspective through which to examine my Chinese American identity.

Shanghai 11:54 PM June 14, 2008

Shanghainese breakfasts are oily and delicious. I think it is my favorite meal here. This morning, my parents brought back sesame scallion pancakes, still piping hot, small wontons, delicate and translucent, floating in a clear broth with scallions, and of course, the staple of any Chinese breakfast, soy milk. This soy milk isn't like the kind that you would find in a Western supermarket. It's made fresh every morning so that it has a nutty aftertaste of soybean, and it comes unsweetened. I added two teaspoons of sugar to mine this morning, and it was just sweet enough. My parents also brought back a silky tofu soup, one of my favorites. The tofu is so smooth that it almost slides down your throat. And of course, my dad had mochi balls, gooey and sticky on the inside with a heart of sweet red bean paste and rolled in toasted coconut flakes on the outside. These kinds of breakfasts bring back childhood memories for my parents, and their happiness when eating these foods is infectious. There is something so warm and satisfying about sharing a meal that is laden with nostalgia.

Shanghai 1:37 PM June 17, 2008

Shanghai is a funny city, unlike Paris and New York in that the city's population of residents and tourists is not so clearly divided. In fact, there are far fewer tourists here than I expected. Because so many Chinese people have emigrated the predominant kind of "tourists" here in the summer are people like my parents, the older generation who grew up in China, but left to start a new life in America. Now they return to their native country with their family, children in hand, who may or may not be able to speak Chinese. They cannot be identified as true tourists because they speak the dialect and intrinsically,

they still understand the people. Yet they need a map to get around; the layout of the city has changed so drastically in these past few years that they no longer know their way around the city where they had spent most of their life. In this way, these families, who are otherwise perfectly assimilated into the sea of Chinese faces, can be immediately identified as they stand confusedly on the street corner, map in hand.

Shanghai 3:45 PM June 20, 2008

I had hoped that since I am now eighteen, I could come to see Shanghai for myself, but I realize now that I was wrong. It would be impossible for me to get around the city myself. Shanghai is still not fully developed, despite its recent leaps in construction. Parts of the city are still run down, and many of the developed parts have been gentrified in the most unpleasant way. The metropolitan areas can look breathtaking, and yet so generic. Juxtaposed right next to swooping skyscrapers and other architectural feats will be a slum, alleys filled with shacks supported by rusting iron bars, bamboo poles strapping the corrugated metal together. These shabby neighborhoods are what leave the deepest imprint in my mind. It is clear that these people have been completely neglected by the government, pushed aside in a mad rush to "bring China into the 21st century." I have heard my father tell so many eviction stories, tales of entire neighborhoods disappearing in the course of one night, razed down to a pile of rubble the next day. On one hand, I want to see China change and advance. I want to be able to come here with friends and not worry about health and safety hazards. But I don't think I want it to change like this.

- Annie Shi

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Youth Advisory Board

Summer 2008

