

The AACP Newsletter

Since 1970

Asian American Curriculum Project, Inc.

July 2007

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The American Dream

Each July, the AACP newsletter staff is challenged by my friend Gary to write something positive about America. This year Gary chose a theme of "The American Dream." Here are our works on this theme.

The Perfect American Dream

By Austin Djang

An old man,
Grunting down the basement stairs,
Switches on the light,
Revealing a room rarely visited.

He bends down,
For a breath,
And quickly resumes his path,
Toward the boxes of trinkets long forgotten.

Adamantly, he sifts through photographs,
Of the wedding, the new house,
The kids, and the long needed vacation.
Reminiscent of the life they shared.

Him and his wife,
Together, their highs and lows,
Their stumbles and triumphs.
Recorded on hundreds of pictures.

Each one worthy of portraying her,
Yet none quite capable,
Of telling their journey,
Together, as immigrants.

Of building their restaurant,
And making the right friends.
Of raising children,
And smelling the new car.

Of learning English,
And accepting new foods and cultures.
Of rooting their life, their family,
And their pursuit of happiness.

Lost in thought,
The old man found,
What he could not capture,
Through words or pictures.

The perfect eulogy,
For the perfect woman.
For what was, in his eyes,
The perfect American Dream.

The Great American Dream

By Florence M. Hongo

Early on a summer morning in the San Joaquin Valley in California in the 1930s, the sun had not yet shown above the mountains. I sat on the edge of a plowed field pulling my flannel nightgown tighter around my thin body to keep out the chill. At the age of eight, I had never seen the sun rise above the mountains and I decided it was an experience that I wanted.

This was a farm, the family was very poor, we had no electricity, running water was from a wooden tank on a tower, I was forced to make this early morning trek to the outhouse (waterless toilet). Barefooted, I walked more than one hundred feet in the dim early morning light, carefully, to avoid fallen seeds and twigs from the trees. The outhouse was on the edge of the plowed field and the ground was still warm from the hot summer day before.

I watched as the clouds on the horizon turned red as a fireball. Then there was a solid streak of red as the sun peeked above the mountains. It made me feel so excited to experience this something new. I thought about the mountains and the land that I'd read about in the *Book of Knowledge* beyond those faraway mountains.

I said to myself, "Someday, I will explore beyond those mountains and see the big buildings of the cities, the vast oceans, the forests on the mountains."

On a farm where there was no electricity, we slept three in a bed. Every night I was in charge of building the fire under the "ofuro" or hot tub in the modern vernacular. We walked everywhere, four miles with a dime in my hand to see a Shirley Temple movie, two miles to school everyday, rain or shine, miles to visit with playmates. Everything I wore was sewn on a Singer treadle sewing machine. I made toys with a hammer and nails from Father's barn, beds for my doll and small tables and chairs for them. Our water was pumped from a tall windmill into a tank perched upon a tall platform. I followed my father as he plowed the field behind a horse. Milk came directly from the cow in the barn.

Now, one jumps into a car to go anywhere. The faucet is the source of hot water. A flushing toilet. Walking for exercise. Clothes come from Macy's. With the click of a computer, one can communicate with family and friends, conduct business, shop, travel, or play games. The freedom to be an individual, participate in politics and religion as one's mind dictates.

That's the American Dream! Appreciate it and protect it!!
(Continued on Page 2)

Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions. You can contact us at -
aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com

Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACCP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Jul 29 - Aug 3	Fellowship Retreat	Zephyr Point Lake Tahoe, NV
Aug. 10-19	San Mateo County Fair	SM Co. Fair Grounds San Mateo, CA
Aug. 19 3:30pm	John Jung - author of <i>Southern Fried Rice: Life in A Chinese Laundry in the Deep South</i> will be featuring his new book <i>Chinese Laundries: Tickets to Survival on Gold Mountain</i> .	Foster City Library Foster City, CA
Sept. 29-30 10am-6pm	9th Annual Silicon Valley Moon Festival	Memorial Park Cupertino, CA
Other Event of Interest that AACCP May Not Attend		
Aug. 1-4	Chinese American Citizens Alliance 49th Biennial National Convention	San Francisco, CA
Aug. 11-12 10-4:30pm	Pistahan Festival and Parade Filipino arts, culture and cuisine	Yerba Buena Gardens San Francisco, CA
Aug. 18-26	67th Annual Nisei Week	Little Tokyo Los Angeles, CA
Aug. 25-26 10am-6pm	20th Annual Oakland Chinatown StreetFest	Oakland Chinatown Oakland, CA
Aug. 27-29	Poston Internment Camp Reunion	Golden Nugget Las Vegas, NV
Sept. 8 9am-4pm	Midori Kai Arts & Craft Boutique	MV Buddhist Temple Mountain View, CA
Sept. 22-23	Kaiser Permanente San Francisco International Dragon Boat Festival	Treasure Island San Francisco, CA
Sept. 27-29	California Council For History Education	Riverside Convention Center Riverside, CA

The American Dream

(Continued from page 1)

My American Dream

Philip Chin

What does the American Dream mean to you? Everyone has their own vision of those words. For many it is the opportunity to make money and enjoy the material rewards of life in America; the big house with the white picket fence, the 2.3 kids, or maybe even the

Editor's Message

Hello Everyone,

This past month sure went by fast. It seems like just the other day that I was emailing the last newsletter to you from the OCA convention. Okay, time's running out on this month, so I better get down to business.

AACP is happy to announce that we have just completed a new novel by Grace Takahashi called *Breathe the Sky*. We hope to have a bigger announcement in our August newsletter. If you can't wait, write to us and we'll tell you all about this wonderful book.

John Jung is coming to the Foster City library on August 19. Come and hear about his new book *Chinese Laundries: Tickets to Survival on Gold Mountain*.

Thank you to William Poy Lee and Bill Wong for signing books for us at the OCA convention and again to William for coming to the Foster City Library.

A big thank you to our intern Austin Djang for your marvelous poem and help. Thank you Florence and Philip for your contributions to this month's newsletter. Thank you Rebecca for giving me your input about life in Singapore and Australia. Life doesn't sound so different down there except that it's winter right now. When you get a chance, come back and visit us, and see how our American Dreams are going.

Lastly, thank you Gary Poon for your theme and for being an interested reader of our newsletter. Hey, I know you wanted to remain anonymous, but we've been doing this for a couple of years and you deserve a lot of the credit for urging us to be more creative and to think more expansively. Thank you, thank you!

Hope all of you are having a great summer. Bye.

Leonard Chan
Executive Editor

big gas-guzzling pickup truck with the gun rack in the rear window. For some it may mean the opportunity to damn the government or praise it to the skies as they choose. Others will enjoy the freedom to laugh at ourselves or cry if we choose to. We can feel free to love the people we want to and fall flat on our faces when we try. We can feel free to travel as far as our dreams (and perhaps our money) will take us anywhere in the world. Perhaps the greatest thing about the American Dream is that we can make that dream whatever we want it to be. Wherever you are and whatever your American Dream is, please enjoy the freedom given to you in this country to pursue that dream.

The American Dream as I See It

Leonard D. Chan

First of all, what is the American Dream? Does a country of over 300 million people have a common dream? Is the dream a vision of our expectations or a concrete road map that we follow as our way of life? In other words, is the dream an idealized goal or something we actually live everyday? Lastly, is the American Dream really that different from other people's dreams around the world?

My answers are - I'm not sure, probably not, idealized goal, and maybe not that much. Okay, am I done now? :)

If you're still reading this far, I'm guessing you want some better answers from me. I wish I could articulate some vision of my American Dream that will inspire all of you as Martin Luther King, Jr. did in his *I Have a Dream* speech, but I don't think I could ever come close to that.

- See and read the *I Have a Dream Speech*
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>

I'm not sure what the American Dream is, but I'm pretty sure that there is no one universal dream that we all share. The one thing I hope for is that your American Dreams are more substantial and egalitarian than the tired old Hollywood plot of a person going from nothing to become rich and famous.

Too often we gauge our happiness by our material wealth and power. Who am I to say that a person living a subsistent life in some remote part of the world is any less happy than the richest man in the world. I have no real perspective on either of these two life styles, but I can imagine that both experiences could be filled with happiness and sadness.

This reminds me of the allegorical Asian painting of the Vinegar Tasters. (Hey, I do write for an Asian Pacific American organization. I had to get in some Asian or Pacific Islander angle to this piece :) In this painting you have Confucius, the Buddha, and Lao-tse (representing their respective philosophies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) standing around and tasting the contents of a vat of vinegar. Confucius appears with a sour express, Buddha has a bitter expression, and Lao-tse seems pleased. There are several ways you could interpret this. To me the closest western saying that could be one interpretation to this painting is the one about getting lemons and making lemonade.

- The Vinegar Taster - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Vinegar_Tasters
- When life gives you lemons, make lemonade
http://www.phrases.org.uk/bulletin_board/19/messages/952.html

To me, Thomas Jefferson made a mistake in the Declaration of Independence. The "pursuit of Happiness" may be an "unalienable Right," but we shouldn't pursue happiness - happiness is a state of mind. You could be happy living a rich man's life or happy living in some god-forsaken place. Hey, I think we'd all like to try out that rich guy's life before we'd ever consider trading places with the god forsaken one, but if I made you smile at this one moment, I think I proved my point. Happiness can come at any time and at any place if you just let it and a life in constant pursuit of this state of mind can be a wasted endeavor. The American Dream shouldn't be about spending a lifetime in pursuit of ones own happiness.

- The Declaration of Independence
<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/index.htm>

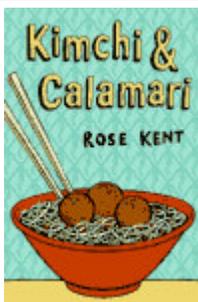
To me the American Dream should be about the idealized goals of a long and healthy life, with liberty, and justice for all. If you have these objectives, happiness is given a chance to blossom.

A long and healthy life does not need an explanation. I think almost everyone in the world dreams for this. However, liberty and justice are more complicated concepts that do not always mean the same to everyone. To me liberty is about empowerment - a sense of control over ones own life. This does not mean that you should have complete freedom to do whatever you want. This is where justice comes in. In a complex society you need rules and laws to constrain people from harming one another and to create a system of fairness. The fairness and the level of protection that these laws provide are often open to interpretation. The key is to have mechanisms within the system to allow for change that would make the rules and laws fairer.

In America, we have a system by which we can change the rules. Is our system the best? I can't say for certain. Once again, I do not have complete perspective of all the other governments in the world. Can our system be better? Without a doubt.

My heroes are the people that creatively work towards making this country and the world a better place. As long as America has an abundance of these people, we'll continue reaching for my American Dream and remain one of the best places to live.

The following books are discounted an additional 20% from the listed price for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end July 17, 2007.



Kimchi & Calamari

By Rose Kent
2007, 220 pages, Hardback.

On his fourteenth birthday, Joseph Calderaro faces a challenging assignment for his social studies class - he must write a paper about his ancestors. What makes this assignment more difficult is that Joseph is adopted and knows nothing about his Korean birth parents. Follow Joseph, in this delightful novel, as he learns about his identity as a Korean American raised in an Italian American family.

Item #3466, Normally \$15.99 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$12.79**



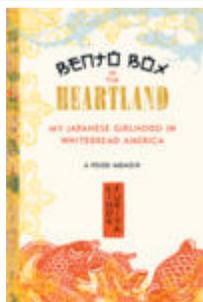
American Born Chinese

By Gene Luen Yang
2006, 233 pages, Paperback.

American Born Chinese is a graphic novel, which contains three seemingly unconnected stories that are told in alternating chapters. One story follows the classic Chinese folktale of the Monkey King, another story is on the life of a teen that is told in the author's voice, and the third appears to be an exaggerated parallel world of the second story. The stories converge in a thought provoking and poignant final chapter that deals with issues of self-esteem and self-identity. The humorous and light style makes this an easy and fun read.

Note, for awhile, I avoided reading and reviewing this book because I found the over-the-top stereotype character of Chin-Keen to be too offensive. After having read the entire book, I now recommend it without reservations.

Item #3464, Normally \$16.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$13.56**



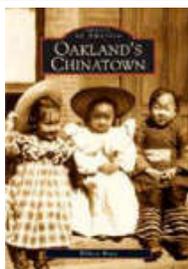
Bento Box in the Heartland My Japanese Girlhood in Whitebread America

By Linda Furiya
2006, 308 pages, Paperback.

Bento Box in the Heartland is a fascinating memoir of food columnist and cooking teacher Linda Furiya life growing up in a small town in Indiana. Food plays a major role in this memoir as it is used to highlight the cultural differences between her Japanese American family and her surrounding community.

The memoir includes tasty recipes located at the end of each chapter in the book.

Item #3467, Normally \$15.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$12.76**



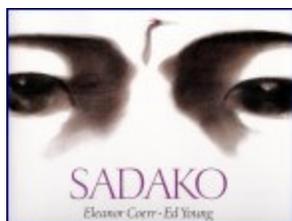
Images of America Oakland's Chinatown

By William Wong
Most recent printing 2005, 128 pages, Paperback.

Oakland's Chinatown is another wonderful book in the Acadia Publishing *Images of America* series. Along with the usual historical photos of the physical elements of the community, author William Wong infuses this book with extensive pictures of the people that inhabited it. Although the community is labeled as a Chinatown, this book shows that this community is more than just a Chinese American neighborhood.

Oakland's Chinatown is a must have book for anyone that has lived in or near this community. We currently have some author signed copies in stock. So hurry and order yours while the supply lasts.

Item #3465, Normally \$19.99 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$15.99**



Sadako

By Eleanor Coerr
Illustrated by Ed Young
1993, 45 pages, Hardback.

This is the illustrated story book version of the classic novel *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, a touching true story of Sadako Sasaki, who initially survives the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan when she was a baby, but eventually dies from leukemia (attributed to the radiation from the bombing).

This August 6, 2007 marks the 62nd anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Each August 6th, the people of Hiroshima hold a peace memorial ceremony with prayers for lasting world peace. Get a copy of this classic book, remember Sadako and the victims of the Hiroshima bombing, and join the prayer for world peace.

Item #2971, Normally \$17.99 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$14.39**