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InformAsian



Two men work out at the AG Fitness Club. Taken from Taipei Times

Looking for Answers in Gay 'club' Case

CHARGES OF DISCRIMINATION: A raid on a fitness center allegedly fronting as a gay brothel and the subsequent arrest of three men has highlighted the divisions between gay rights activists and police

Irene Lin and Yu Sen-lun (Taipei Times)

Before letting three gay men out of an interrogation room at the Chungcheng precinct police station on Dec. 20, 1998, a police officer told the detainees, "We've done our best to protect you from media publicity. But you might be used by gay rights groups who want to use your case for their own purposes."

Outside the station, members of the media waited to get a glimpse of the three, as gay rights groups shouted slogans accusing police of discrimination against homosexuals. But police said later that the men being held inside the station were so

Gay Men Cleared of Charges, Police Castigated

TRIAL OF RIGHTS: The judge hearing the case said that justice had been done in exonerating the men, but that no court could make up for the injustice the men suffered at the hands of the police

Irene Lin (Taipei Times)

The Taipei district court found two gay men not guilty on charges of indecency yesterday, calling it a case of justice delayed.

"When things such as this happen, the only thing that the court can do is render a not-guilty verdict. This is a decision of law, but it can do little to correct the wrongs that have been done to the defendants," said Wu Chiu-hung, the judge in charge of the case. A-hau, a 26-year-old man, was arrested by police on

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Dec. 20, 1998 for allegedly participating in obscene acts in an open room of a health club in western Taipei.

A-cheng, 34, a body-building trainer working at the health club, was also arrested by police on the same night when he tried to stop the arrest. The police charged him with providing sex services to gay customers at the club.

A third man was also taken into custody at the time but returned to Hong Kong where he lives and did not return to answer the charges.

Gay rights groups have claimed the three defendants were discriminated against during the process of arrest and police interrogation. The defendants also claim they were forced by police at the time of detention to strip so that photos could be taken and used as evidence against them.

According to court records, the police denied all accusations of discrimination and changed their testimony regarding the photos during the trial.

"At first a policeman admitted the photos were taken but that they did not force the men to do anything. But after further questioning, the officer contradicted his earlier statement about the photos," Wu said.

Media publicity surrounding the arrest of the men has cost A-cheng his job at the club and forced A-hau to change his name and residence.

The defendants do not plan to take any legal action against the police involved. "It's better for ordinary citizens not to fight with [police] officials because chances are they will lose at the end of the day," said Kenneth H.C. Chiu, attorney for A-cheng and A-hau. "As long as the court found them not guilty, it's a victory."

Two pieces of major evidence used in the case by police and the prosecution were over 300 new and used condoms and the confession of A-hau during his interrogation. However, Wu said the fact that there were numerous weak points in the nature of the confession, made him question whether the admission was indeed obtained of the defendant's own free will. He also challenged the charge of public indecency, saying it goes against common sense to think that consenting homosexuals would display acts of intimacy in public.

"Our society still regards homosexuals as strange. Few would admit they are homosexuals under such social pressure, let alone display their acts of intimacy to others," Wu said.

In acquitting the defendants, Wu expressed sympathy for the men, especially for A-cheng, saying he was only arrested because of "bad luck." "He did nothing wrong, but only tried to stop the police from arresting his customers. His charge, as far as I'm concerned, was groundless," Wu said. The prosecution has 10 days after receiving the written judgment to file an appeal. ☹

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afraid of media exposure that they simply wanted the "nightmare" to end as soon as possible.

The nightmare involved a raid on the AG fitness club in western Taipei by 10 police officers that were following up complaints by local residents that the club was a front for gay people to engage in sexual activities.

The ensuing legal action -- which ended yesterday when the men were found not guilty -- has pitted Taipei police against gay activists who say the entire case is nothing less than gay-bashing.

The case: Police involved in the case have said that when they arrived at the club, they saw two naked men touching

each other's private parts in one of many small booths inside. The booths had no doors and so, they said, they arrested the two men for obscene behavior in public.

Police also said that used tissue and condoms were strewn on the floor of the club, and that they suspected the facility was in fact a brothel for homosexuals.

They arrested a bodybuilding trainer at the club, and both he and the gym's owner were later charged with providing customers with equipment (rooms and condoms) for the alleged obscene acts. That version of the story is disputed by both the defendants and witnesses.

The body training coach at the fitness center, who calls himself A-cheng, told the *Taipei Times* that five to six plainclothes policemen entered the fitness club and asked everyone to show their identification.

Shortly afterward, a dozen police officers broke in through the back door. Acting on what they said were suspicions that the gym provided sex services on the premises, the officers allegedly forced two of the gym's patrons to pose for photographs while they were naked, to be used as "proof" of the allegations.

"The two customers who were sitting in one of the cubicles were threatened and told to remove the towels they were wearing. They were then told to get into sexually suggestive positions with each other," said A-cheng.

Another customer -- a law student at the time -- came forward and questioned the appropriateness of the actions being taken by the police. A-cheng claims the man was immediately struck by one of the policeman.

"They are my customers -- you cannot force them to do this or arrest them!" A-cheng says he yelled at the officers, trying to stop them from taking pictures. The police then took him into custody as the owner of the gym, and therefore as an



accomplice. He was accused of being the pimp for alleged sexual activities in the gym.

Meanwhile, A-cheng said, a few policemen kicked over trash bins, exposing tissues and rubbish -- ostensibly, he said, to create a more appropriate "crime scene."

The police took the body trainer and the two patrons back to the police station, and in just a few minutes -- as they were being questioned by the police in the basement of the station -- television cameramen appeared outside the station. The media had received a tip-off about the incident.

But when gay rights activists also showed up and added to the circus-like atmosphere, one of the two customers in custody, who identified himself as A-hau, a college student, said he began to dread being paraded in public. That, he said, was when he agreed to confess to the police accusations.

A-cheng said the police had asked the two customers to sign a deposition over their alleged indecency. "It's only a NT\$300 fine. Sign it, or we'll do nothing to protect you from the media," A-cheng recalled the police as saying.

Police, however, said it was a cut-and-dried case. "A-hau admitted to all the charges during the police interrogation. And we recovered over 300 new and used condoms at the scene. There was plenty of evidence against the three men," said Wang Chiao-ling, the prosecutor in charge of the case.

A-cheng was charged with providing sex services while the two patrons were charged with public indecency. The proof, ultimately, was a box of free condoms that had been set up at the club's front counter.

Prejudice or bad pr? Gay rights groups told the media that the three gay men had been discriminated against by the police

Hey G-Man

Dearest G-Man,

I think I've been a victim racial stereotype. Sexually, I'm a top, but because I share the common Asian physical characteristics of dark, short, and a boyish look, all my tricks and flings assume I'm a bottom. It's typical scenario in my encounters that they expect me to go down to serve them; at which point I feel like scream out and say, "I'm a top, damn it, and I want to be served too!" Recent years, I've been trying to enhance my butch image by going for the cholo look: bleaching my hair and wearing baggy pants. Apparently those aren't enough. Can you please suggest more physical and behavioral modifications for me to overcome this dreadful stereotype?

Bottomless in Hollywood

Dear B.H.,

You should be happy. Most people I know are actual bottoms who claim to be top. (I'd start mentioning names, but there really isn't enough space in this newsletter...) However I am missing a few pertinent items in your letter. First of all, I'm assuming that you are going out with white people since most Asians don't assume that other Asians are bottom -- otherwise we'd be in big trouble.

Also, I get the sense that you have you have a problem with being a bottom. Your comment about wanting to be served too makes me think that you are willing to be bottom, but you also want to top as well. Or is it that you don't want to solely be mistaken for a bottom?

I hope you realize that there is nothing wrong with being a bottom. There are benefits to both positions and that you shouldn't be ashamed of engaging in any sexual behavior as long as both parties are willing adults and that no one is harmed in the process. Remember that in most satisfying relationships there is a top and a bottom and there is nothing wrong with either position. That being said I also have to put in a plug for communication. If there were better avenues of communication, the other person would be clear that you preferred "topping" and expect to at least play both roles.

Seeing your predicament I'm a bit at odds at how to best rectify the situation. After all, if you convey some of the stereotypical traits of being a bottom, I find it difficult to figure out how to reverse that. Based on your letter, I sense that you are not shy with your sexual conquests. Perhaps if you let it be known around your circles that you prefer to top, people that you hook up with will hear from other people.

The other method (and I snicker while I write this) is to be very physically aggressive towards the end of the evening. If it's clear that you definitely going to score, you might engage in some ass-grabbing or other forms of clarifying that you want a piece of their ass (literally).

I don't know what else to tell you. If you have traits that make people think that you're a bottom, it is very difficult to act more "butch." I also don't think that it would be necessary. You should just be you.

G-Man

and this was only one of many examples of such actions.

A-cheng recalled that police officers had yelled obscenities and had threatened to beat them up because of their sexual orientation. "How about if I take off my pants so you can have some fun?" he claimed police had said, followed by statements such as: "You shameless kids! I should beat the shit out of you!"

"Had the activists not been protesting just outside, I probably would have been severely beaten in that basement," A-cheng said.

However, Lee Han-chin, deputy director of the Chungcheng First Precinct of the Taipei Municipal Police Bureau, refuted the accusations, saying that police treat gays no differently than any other citizens.

"The problem is whether they have broken the law, not whether they're gay or not," Lee said. "We look at gay people in a healthy manner. And I think they should do the same themselves.

"When they feel ashamed of themselves, they claim they're being looked down on by others. When this is the case, whatever the police do is regarded as discrimination," Lee said.

Lee also claimed that police raided the gym only after frequent complaints from neighborhood residents. "They were tired of seeing gay couples displaying explicit intimacy everywhere in the neighborhood," Lee said.

While gay activists have blamed the police for discrimination, Lee thinks the three defendants are being used by the groups. "They took the three men as hostages of a sort and saw the case as an opportunity to highlight the gay issue," Lee said.

He also said they seemed not to care that the defendants were afraid of being hurt by the publicity. "I saw how frightened

they were of being caught in the media spotlight. I told them the police were also trying to protect them from that," Lee said. "But I also made it clear to them that it was the gay activists that were determined to make their case a media spectacle." ☺

GAPSN Presents On Same-Sex Marriage and Anti-gay Ballot Initiatives to National API Groups

by Myron Dean Q.

In January, GAPSN was invited to a select dinner meeting with the Executive Committee members of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans. This NCAPA committee consists of the executive directors of Organization of Chinese Americans, Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, Japanese American Citizens League, Asian American Institute, India Abroad Center for Political Awareness, Korean American Coalition, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, National Federation of Filipino American Associations, National Asian Pacific American Women's Leadership Institute, National Korean American Service and Education Consortium, and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.

Committee members listened with interest and learned about GAPSN's role in fighting the petition drive to qualify the so-called "California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act" — a proposed ballot initiative that would prevent state agencies from using the words "sexual orientation," as well as GAPSN's work to defeat Prop. 22, the anti-marriage initiative for the California primary in

March. GAPSN explained how anti-gay initiatives like CDSRA and anti-marriage recognition initiatives like Prop. 22 are being promoted by the same backers of past anti-immigrant and racist initiatives such as Prop. 187, Prop. 209, and Prop. 227. Additionally, GAPSN highlighted that this particular battle in Southern California is being fought out throughout the country, through similar initiatives or proposed legislation. In the end, GAPSN asked that each organizational member of NCAPA recognize that their advocacy to protect the rights of their immigrant or limited-English members also should extend to their lesbian and gay members.

I was very pleased to note the respectful attention paid to our presentation. Further, many of the attendees of the meeting wanted additional copies of the recent AsianWeek article that describes GAPSN's work within the Korean American community to combat the Christian Coalition's outreach to the faith-based Korean population in Los Angeles. In the near future, I look forward to reporting on further inroads with these national API advocacy organizations. ☺

Proposition 6

Eric W.

On March 7, California voters will decide on Proposition 22, a ballot initiative that would make gay and lesbian marriages illegal in California, even if they were recognized in another state. This is not the first time California voters confront a proposition against gays and lesbians. In 1978, there was Proposition 6, which would make it legal to dismiss gay and lesbian public school teachers solely based on their sexual orientation.

Although there was no gay Asian organization in Los Angeles in 1978, many gay Asian men participated in the campaign against Proposition 6. One of them was led by Morris Kight, who was just honored for his activism at the GAPSN Installation Dinner this year.

Paul C., who was a Chinese American student at CSU Fullerton at the time, worked with Morris. Paul was the vice president of Orange County Against Briggs Initiative. (Briggs was the sponsor of Prop 6.) He remembered once hosting a fundraiser for the campaign at his apartment: Every time I looked outside of our house, there was a cop driving by. I had a big mouth then. So I walked out to the cop and waved him down. I said, "Excuse me! Excuse me! Why are you driving past our house all the time?" And he said that they had gotten wor that National Socialist White People's Party, which had their headquarters in Placentia, had threatened to bomb us. The police were actually coming to protect us. And I confronted them. [Laughs]

Although he wasn't eligible to vote in 1978, Stanley R., a Filipino immigrant, also worked with Morris Kight on the Proposition 6 campaign. When he first came to Los Angeles, he had ambitions to become a teacher. He said: When I found out about this initiative, I said, "What? What is the big deal about being a gay person? The best educators in the world have been gay. Are we going to deny children nowadays to learn from gay people?" I was going to get involved in the campaign. That's when I started knowing Morris Kight because his house was like the center for the campaign against Proposition 6. That's where I picked up materials to distribute. You know where I used to go? I used to leaflet all the different Catholic churches here. I was chased by cops. I was chased by parish priests. I was chased by parishioners. One time I even got into an encounter at a restaurant. I used to wear a T-shirt that says, "Vote No on 6. The Briggs Initiative." And my estimation was about seventy-five, eighty percent of all voters, because of the heated campaign, knew what the proposition was. One day I went to a Norm's Restaurant. And there was this real, ignorant, stupid guy, who came and sat beside me. I was reading the papers. And the T-shirt got his attention. He asked, "Excuse me. What does that mean?" "Oh, this is a campaign against Proposition 6," I explained.

"What the hell is that?" He said. The counter was loaded with people, mostly guys. At that time I was really versed in my political philosophy. I explained what it was about. "Oh, that thing about those queers being kicked out of the schools," he said. And I said, "Excuse me? Please watch your mouth because you would not like me to call you a honky either." I said that to him. He said, "Oh, I'm sitting with a queer." "I beg your pardon," I said. "I might be a queer, my dear." I said MY DEAR. "But have a look at yourself in the mirror. If you were standing on Santa Monica Boulevard, peddling your ass, you're not even worth ten cents." I picked up my plate and moved to a table. And these guys, they were like, Good for you. You told that creep off. I mean, he's an idiot. So I've gotten into encounters like that.

Thanks to the involvement of many people like Chris and Stanley, Proposition 6 was defeated. Furthermore, Chris and Stanley were able to apply the skills they gained from this campaign to organizing a gay Asian community for the first time in Los Angeles. They were our community pioneers. It's sad to see that, twenty-odd years later, the gay community finds itself confronting a homophobic initiative once again. Recent polls have shown that many California voters would vote in favor of Proposition 22. It's a reminder that we can't be complacent with our gains in the last two decades. We could lose grounds if more of us don't vote or get involved. ☹️

Gay Activists Slam Police, Media

DISCRIMINATION: Activists say a verdict of not guilty handed down on a gay man charged with performing indecent acts highlights the bias homosexuals face both from the police and Taiwan's mass media

Yu Sen-lun (Taipeitimes)

Bruce Chen was walking along Taipei's Changte Street as he usually did. He had just celebrated his 28th birthday, and felt like meeting his old friends after midnight. Changte Street, which sits between National Taiwan University Hospital and the 228 Memorial Park -- formerly called Taipei New Park -- is what Bruce and his friends called Hanover Street. It is also an alternative meeting place for gay men after the park closes at midnight.

But on that night, July 27, 1997, Bruce said he sensed some strange aura in the streets. He said he soon found himself facing a police officer. "Why are you hanging out here this late? Where is your ID?" the officer asked. "What do you mean?" he replied to the policemen. "I have a right to walk on this street."

"You are not allowed to be here at this hour. Go home!" the policemen told him. "If we see you here again, we will inform your parents and ask them to take you back," the officer added.

Three days later, after Chen had written about his experience on the opinion page of a local newspaper -- he had seen it as a violation of human rights -- police cracked down on gay men who showed up in the area. 40 young men were taken into custody, and some were reportedly forced to be photographed. The occasion has become known as the "Changte Street Incident," and gay rights activists describe it as the prelude to the so-called "AG incident" in 1998 that saw the wrongful arrest of gay customers at Taipei's AG Fitness Club. A Taipei district court ruling on Thursday found two defendants innocent of charges of participating in obscene acts and providing sex services to gay customers at the gym.

Both cases, say activists, show something of the constant harassment gay men face under what police call the "tightening of neighborhood security." "Next time we'll call the media to take your picture," were constantly used threats by police,

according to Chen. Chen, who is an English teacher at a local college and a gay rights activist, said although the police officers concerned may have been aware their actions were without legal basis, they often play on fears by some gay men that their identities could be made public.

Before the AG arrests in 1998, police had already begun putting intense pressure on the gym over its status as a gay meeting place. "They came and checked us three times a week. Sometimes drunken officers hurled insults at customers and broke furniture and equipment," said A-cheng, a defendant at the AG trial who had been a bodybuilding trainer at the gym. Reasons other than discrimination, however, have been suggested for the harassment. One source said the newly opened gym had not set up channels to pay police "protection." The source said such fees average between NT\$30,000 and NT\$50,000 per month. Others said the club attracted so many gay customers that it raised hostility among nearby shop owners, who reported it to the police. Nevertheless, activists said that biased media presented only the police side of the story in reporting the AG case.

Most of the TV coverage described the main defendant, A-cheng, as a gay "pimp." Cable networks showcased him as "the owner of a gay sex venue." "The media found me guilty from the very beginning, without any verification or balance," said A-cheng. He said his statements made to TV reporters were misrepresented and used against him. "My own accusations that the police violated human rights were entirely omitted," he said.

While Taiwan's journalists have made progress in terms of advocating the protection of political human rights, they are still very ignorant about social human rights, according to Ho Jung-hsing, a director of the Association of Taiwan Journalists. He said reporting on social issues requires sensitivity and

professional knowledge, but that most social reporters lack such characteristics. Most media outlets have never provided the required education to their staff, he said. In coverage like that of the AG incident, he said, the media was unable to voice the concerns of disadvantaged groups, resulting in bias towards the police.

A-cheng was victimized by a "chain of non-professionalism as a result," he said. "All my relatives, friends and neighbors said I was engaging in sex deals and they all stopped communicating with me," he said. "My social life collapsed and I ended up seeing psychiatrists frequently," he said. A-cheng not only lost his hair through anxiety brought on by the case, but also his job.

Business at the AG Fitness Club dropped drastically after the incident, and A-cheng had to quit his job as a training coach, which left him short of income for a whole year. "Now the court is giving me belated justice, but for the one year of injustice that I have suffered at the hands of society and the media, who should I seek redress from?" he asked. ☹

STD in the News

Michael L.

"Chinese AIDS Drug Will Be Tested, Says Minister"

Africa News Service (01/24/00)

Zambian Health Minister David Mpamba announced Sunday that local scientists will test a Chinese AIDS drug, the Tian Immunity Booster. Mpamba also reported that, as a result of an HIV awareness campaign, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among 15- to 19-year-olds dropped from 28 percent in 1993 to 15 percent in 1998. The official noted, "Cases of HIV have stabilized, and the major factor is the education campaign which has been very good

"Number of New HIV Cases, AIDS Patients Hits Record High"

Kyodo News Service (01/25/00)

Japan recorded 491 new HIV infections in 1999, according to the Health and Welfare Ministry. That number is up 16 percent, or 69 cases, from the previous year. Doctors also reported 289 new AIDS cases, a 25 percent increase from 1998. The numbers of new HIV and AIDS cases were both record-high levels. Statistics also show that there were six AIDS-related deaths in Japan last year.

"Prostitution Flourishing in Cambodia"

Detroit Free Press (01/28/00); McDonald, Mark

In Cambodia, young, rural girls are being sold to urban pimps and forced to become prostitutes. Many of these girls, who are sold to help provide money for their families, are sent to work in the city. Procurers, or middle-aged women who promise the girls work as a waitress or housekeeper, deceive the girls and then sell them to brothel owners. The World Health Organization estimates that nearly two-thirds of Cambodian prostitutes have HIV. Furthermore, according to Vietnam's Ministry of Health, about 20,000 Vietnamese women work as prostitutes in Cambodia, and half will contract the virus that causes AIDS before they return home. Most of the rural girls who come to Phnom Penh are virgins. The AIDS epidemic has made virgins extremely desirable, and some men believe that having sex with a virgin is healthy and can even cure HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. A new program funded by the United Nations Foundation hopes to stop the massive trafficking of women from Vietnam to Cambodia. Lisa Ng Bow, a specialist with the UN Development Program in Bangkok, notes that the \$2.8 million effort will both study the trafficking as well as work to prevent it.

"HIV Transmission by Oral Sex" Washington Post (02/02/00) P. A9

A study conducted by researchers the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of

California at San Francisco shows that oral sex is a frequent method of spreading HIV. Oral sex was the likely cause of 8 percent of recent HIV infections in a group of 102 gay and bisexual men in San Francisco. The only risk behavior found in eight of the men was oral sex, which they thought had little or no risk. The scientists concluded that the men must have contracted HIV through giving oral sex, not receiving it, without using a condom.

"More E. Timorese Succumbing to Malaria"

Kyodo News Service (02/06/00)

Thousands of East Timorese are thought to have malaria, but confirming the cases is hard because of a lack of facilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) received reports of 1,089 malaria cases between late December and January 19, as the rainy season helped mosquitoes to breed and transfer the disease to humans. In Dili, the WHO said that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also on the rise, with 15 infections reported in December, including cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and one case of HIV. While Alex Andjaparidze, head of the WHO's Dili office, noted that STDs do not represent a large part of the illnesses in the region, United Nations agencies have taken several preventative measures, including the distribution of condoms.

"Myanmar, Laos: H.I.V. Spreading"

New York Times (02/09/00) P. A6; Wren, Christopher S.

New research from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health shows that HIV is spreading in the Asian region known as the Golden Triangle. According to the report, the virus is moving along heroin trafficking routes from Myanmar and Laos. Lead researcher Chris Beyrer said the data show "a clear and urgent need" for neighboring countries like China, India, and Vietnam, in addition to Myanmar, to focus more on HIV prevention.

"AIDS Care to Cost Ghana 37.4 Billion Cedis By 2014"

PANA Wire Service (02/07/00)

The National AIDS Control Program of Ghana expects the cost of AIDS care in the country to rise tremendously, costing 37.4 billion cedis by 2014. A new report predicts that AIDS will continue to affect all sectors of life, from health to education and economy. According to the study, AIDS will account for 35 percent of deaths in Ghana by 2014, as over 200 people a day are infected with HIV.

"More Than a Third of Condoms Unsafe"

South China Morning Post Online (02/15/00); Lau, Shirley

Over one-third of the condoms bought in Hong Kong are unsafe even after improvements made in recent years, according to the Consumer Council. The organization bought 27,000 condoms and tested the 66 different brands for bursting volume, bursting pressure, and tensile strength. Twenty-five brands failed at least one trial. The most reliable brands were Lifestyles and Durex, while Fairlady, Forex, and Joy's were the least. Dr. Michael Tsui Fok-sun of the Consumer Council noted that while the quality of the prophylactics has increased in the past 12 years, he voiced concern that "some products still fail to fully protect people from pregnancy and [sexually transmitted diseases]."

"Tuberculosis Spread by Corpse"

Washington Post (01/27/00) P. A5

The first known case of an embalmer contracting tuberculosis (TB) from a corpse is reported in today's New England Journal of Medicine (2000;342:246-248). The funeral home worker was infected with the disease from a dead man who had both AIDS and active TB. Scientists used DNA fingerprinting to determine that the embalmer's infection came from the corpse. The researchers now recommend that funeral home workers take the same precautions as medical workers to prevent TB transmission.

"Regional AIDS Workshop Opens in Cambodia"

Kyodo News Service (02/15/00)

A two-day AIDS workshop opened Tuesday in Cambodia. The meeting, part of an effort to control the spread of HIV, attracted about 100 people from international agencies and government and non-governmental organization in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and China. Cambodian officials said the country has the highest rate of HIV infection in Asia, with 100 new cases of HIV and 20 AIDS-related deaths each day. ☺

UCLA Samahang Pilipino presents The 2nd Annual Queer Pilipina/o Conference-Hands On!

UCLA Asian American Studies Center

Date: Friday, March 17, 2000 (Welcome Reception and Evening Showcase) 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm UCLA Charles Young Grand Salon and Saturday, March 18, 2000 (Conference) 9:00 am - 5:00 pm UCLA Kerckhoff Hall

Mission Statement: To empower queer Pilipina/os, especially youth, to become active agents of change and progress

Theme: Hands On! is the 2nd annual queer Pilipino conference. This year we would like to emphasize a more interactive, "hands on" approach to working within the community. This conference will focus on empowering its participants by providing them with the tools to become more engaged in their various communities.

Target Population: This conference was created for all queer Pilipina/os. Although we specifically target queer Pilipina/o youth, this event was established as a community event. We would especially like to encourage Pinays

and transgendered individuals to participate in this year's conference.

We consciously use the term "queer" to be inclusive of all "queer" sexualities: lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, gays, queers, MSMs, baklas, t-birds, dykes, silahis, tomboys, badafs, bayuts... YES, this means you!

How About Allies?: The attendance of family/ friends/ allies is appreciated and strongly encouraged. However, we do ask that allies respect any "queer Pilipina/o" only spaces. There will be several resources and workshops offered during the conference specifically for allies.

About Last Years Conference: The 1st annual Pilipina/o queer conference, On The Verge, was held on March 6, 1999. Over 250 people, from as far as New York, attended the daylong conference. About 60% of all the conference participants were composed of youth (defined as 25 and under). Furthermore, the evening showcase, featuring queer Pilipina/o artists, raised money for a Los Angeles based non-profit AIDS organization.

About the Sponsoring Organization: This student organization was founded in 1972 and has a membership of over 700 students. Since the early 1990's, Samahang Pilipino has been actively creating programs and services for queer Pilipina/o students. Kabalikat was developed by Samahang as the organizational task force to address the needs of its queer members.

Our work in the queer Pilipina/o community was recently honored and recognized by Barangay, the Gay Filipino Association of Los Angeles. On

December 1999, they presented Samahang Pilipino with the B2K Community Service Award.

There are three ways to register for the conference: 1. By calling the Official

Conference Hotline: 310-815-0829 2. By emailing: hands_on_2000@hotmail.com 3. By mailing your information to: 3668 Motor Ave Apt 119, Los Angeles, CA 90034. ☺

Assembly Seeks To Curb Immigration Fraud!

Henry L.

On February 7th, State Assembly Majority Whip Dr. Gloria Romero (D-49) introduced legislation that would seek to curb the fraudulent



Forbidden City, U.S.A.

Outfest

This delightful, documentary unearths a forgotten chapter of American entertainment history. As America thrall to crooners and big bands of the '30s and '40s, San Francisco's Forbidden City, the premiere all-Chinese nightclub in America, offered its grateful patrons Asian reduxes of Western entertainment idols, including the "Chinese Fred Astaire," the "Chinese Sophie Tucker" and the "Chinese Sally Rand." The inspiration for Rodgers and Hammerstein's FLOWER DRUM SONG, this fascinating nightclub is revived through intimate reminiscences and newly discovered footage of spectacular musical numbers that bring the wonderful legacy of Forbidden City alive for a new generation. Voted "Best Documentary of the Decade" at the 1990 Hawaii International Film Festival (shared award). ☺



activities of unauthorized legal advisors. This problem is particularly prevalent in the Asian and Latino communities given the large number of immigrants who seek U.S. citizenship status.

In one spectacular example of fraud, a Chinese woman who was not authorized by the bar to practice law, was able to accumulate half a million dollars in fees from unsuspecting clients in the San Gabriel area. Currently, she is wanted by the Alhambra police and has since fled to

Taiwan. Such cases are prevalent in Los Angeles County.

In 1998, the District Attorney's office investigated nearly 600 complaints of fraudulent legal advisors. Typically, these legal advisors will advertise in newspapers or phone books that cater to the Asian or Latino Community. Many of these advertisements guarantees results and clients are asked to present up front a few thousand dollars in cash.

Unfortunately, after taking payment, these advisors may fail to appear at a INS hearing or prepare INS papers incorrectly. The result: Many unsuspecting applicants for citizenship have ended up not getting their naturalization papers, or worse, in some cases have been deported.

Assemblymember Romero's Bill, AB 1858, would Specifically (1) increase civil penalties from the current maximum amount of \$10,000 to \$100,00 for violations of Business and Professional Codes relating to Immigration law; and, (2) require all attorneys to place their bar# on all printed advertisements so that consumers can tell which attorneys are legitimate and which ones are false.

Many of GAPSNS's members are themselves, seeking citizenship in this country and we ask that caution is exercised when seeking legal consultation.

For more information regarding AB 1858 and its status, please call the office of Assemblymember Romero at (323) 981-3426. ☎

The Gay Asian Pacific Support Network (GAPSN) and The Village at Ed Gould Plaza presents - Queer Asian Shorts

GAPSN's Voter Guide

Pei-Chi C.

For Select Races

President of the United States

Bill Bradley or Al Gore, Jr.

United States Senate

Dianne Feinstein

U.S. Representative

31 Hilda Solis

36 Jane Harmon

State Senate

23 Sheila James Kuehl

27 Betty Karnette

California Assembly

40 Bob Hertzberg

49 Gloria Romero

53 George Nakano

56 Jackie Goldberg or Cesar Portillo

Proposition & Initiatives

1A Yes: Indian Self Reliance (restores Prop. 5)

12 Yes: Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water and Air

21 No: Juvenile Crime. Treats 14 year olds as adults

22 No: Knight Initiative Limit on Marriage

28 No: Repeal of Tobacco Surtax

Cirilo D

Filmmaker Nguyen Tan Hoang will be present for the screening and will discuss his creative process afterwards. Nguyen Tan Hoang is a Vietnamese American video artist whose work has screened in film festivals in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Hong Kong. Among the shorts included are:

"Forever Bottom!" While pointing out the problems of relegating Asian men to the exclusive role of Bottom and instead of offering the reverse argument that Asian men are really Butch Tops, in this pseudo-instructional work-out videotape, I articulate, trace, and embrace the pleasures and desires of full-on, unrepentant Bottomhood. This aggressive and insatiable Asian Boy-Bottom is forever ready: in the shower, the kitchen, on the carpet, the floor, the balcony, the front lawn, at the park, the beach, in the cars.

"7 Steps to Sticky Heaven" The film interviews with a group of young Asian men about 'Rice Queens', Caucasians sexually attracted to Asians, and the burgeoning phenomenon known as 'Sticky Rice', Asian men attracted to each other. What starts off as p.c. sounding interviews quickly degenerates into a frank no-holds-barred "I-can't-believe-she-went-there" toilet-humor discussion full of wit and good-natured humor.

"Love Letters 1&2 (For Julian Love, Hoang)" He was nineteen, and it was his first: kiss, holding hands, staying over. The summer ended quickly. He went to the East Coast for college; I left for Southern California for grad school. I missed him terribly and made these two tapes for him.

Come see the films The New York Native calls, "A porn filled, good humored, sexual celebration of gay life that's nervy, enlightening and quite delightful."

Location: The Village at Ed Gould Plaza Black Box Auditorium, 1125 N. McCadden Place, Los Angeles, CA 90038, Date: SUNDAY, March 19, 2000., Time: 4-6 p.m., Tickets: Free, Contact: Cirilo Domine (323) 860-7337



Pride Dates:

Simi Valley Pride May 7th
 Long Beach Pride May 20-21
 LA Pride June 9-11
 Santa Barbara July 7
 San Diego July 21-23

Orange county August 19-20
 Ventura county August 26
 Pasadena September 16
 San Fernando Valley Sep. 30
 Palm Spring Nov. 4-5

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InformAsian is a monthly newsletter for the members & supporters of the Gay Asian Pacific Support Network (GAPSN). Publication of any person's name and/or photographs is not to be construed as an indication of sexual orientation. Opinions expressed are those of the contributor and are not presented as the views of InformAsian, its editor, or GAPSN. First name and last name by initial are printed unless otherwise instructed.

Annual membership fees for general and supporting members are: Single \$24.00, Couple \$40.00, Student \$25.00. There will be a \$12.00 charge for overseas postage. Checks (US funds, no cash) to be made payable to GAPSN. Send to:

GAPSN Membership
 P.O. Box 461104
 Los Angeles, CA 90046
 (213) 368- 6488
gapsn@yahoo.com

The mission of GAPSN is to provide supportive environments for gay and bisexual Asian Pacific Islander men to meet, network, voice concerns, foster self-empowerment, and to advocate on issues of significance to the gay API community.



This Month's Events

• **March 4, Saturday**
 7:30 PM – 10:00 PM, The Village at Ed Gould Plaza, 1125 N. McCadden Place, Los Angeles, CA 90038
Monthly Rap

The rap in March will focus on the topic of open versus closed relationships. During the rap, we'll talk about the ideas of commitment and monogamy and how they relate to the experience of being in an open relationship. We'll ask ourselves what are the pros and cons of an open relationship, what makes one successful, what do we want most in a relationship, and anything/everything else which might pertain to the topic at hand. This is a particularly good opportunity to find out how other people think when it comes to trust and communication in gay relationships. I especially invite those who have been in open relationships to come and share your experiences with other GAPSN members. For more information call, Chi-Wai.

• **March 9, Thursday**
 7:30 PM, The Village at Ed Gould Plaza, 1125 N. McCadden Place, Los Angeles, CA 90038
Arthur Dong's Forbidden City, U.S.A. and Sewing Woman

GAPSN is proud to Co-sponsor with Outfest a GAPSN member and Sundance Award Winner Film Director Arthur Dong's *Forbidden City, U.S.A. and Sewing Woman*.

• **March 12, Sunday**
 4:00 PM, Glendale
Classics March Potluck/Social
 Come join GAPSN Classic potluck and Social. For more information call Steve, (805) 497-8918.