

Vol. XXXIII, Issue 1

# THE STONY BROOK PRESS

## PANDAMONIUM!



## THE WHITE PANDA

Tuesday, September 13, 2011

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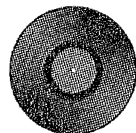
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## STEALING FROM THE POOR

The Student Activities Board (SAB), the event-planning wing of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) that is now equipped with a \$534,887 budget, is clearly adept at putting on successful campus events. The White Panda concert last Friday proved that SAB's current leadership plans to carry on the consistency and popularity of last year's run of concerts, comedians and speakers, but with better economic sensibilities and the opportunity to build upon last year's foundation. The concert, this year's first SAB-coordinated event, cost roughly \$28,000 and nearly 1,100 students attended, according to estimates by USG President Mark Maloof.

But the newly revised USG financial bylaws the senate passed at the beginning of the summer, which were presented to all clubs at the USG Leadership Conference on Saturday, September 10, make it clear that USG is set not only on decreasing the budgets of many clubs, but also on minimizing their influence in a way that ultimately injures our diverse campus environment. This highly unjustified approach to student leadership is setting a disastrous precedent for future students, all while the success of concerts and other events helps mask this rechanneling of power and student money as a newfound source of "fun on campus."

In the words of USG Treasurer Thomas Kirnbauer, SAB's success is the very reason its budget was increased by more than 30 percent, while clubs and organizations saw massive reductions across the entire board. That admission alone is enough to evoke suspicion and anger from every club for a number of reasons, such as the fact that SAB went over budget last year and still received such an increase, or the fact that SAB is currently operating without a Special Events Coordinator, the second half of SAB leadership alongside the VP of Student Life. USG determining that its own organization is successful enough for a budget increase is akin to a corporate executive increasing his or her salary because they felt they deserved it. But USG has gone even further than budget cuts in its efforts to minimize

the influence of clubs and maximize the reach of SAB.

For one, "Fall Revisions" was the oft-repeated answer Kirnbauer gave out when questioned about the large club budget decreases. The revision process takes rollover money from last year and appropriates it to clubs who felt they were shortchanged by USG's original 2011-2012 budget.

But it was revealed at the leadership conference that this process is reserved only for clubs whose budgets were decreased by 40 percent or more, a new restriction under the rewritten bylaws. This applies to only 15 clubs out of 76 who saw their USG line budget decrease, if one compares last year's final budget with this year's original and excludes clubs whose budgets that were cut completely because a budget was never submitted or the club disbanded.

For the remaining clubs, they're out of luck and must make due with what they have, which is especially painful for clubs with larger budgets because a decrease less than 40 can still equate to a substantial decrease in funds. For instance, the African Students Union saw their budget decreased by \$7,080, or 26 percent, with no hope for a revision under the new bylaws, where as last year, they would have been able to apply for at least a small increase. The LGBTA had their budget cut from \$13,500 to \$8,490, or 37 percent, and will undoubtedly suffer greatly because of that. If its budget were cut down to \$8,000 instead, they would then be eligible to make some of that money back. USG members will like to say that it is only appropriate to compare original budgets, which illustrate a far smaller decrease, but because USG placed no restrictions on last year's fall revisions—any club could apply for more funding—last year's final budgets should only be compared to this year's original budgets, which without fall revisions, are final.

Kirnbauer's official response to this is a more efficient grant process where clubs will be able to apply specifically for extra money for events or long-term items, but even the

grant amounts were arbitrarily constructed and their distribution highly restrictive. A club with a budget less than \$10,000 can receive a maximum of only \$1,000 to put on a campus event, with the maximum event grant amount set at \$3,000 for clubs with budgets larger than \$20,000. These amounts basically stomp out any possibility of a club with a small budget planning a larger event, or a new club getting on its feet by planning something successful.

The revised bylaws go further to cripple club event planning by restricting the maximum amount of money a club can spend on a guest speaker to \$2,000, and prohibiting clubs from using an event grant to co-sponsor an event. By placing an arbitrary limit on the amount a club can pay a speaker and by prohibiting clubs from splitting the costs of events, USG is effectively making itself the only student-run organization with the ability to bring a well-known person to campus. Had these restrictions been in place in the past, countless successful events, including The Press' last spring with Daniel Ellsberg, would not have been possible. It's a vast overstepping of USG's boundaries that further centralizes power in the hands of a few students, rather than many student-led clubs that are open to the entire student body.

There is a way to bolster the consistency and success of large-scale events on campus while at the same time helping foster a diverse club environment, but our current leadership is not searching for such a solution. Instead, they have strengthened an arm of their own organization and taken a stance against the influence and effectiveness of nearly all clubs. In doing so, USG is failing to do one of its fundamental jobs — maintaining and protecting clubs and fostering positive campus life.

President Maloof has solidified his position against the university's clubs, whether he knows it or not, by not vetoing these changes to the bylaws when they were brought to the Senate, meaning only new legislation can reverse any of this damage.

# NEWS

## “New York Remembers” Comes to SBU

By Carol Moran

Stony Brook University is one of thirty locations hosting the “New York Remembers” Exhibit, a project organized by the State Museum meant to give New Yorkers across the state a place to honor the victims and heroes of the 9/11 attacks.

The exhibit in the Skylight Lobby of the Wang Center, open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and weekends from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., includes artifacts from the World Trade Center site, a display of letters and notes for those that were considered missing and a timeline of events with carefully chosen images.

“Every artifact has some story embedded in it,” Mark Schaming, director of exhibitions and programs for the State Museum, said. “Objects are carriers of stories—powerful vessels, touchstones to a moment in history.”

The artifacts, all of which came from the New York State Museum’s collection, hold a specific significance to their location. For Stony Brook, the focus is on the story of commuters, he said.

A large flag frayed at the bottom that was draped over a fire engine during the recovery effort hangs over the reflective pool in the exhibit, just in front of a 35-foot timeline of the events and images. Also included is a panel from a Ladder 3 fire truck, keys from the World Trade Center and a triptych, a three-part panel used to barricade commuters from the rubble.

It took more than 100 people—curators, writers, designers, truckers, etc.—to organize and construct the exhibits,



Schaming said, and such a sensitive project came with pressure.

“It’s not like anything we’ve done,” he said. Every image used in the timeline had to be carefully chosen and every piece of information had to be verified by three sources.

Each artifact was carefully handled, wrapped and transported in state vans and trucks from the State Museum in the capital to each location, and they will all be returned there once the exhibits close at the end of the month.

The State Museum has a collection of 2,000 artifacts, the largest in the nation, which the New York City Police Department, an FBI recovery team, 25 state and federal agencies and 14 private contractors inspected at the World Trade Center Recovery Operation at Fresh Kills

Landfill on Staten Island. Only the artifacts that weren’t essential to the crime scene nor claimed as personal property, were transported to the museum.

“Stony Brook University is proud and honored to be selected by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State Museum, and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum as a host location for the ‘New York Remembers’ exhibition,” President Samuel Stanley said. “As home to the Long Island World Trade Center Medical Monitoring Program, under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Luft, we anticipate that the Stony Brook University location will hold a high level of interest with the many thousands of first responders who are being cared for under that program, their family members and all Long Islanders who want to view this moving memorial exhibit.”

# Southampton Lawsuit Settled, But Closure is Still Far Off

By Carol Moran

The litigation six students brought against President Samuel Stanley and the State University of New York for moving the Sustainability Program from Southampton to Stony Brook's main campus came to a close in August when a settlement was finalized. But the settlement did not come without controversy or discontent.

In August 2010, the courts ruled that the way Stanley closed the program was illegal, and after the university appealed, they began settlement negotiations.

"It could have been litigated forever," Assemblyman Fred Thiele said. "That costs a lot of money." Money that the six students, Katherine Osiecki, Nicole Altimari, Tara Linton, Dead Tarulli, Kathleen Furey and Martha Weller, along with the not for profit organization Save Our Campus Inc., don't have.

The settlement stipulates that the

university pay for the plaintiffs' attorney fees--which total \$30,000 even after fundraisers, donations and financial support from alumni--that it hold a sustainability conference before 2013 and that the program be guaranteed until 2014, though there is no indication that the program will be shut down after that.

Thiele said the closure reflects the way Stony Brook views its mission, though the university said it would be financially irresponsible to keep the program open.

"I never quite bought that," he said. "I don't think that Stony Brook has generated anywhere near the savings they thought they were going to generate. If money were the issue, when Stony Brook got its state funding and its tuition increase this year, why didn't they move the program back? ... To me the numbers never added up"

Also under the settlement, President Stanley must hold a meeting--scheduled for Monday September 12--to apologize

for the disruption of the lives of the student-petitioners. Only after a week of "public pressure," phone calls and e-mails did Stanley extend the invitation to all students currently in the Sustainability Program--rather than just the six petitioners, Senator Kenneth LaValle and Thiele, according to Julie Semente, the mother of plaintiff Tara Linton.

"There was no happiness with this settlement," Semente said. "They proved that what Stanley did was illegal. They won their lawsuit, and all they get is an apology?"

In an email sent to Stanley August 31, Semente told the president that he owes her an apology, as well, for disrupting her daughter's education. Executive Assistant Carol Londoiro replied back that it is a "closed, by-invitation-only meeting, and individuals not directly invited by President Stanley will not be able to attend."

Semente said Stanley is trying to circumvent the apology by refusing to allow all the students that were affected--not just those in the Sustainability Program--to attend, Semente said. "He's choking on it now," she added. "The public and the press should be there, too."

Tara Linton, Semente's daughter, followed the Sustainability Program to the main campus, though Semente said a lot was lost.

"Since she was nine she wanted sustainability," Semente said. "We just didn't know what to call it back then. She was not going to give up just because [Stanley] took the campus out from under her feet."

Martin Schoonen, director of the sustainability program, said there is a rebuilding process underway to...



cont. on p. 7



Melissa Czerniawski has been attending Stony Brook for a few years. Now the president of the Environmental Club, she is taking up sustainability studies and makes it a priority to be involved with the university's efforts to be an environmentally friendly campus.

Czerniawski, however, has mixed feelings towards Stony Brook's pledge to be green. She said that although its offering of five majors through the Sustainability Studies program that came here from Southampton last year is "a great asset," the constant construction around campus and plan to cut down several acres of forest for a new Hilton Hotel contradicts the message the university sends to the Stony Brook community: "Wear Red, Think Green."

"Stony Brook has an interesting history with sustainability," Czerniawski said. "I've spent a few years here, and have seen the campus change over time. The amount of available green space is definitely diminishing, and the campus is truly beginning to take on a more urban feel.

A blanket statement towards Stony Brook's efforts toward sustainability wouldn't seem fair, as the university's agenda seems to change over time."

Although not everyone at Stony Brook can quite relate to Dr. Seuss' quirky tree-

loving character from *The Lorax*, those here who strive to keep the campus green, both literally and figuratively, appear to be doing the right thing.

Earlier this year, Stony Brook was one of 311 schools in North America to be profiled in the Princeton Review's "Guide to 311 Green Colleges." The guide, which does not rank the schools, provides information on what types of facilities, practices and technologies the schools all feature.

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"The entire campus  
community has to do  
it...all of us can do a  
better job."

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It also acknowledges Stony Brook for its signing of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, the development of environmental stewardship, a solar-powered bus shelter—which requires no energy and very little maintenance—and the biodiesel blend the buses run on. The guide

also recognizes the Campus Residences Recycling Initiative that produces more than 1,200 pounds of recycled materials every year.

Also receiving recognition is the fact that Stony Brook will be home to the Advanced Energy Research and Technology Center, which will be one of only 25 buildings in the country with a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum rating, and the only one in New York State.

In addition to all of the features mentioned in The Princeton Review's guide, Stony Brook does a lot more to reduce its ecological footprint. The university recycles many different materials such as asphalt, ceiling tiles, electronic waste, chemistry solvent and mulch. According to the latest statistics provided by Campus Operations and Maintenance, clean construction and demolition debris was the most recycled material in 2009 by more than 50 percent.

Stony Brook also houses nature-preserving gardens and sustainable buildings, as well as a waste water treatment plant and greenhouse, according to the university's sustainability website.

The Princeton Review found other SUNY schools worthy of mention in its guide too: Geneseo, Binghamton,

Brockport, Oneonta, College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), New Paltz, Potsdam and Purchase are all noted as green colleges.

In recent years, Geneseo, Binghamton and Brockport have each recycled over 200 tons of materials annually, according to their websites. ESF recorded that its campus recently recycled 325 pounds of material in just three days and that its campus recycles about 40 percent of all its solid waste. New Paltz recycled about 29,000 pounds of material during this year's Recyclemania.

As for energy consumption, all of the schools have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs. Stony Brook, for example, has cut electric fuel costs and energy costs by using effective lighting systems, boilers and furnaces. Dr. Jim Quigley, a lecturer and the director of environmental design and policy in the Sustainability Studies program, praised Amy Provenzano, the university's director of environmental stewardship, for her work in reducing energy consumption. Amy Provenzano could not be reached for an interview.

"[She] has done a superb job in reducing the environmental impact on campus," he said. However, he added that more could be done. "Can the university do a better job? Of course."

Quigley suggested that the university

should offer more frequent communication with the campus community about ways to recycle. He also said that because so many people commute to Stony Brook, car pooling methods and better transportation means should be considered to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"One or two people can't do it," he said. "The entire campus community has to do it...all of us can do a better job."

Part of the campus community that is trying to do a better job is the Environmental Club, led by Czerniawski. She said the club does several cleanups around the residential quads every year, works with members of the Ashley Schiff Preserve by hosting nature walks on the preserve and cares for the organic garden in South P Lot. One thing the club will be doing this year, she said, is raising awareness of Stony Brook's land use plans.

"Admission to Stony Brook is becoming quite competitive, and the expansion is



Photo credit: Wolf Tank

expected," she said. "Though, at some point, we must take a step back and ask ourselves, 'Where is all the green space going?'"

Like Quigley said, furthering Stony Brook's sustainability efforts is a step the entire university has to take together in order to achieve significant results. For those who have not yet accustomed themselves to a lifestyle of recycling and environmental responsibility, perhaps they will find inspiration from the wise words of *The Lorax*:

"Unless someone like you cares a whole lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

## Southampton Lawsuit cont.

recoup some of the sustainable practices that existed at Southampton, such as growing produce on campus for the dining halls. The main campus has a lot of opportunities that didn't exist at Southampton, such as high efficiency buildings, which keep faculty and students optimistic, and there are a lot of opportunities for collaboration, he said. "For everything you lose, you gain something new."

Though the program here has around 100 majors and 50-60 minors, only about a dozen faculty members made the leap. Many were teaching courses at Southampton that already exist at the main campus, like physics, biology and writing,

Schoonen said.

He acknowledged the fact that the tightknit community that existed on the southern shore is now fractured. There was more space there, they had their own campus, they shared meals in the same cafeteria, and he knew most students on first name basis, he said.

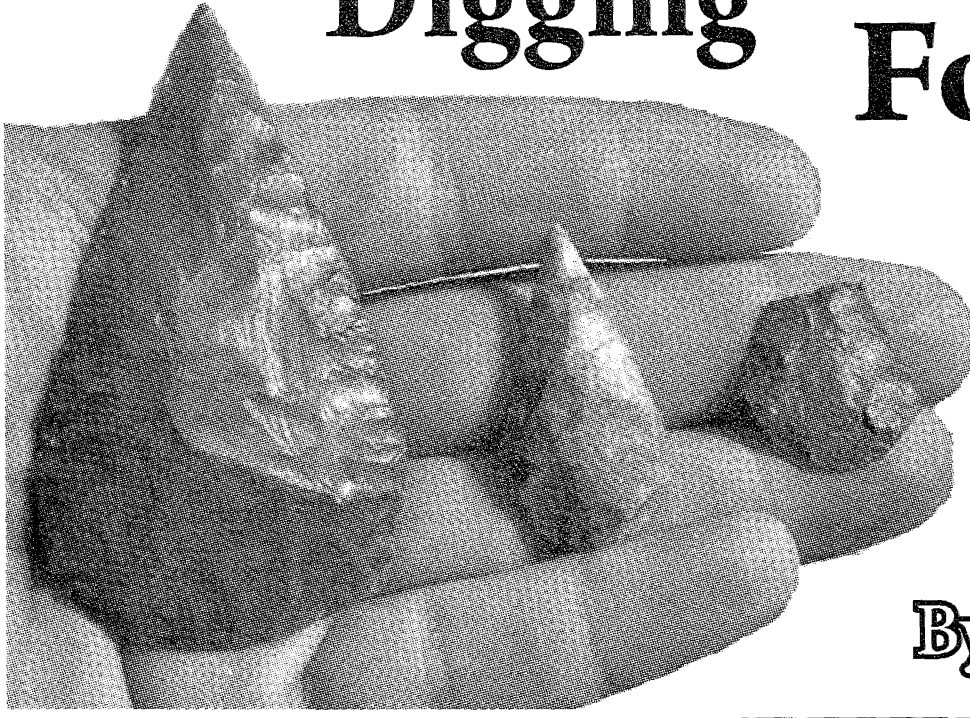
"At Southampton, it was a green campus," Semente said, "They lived what they were learning." Much of the studying was outside, everything in the food courts was biodegradable and they grew their own food, she explained. "Now they are in a classroom...they feel like second class citizens here."

Thiele and LaValle have plans underway to build a sustainability institute on the Southampton campus, though finding the initial start-up money will be a challenge. They said they will schedule an organizational meeting for October to discuss how the institute should be funded and what its mission will be.

"Sustainability and trying to create sustainable development is a global issue," Thiele said. "All of Long Island is essentially built out. We just can't keep developing. Our future lies in sustainability; resources are finite and in no place is that more obvious than Long Island."

# FEATURES

## Digging For Truth



By Ariam Frezghi

Being a college professor is the best job in the world, says John Shea from his desk on the fifth floor of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Building, and the 20 years he's spent teaching have been anything but ordinary.

Shea, a native of Hamilton, Mass., always had an interest in Greek and Roman mythology, which led to an interest in the stories of other cultures. He first visited the Department of Anthropology twenty years ago, after being invited to give a lecture as a graduate student of Harvard University.

Archeology, or what Shea describes as the study of human society through the recovery and the analysis of what is left behind—residue like trash, artifacts and cultural landscapes—has led him to dig sites in Israel, Jordan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Eritrea.

"I'm part Eritrean," he says, pulling up an x-ray image on his computer that showed some stone-like object wedged into his middle finger. "My finger is part Eritrean."

Shea, who earned his Ph.D. from

Harvard in 1991, has discussed some anthropological questions that others often overlook, such as why it's okay for him to talk to his mother-in-law, whereas in other cultures that is avoided, or why we live in square houses whereas Kenyans live in round ones.

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"They can't make anything that'll get me arrested."

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As a Research Associate at Stony Brook's Turkana Basin Institute in Kenya Shea pondered these questions, and his interest in contemporary culture gradually developed into a life-long career of recreating stone tools to connect with prehistoric society.

As part of the Department of Anthropology, which boasts about 200 majors, Shea provides hands-on instruction; his students have accompanied him on digs in Israel and Ethiopia, and a ten-week international academic program brings students to the field school at the Turkana Basin Institute.

He teaches a number of courses at Stony Brook, including ANT 417 Primitive Technology, in which he demonstrates to his undergraduate trainees how primitive cultures used stones to sharpen obsidian glass into tools so sharp they could shave hair off an arm—or cut the skin off a human finger—as a Stony Brook colleague learned Shea's first day on the job. The curious professor picked up a piece of the glass during an outside demonstration, not knowing how sharp it was until blood poured from his thumb.

In the class, students also learn how stone tools like spears and arrows were used by early hunting and gathering cultures to obtain their food. Other lessons include how to use wood to make stone tools, how

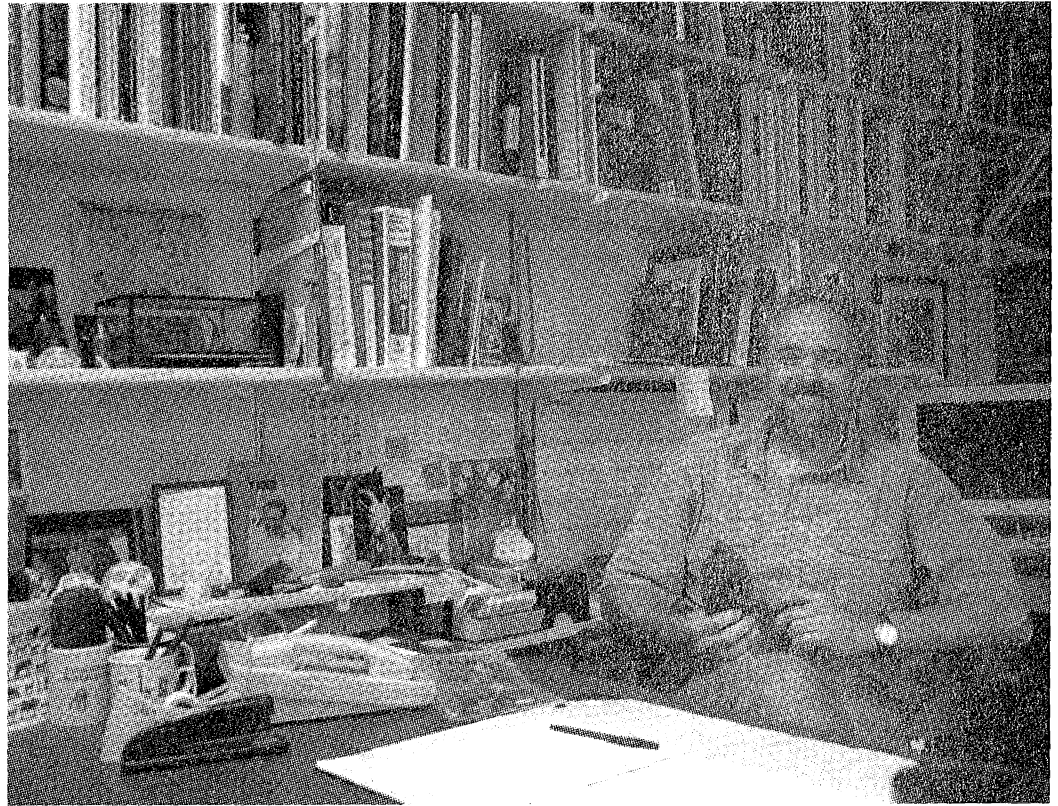


to create fire and how to make glue and string.

“They can’t make anything that’ll get me arrested,” he chuckled.

Though Shea is one of the most praised faculty members at Stony Brook, it’s easy for students to pass by the Anthropology Department without giving a second thought to anthropology’s studies of the beginnings of human civilization and how they survive today through artifacts and remains. Shea points out that the farther down one digs, the more questions one can answer about today’s culture. Th is philosophy suits the man who has a collection of books and souvenirs from past ventures in his office. A wooden snake and a white skull hang on his wall, cactus plants and a cylinder of colorful marbles sit near the window, and a six by four row of Iraqi coins is displayed near his desk.

In 2010 Shea appeared on *The Human Spark*, a three-part series broadcasted



archaeologists. However, the average student may not appreciate this skill because we are accustomed to the availability of digital information.

field data easily reviewable and retrievable.

While watching the global shift of a new age in technology unfold, Shea pokes fun at his colleagues in Kenya who have “cell-phone radar” and can detect when service is available in certain areas. Shea understands the advantages of being digitally connected with the world, but sees “technology as a trap. In a way, things you own end up owning you,” he says.

When not making long journeys away from home where he has had three encounters with malaria and some local violence, Shea enjoys peace and quiet. “I like to look at trees, the sky, or the raccoons in my neighbors’ trash.”

Some journeys aren’t lonely for Shea, who travels with his wife— also an anthropologist. Outside of teaching, working with the academic judiciary on campus and traveling, Shea spends his downtime mountain biking and hiking.

“In a way, things you own end up owning you.”

by PBS in which he assists a newsman in obtaining a piece of glass and proceeds to explain how ridges around the glass indicate whether or not “someone has made the tool and re-sharpened it.”

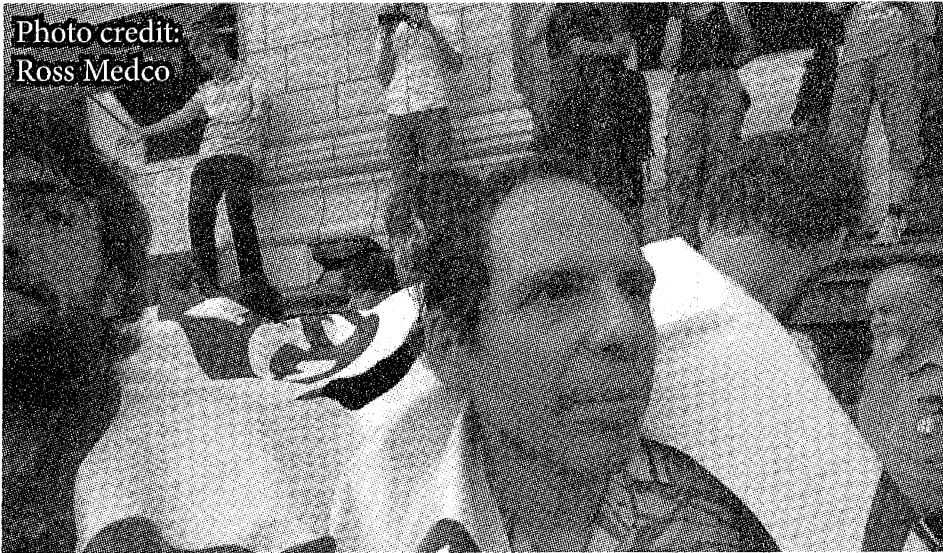
**B**eing able to distinctively tell the origin of a rock—by its size and shape—is an important skill for

During the course of Shea’s faculty career, he points out that students have lost an essential skill—the ability to take notes. “Note-taking is a skill that can’t be lost permanently, but requires a lot of energy to get it back,” he adds. Not to bemoan the arrival of modern technological advances, Shea points out the role they can play in archaeology; computer archiving makes

# Russian Politics From the Front Lines

By Siobhan Cassidy

Photo credit:  
Ross Medco



While studying abroad in Russia this summer with the Journalism Without Walls program, we took a day trip to Vyborg, a small town bordering Finland. In a mix of debris from World War Two that surrounded a memorial, I noticed “Strategy-31.ru” spray-painted onto a building. That evening, I Googled the website.

“All-Russian civic movement in defense of freedom of assembly in Russia,” the website read. “Shares are regularly held on 31 July in Moscow on Triumph Square every 31 of the month, if this number is present in the month.”

“We are going to be in Moscow July, 31; I thought to myself. Then I passed the information to the other students in the program.

When the day came, our tour guide Natasha, a local Russian, advised us not to attend the potentially violent gathering. We decided it would be best to have two students cover the protest, and the rest of us would not attend.

Ross Medico and Chris Cloonan, both political science majors, could not resist the temptation to learn about Russian politics in a hands-on fashion.

The gathering was led by Strategy-31,

a group of Russian opposition leaders and they meet in St. Petersburg and Moscow on the 31 of every month in defense of the 31st Article of the Russian Constitution, which grants freedom of assembly.

The unsanctioned protest remained peaceful until protestors began marching to the Kremlin. The police formed a blockade and Medico and Cloonan were stuck; trapped. They attempted to get through from one side, and failed. But Medico thought to whip out their secret weapon--an American passport--and escaped detainment. Later they discovered

that nearly 40 people were detained in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The students were excited to attend the assembly and decided to attempt to observe from a distance. But when they entered Triumph Square, the large police presence sucked the excitement out and the determination from the crowd was contagious. The protesters were determined to get their message Russia becoming less free, liberal and democratic across.

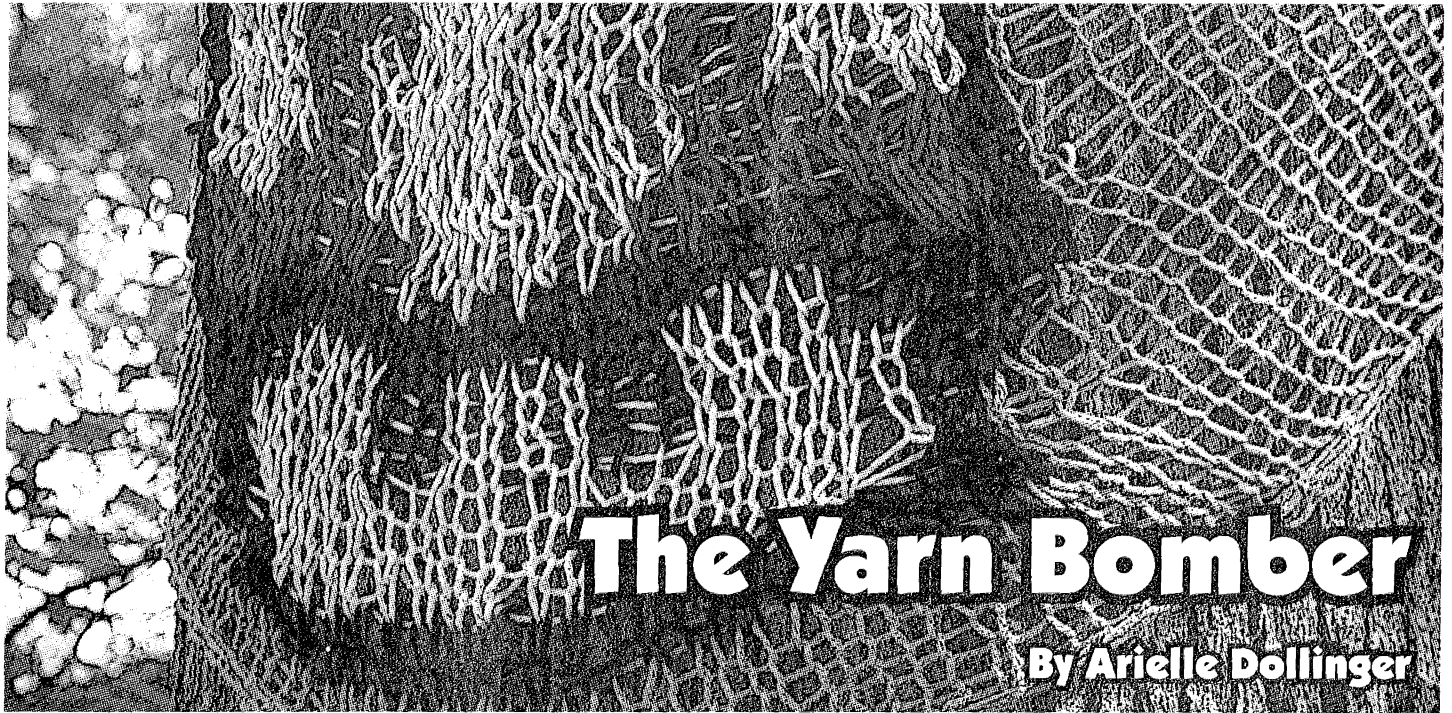
“Once I found out about this protest, I knew I had to go,” said Medico, 20. “Nothing was going to stop me.”

During the protest, Medico and Cloonan said not knowing how to speak Russian was challenging. They could not read the protesters’ signs or understand their chants. But Russians translated: “Putin is an extremist. Freedom. Put Putin in a Siberian prison.”

Prominent political activist Eduard Limonov, leader of “The Other Russia,” an unregistered National Bolshevik party, was active in the protest.

Countries abroad have begun to hold Strategy-31 rallies. Most recently in London, where a small rally focused on the Russian Politician Maksim Petlin and activist Evgeny Legedin, whose freedom is in danger.





# The Yarn Bomber

By Arielle Dollinger

There are many ways in which a college student can make his or her mark on the surrounding world. One science major at Stony Brook University, who wishes to remain nameless, makes hers by decorating parts of the university's campus with her own

knit goods.

The technique is known colloquially as "yarn bombing." Despite the paradoxically fuzzy name, Yarn bombing is actually a type of "urban graffiti," the student said, and it is technically considered illegal as a form of graffiti, fundamentally. It is for this reason that she has requested anonymity. Individuals who "yarn bomb" knit items and fasten them to components of an urban landscape, and Stony Brook's yarn bomber knits such items as tree sweaters, birds and hearts.

"Its general purpose is just to make an urban landscape seem a bit more welcoming," said the student in a Facebook message.

Last week, the student put on display her most recent project: tree sweaters to wrap several trees lining the steps leading up to Tabler Quad.

"[It] lets me add color and life to a normal landscape," the student said. "For me, there's no productive reason behind it, I just love knitting and the idea of sharing it with other people. I think it gives people something to talk about if they see it."

Megan Ladds, a sophomore Marine Science major, for example, stopped to look at the trees as she

and a friend were walking up the Tabler steps on Thursday.

Ladds, said that she had no idea of the purpose of the decorations, but that she guesses the adornment "makes things more interesting."

According to the creator of the avant-garde exhibit, there is no reason for her decision to put her project up this week in particular. She simply has had free time to knit with her summer job ending and the fall semester just beginning. This week also falls in the middle of a lull before winter hits, at which time she begins knitting hats and scarves as gifts for the holidays.

Though she leaves a card with her Twitter account information on it attached to each of her yarn bombs, she has never been contacted by the university about her projects. She has, however, noticed that they do get taken down by the school, she said.

Last fall, she decorated Kelly Quad with knitted birds and tree sweaters. Last spring, she knitted 30 small hearts and a tree sweater, which she used to decorate a tree near the Student Activities Center in an effort, she said, to brighten Valentine's Day for those without valentines.

A tree sweater in Tabler Quad.



# THE WHITE PANDA

# ROLLS INTO SBU

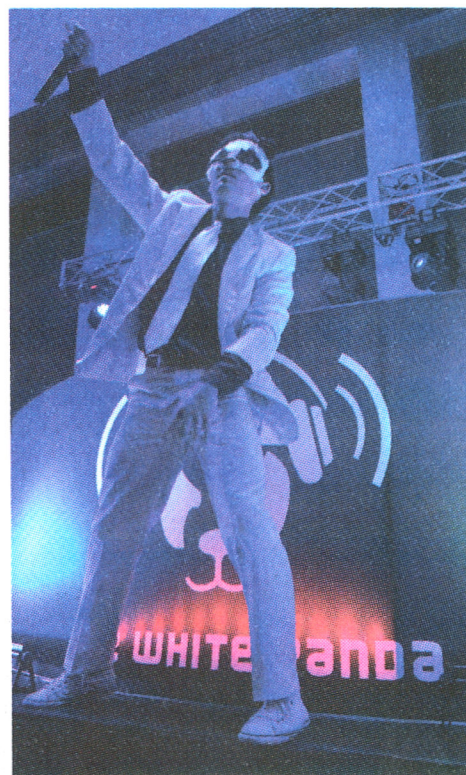
## By Mark Greek

I don't claim to be an expert when it comes to new music. I'd say 80% of the stuff on my iPod is pre-'95. As contemporary music slowly slides into the Le Roux, androgynous-future-techno crap that it's destined to become, I keep songs made with actual instruments on a pedestal. I sit on my ivory tower of Beatle-esque records and look down at the catchy garbage that will.i.am and "The Dutchess" produce in disgust. I'm not pleased with the state of Music as a whole. But that doesn't mean I can't enjoy a #1 club jam every now and again. Even better still: when someone mixes it with a similar sounding song and plays it really loud in front of me.

"The White Panda" brought their mash-ups to the SAC auditorium Friday, and I was pleasantly surprised with what I heard. For one day at least, Stony Brook's nightlife was "poppin," as one inebriated student remarked. A line around the SAC developed for the moderately popular duo from Chicago; irrefutable evidence of the huge group of Electronic music fans on

campus. I'm not a huge fan of Electronic Dance music, and despite the occasional Youtube viewing, I don't really listen to mash-ups. But, I recognized almost all of the songs in their mixes. Classic late 2000's dance songs that you hear at weddings, skillfully mixed with contemporary goodies like "Money to Blow" and "Sexy Bitch."

My senses were assaulted with good and bad sensations at every turn: vomit on the line into the show, the skinniest man I've ever seen swirling glowing sticks in predetermined motions with incredible skill, music so loud that it seemed to enter my ear-holes and exit through my soul. I stayed on the outskirts of the writhing crowd, enjoying the occasional clapping and a point to the audience from DJ Griffi. I respected the fact that two childhood friends could remix other people's songs and be greeted and renowned. DJ's in general appeal to me; because with the advent of the laptop and mp3, their specific actions on-stage elude me. Either way, a relatively cheap event (\$50,000) had brought joy to a specialized but substantial group of Stony Brook students. Give the people what they



want, even if it doesn't cater to the musically uninitiated like me.

## By Samuel Liebrand

Mashups--part dance music and part novelty--are always an easy crowd-pleaser. Like cover bands, mashup producers have the great advantage of performing music that the crowd already knows by heart. Your fans are anyone who loves music (particularly pop music), and they exist everywhere. Your tools are already recorded and at your disposal, and you already know the crowd will love what you do because you sampled from the top of the iTunes charts.

Although sampling has been a practice in hip-hop and dance music since the 80's, mashups are a relatively recent phenomenon. In the second half of the 90's, producers like DJ Shadow and the Avalanches made complete, sprawling albums constructed out of hundreds or thousands of samples cut from other songs.

But these samples were so heavily edited together that they were rendered almost unrecognizable, and the music thus formed unique statements of its own. Starting around 2004 with Danger Mouse's acclaimed *Gray Album* (a mix of Jay-Z's *Black Album* and the Beatles' *White Album*), a surge of producers started building mixes around the idea that listeners want to recognize their sources. Despite it being a retreat in complexity, the shift to a basic "Song A vs. Song B" format proved successful for

artists like The Hood Internet, Girl Talk, and more recently, The White Panda.

Since creating mashups has become unfathomably easy in the past decade (there's a now free Macbook App that literally does it for you), DJs are increasingly judged on their song choices rather than their mixing skills. The White Panda's specialty is all things Pop, a choice that's safe, if not uninteresting. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. After all, their mashups aren't supposed to make you think, they're supposed to make you dance. Judging from the heat and sweat generated from inside the SAC



short, if it wasn't for them introducing themselves to the crowd, it would have been hard to tell when the pre-show Pop playlist ended and their DJ set began. Sometimes their insistence on using only relevant music was irritatingly obvious. Their greatest offence in this regard was asking the audience if they like dubstep before briefly introducing a generic wobble as a backing track.

But I digress. The White Panda isn't attempting to break new ground; they just want to be crowd pleasers. Despite being a relatively unknown group, they drew flocks of brightly dressed, wide-pupiled students, and filled the ballroom to capacity. Mashup shows are about mindless fun and being a part of the crowd, with or without free panda masks. It's

entirely unimportant to be able to see the artists, and actually paying attention to the music is secondary to having a good time and buggin' out to strobe lights.

Despite their flaws, and the tragic decision to move the show inside on one of the most beautiful nights of the year, The White Panda was a great choice for a broadly pleasing free student concert.

**Photo Credit:  
Vincent Barone**

**Check out all the photos  
(and video!) from The  
White Panda concert at  
sbpress.com**

# Big Troubles: Romantic Comedy

ALBUM REVIEW

By Vincent Barone

Big Troubles makes no bones about their influences. The New Jersey four-piece hit the ground running with their 2010 debut, *Worry*, a bona fide shoegaze hit. Lacing their blown-out guitars with nebulous vocals, singer/songwriters Alex Craig and Ian Drennan offered a refreshing take on the genre while acutely paying homage to the likes of My Bloody Valentine and Guided By Voices.

Those familiar with the outfit's work will probably be a bit fuddled when they first give a listen to *Romantic Comedy*. It's an unabashed pop album that lavishes in its hi-fi glory—a far cry from the melodies that were embedded deep in *Worry*'s crunched wall of sound.

While changing gears, the band's inspirations are just as manifest. The bright riff off the opener "She Smiles For Pictures"

parallels the poppy sensibilities found in the early recordings of neighboring New Jerseyans Fountains Of Wayne. Both Alex and Ian sing hushed vocals with a Billy Corgan flair.

Made hazy enough with just the right drop of 90's slacker rock, Big Troubles have ambitiously crafted a nearly perfect album of pop bliss. Th is shift in sound

allows the listener to fully appreciate the ambient intricacies of tracks like "You'll Be Laughing," and the intensity in the verses of the riff-driven "Minor Keys".

In lieu of a drum pad, Sam Franklin's snappy percussion helps bring the songs to life. It should also be noted that this is the first album that features Luka Usmiani on



bass. The addition of both members helps the recordings sound a bit more pert and dynamic.

Facetiously titled *Romantic Comedy*, Alex and Ian switch off singing duties, crooning about heartbreak, growing pains ("Just to say it will always be the same/and just to see change/it wouldn't be enough to keep you") and the suburban woes that

New Jersey bands seem to all know too well ("Today forever/I'll go with whatever/follow whoever can drag me along")--all wrapped in sugar-coated melodies juxtaposed with brilliantly catchy guitar riffs.

Big Trouble's songwriting technique flourishes on their sophomore release. The tracks generally run a little longer than earlier efforts, with listless, Sunday morning hooks blanketed over the choruses, post-choruses, bridges and outros. Numbers like "Minor Keys," "Sad Girls," and "Time Bomb" are almost anthemic in that regard.

The band has matured a great deal since just a year ago when Ian and Alex released *Worry*, the fruit of their bedroom recordings. With a little more room to breath, Big Troubles has fully utilized talented producer Mitch Easter, who has recorded the likes R.E.M. and Pavement.

Even those who stay true to the lo-fi aesthetic will appreciate this record. The 90's-era vibes of *Worry* are still prevalent on *Romantic Comedy*; they're just presented in a cleaner, more developed atmosphere. From the first song to the tenth, the album is completely unattackable. It's unapologetically poppy, yet delightfully foggy and complex.

Big Troubles really outdid themselves with this one. It wouldn't be a stretch at all to call this record one of the year's best thus far.

*Romantic Comedy* comes out on September 22. It's a perfect reflective

Fall album. Put it on, think about when you used to walk around all day just to kill time. And how you'd plan detours just to pass the house of the one that got away.

PRESS  
RATING

9.5

# Lotus: Self-titled

By Alex Timofeyev

Lotus is a big name in the jam music world. They self released their first album *Vibes* in 2002 and since then their sound and skill have grown tremendously. Now they are one of the biggest acts in the scene, placed on the same pedestal as STS9 and The Disco Biscuits. On September 13, Lotus will release their new self-titled album and this time the band has managed to revolutionize its sound to create something even more beautiful than any of its previous work.

On the new album Lotus uses its eclectic taste to smoothly blend several

fun genres together. Funk, dubstep, classic rock, hip-hop and psychedelia are successfully fused making Lotus an entertaining and inspirational listen that covers many sounds and emotions. Tracks "In An Outline" and "Orchid" use conventional rock music sounds and vocal harmonies to create a late 90s indie rock-kind of beauty—what a song would sound like if Cake collaborated with Edward Sharpe and Radiohead.

These tracks can be described as Lotus's more emotional songs. But standing opposite their emotional, vibe-able tracks are Lotus's funky electronic compositions. In tracks "Down" and "Molluskunk," Lotus proves that they can make your body move. Both songs draw influence from bass music, which gains more fans daily (at least one person discovers dubstep every day.) With deep and loud synthesizer sounds and sometimes even a little bass wobble, which

## ALBUM REVIEW

is created by an LFO tremolo, Lotus creates both a funky and emotional bass line. On top of the bass are high-pitched, wailing synths and groovy guitar riffs. Using these components, Lotus creates a live jam sound that is sure to make all bass music fans turn their heads.

*Lotus* is not only a fun listen but also a skillfully prepared album. Lotus has proven that they can unite electronic music and jam music in a way that is relevant to the two changing music scenes. Using beautiful electronic effects and masterfully harmonized jams, Lotus has created a masterpiece that is sure to be worth any music explorer's time.

PRESS  
RATING

9.0

# A Frosh Perspective

By Jasmine Haefner

I'm from Minnesota.

It's been about 2 weeks now and I still get asked at least once a day why I came to Stony Brook. For the first several days, I answered with valor about the School of Journalism, Stony Brook's world standing, the cost benefit and the added perk of being no where near my family.

As the end of the first week dwindled, my answer began to waver; my positive view of and confidence in SBU was faltering. At this point, I almost always respond with an, "I'm not sure anymore."

I applied to nine colleges, got into seven, and chose Stony Brook. SBU was the last university I visited, and after these first couple of weeks I realized that I definitely slacked on my research.

Every university I visited before SB had a building specifically for the students' gym, extremely nice dining facilities, and dorms that had the basic needs of students covered. Assuming that every university had these was very clearly an idiotic

mistake.

Nearly all of the food on campus is enough to give a whale gut rot, while stealing its wallet in the process. The exception to this is the Union dining, a good ten minute speed walk from my dorm. My closest dining facility, Kelly, has food greasy enough to give you a heart attack by midterms. It seems as if our choices are between salad and unhealthy.

To give SB credit, my dorm in Keller College (Roosevelt Quad) is fairly spacious for two. I'd appreciate the space much more if I could finish my online homework in it. Getting internet access in my room is a circus act and this gorilla is tired. Cell phone service is sparse, but my phone seems to be slowly adapting to not killing itself in three hours.

The general lack of things provided in Keller makes living comfortably difficult. No dish soap in the kitchen I can understand, but no pots or pans for students to use? No paper towels in the

bathrooms? Turning the study rooms into dorms? Come on SB, I thought we had swagger.

By far, the largest thing that worries me is watching the students who have adjusted worse than I have. Yeah, you know those kids; the ones who eat alone, walk to class alone, study alone. To all of you, just open your door. You'll be surprised at how well it works. Approach people. Even though it's apparently unusual for a New Yorker to do, they reciprocate surprisingly well. I guarantee there's a club at SB to fit you.

Right now I'm just hoping that I don't get a cramp while swimming in the mass amounts of my New Literacy homework. Fear of drowning at college, in homework, the student body, and the jungle juice, is enough to engrave stress lines in my forehead.

SB students, raise your cheap beer and tequila tacos. Here's hoping things get better.

# SBU Style File

By Matthew Murray & Anna Too

Since the beginning of civilization, we humans have been adorning our bodies with gems and silks, furs and ivory, precious metals and cow hides, and painting our faces with kohl and crushed safflower. Trends and traditions grew as cultures developed; now, in our modern world, we see different styles everywhere – some trends, some engrained in our societies. Stony Brook University's student body represents over 100 countries, all 50 states, and students from practically every religious, cultural and socioeconomic background; SBU thus breeds some very stylish individuals although we may forget about this as we meander through campus and see nothing but leggings, sweatpants and Uggs. Heck even Wolfie, our school mascot, doesn't change out of his athletic shorts for events. However, there are more than a few fashion mavericks out there if you know where to look. In our style section, we plan on featuring these contemporary trendsetters. We have featured, in the StyleStalker section, two such individuals who happen to always look impeccable. Stay stylish, Stony Brook!

## STYLE STALKER

Name: Evgeni Alexandrovich Iattcheni

Evgeni, a senior Economics major more popularly known amongst friends as Eugene, has become an under-the-radar connoisseur of good taste. Walking around campus, he attracts glances from the fashion-forward, something he enjoys but doesn't really understand. "I honestly don't think about fashion or style," he tells me. "I just get dressed and throw things on and ask whether I look good or not. *You* are your best critic, I think."

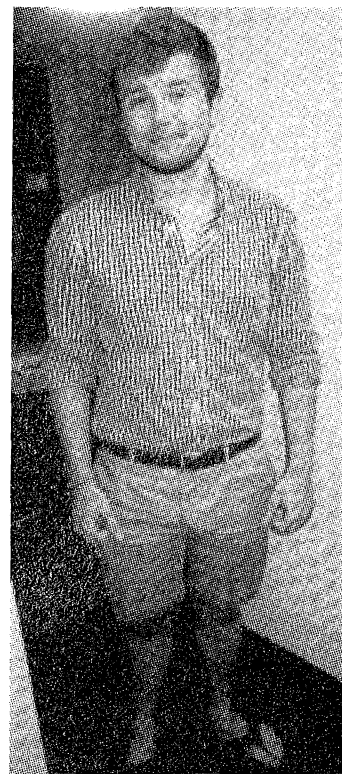
Eugene braves the stormy weather in an orange Brooks Brothers shirt, turquoise J. Crew shorts and an Abercrombie belt, plus a rather large umbrella.

**Wardrobe:** "Brooks Brothers shirts, J. Crew shorts and pants, H&M anything. A lot of colorful American Apparel tees ... because they work with anything. For shoes, it's beaten-up Nikes, a nice variety of flip-flops and a great pair of Prada loafers."

**Style Icons:** "I don't have one in particular. I like the way Italian men dress – very classy and old-fashioned. I also like the way business execs live their life. They are no bullshit in the office and in the tailoring of their suits."

### Steal His Look:

Invest in a classic blue oxford shirt. These can be found everywhere from the Salvation Army to H&M to Barneys. Find



one with a snug fit in a shade that's just right - not too bright, nor so light as to look washed out. The look is great for going out to dinner, bro-ing it up with some swag, or just grabbing lunch at the Union.

The next essential is a great pair of shorts that can be worn casually or dressed-up. J. Crew's Stanton short, at \$60, may seem expensive on a college budget, but it's a great pair of shorts that justifies the price

tag. Plus, you may even save big like Eugene did when he scored his pair for \$16 at the J. Crew outlet at Woodbury Commons.

A nice corded belt ties the transitioning summer-fall look together. Avoid gaudy patterns and sloppy stitching and find a belt your grandfather would be proud of. Remember, the look only works if it is well-executed. It makes you feel good and attracts ladies. Just ask Eugene.



*Name: Arianna Dussie*

Arianna Dussie, a senior Pre-Law English major has more street cred than she'd like to admit. She is a certified seamstress, loves designing clothes, and has plans to one day own a boutique. This girl knows how to make anything she wears look like a million bucks and knows a thing or two about how and where to shop, in Manhattan and on Long Island.

Arianna wears a Levi's denim trucker jacket, a grey unisex American Apparel tee, Levi's olive cargo pants, Topshop combat boots, an Urban Outfitters convertible shoulder bag, a Michael Kors watch and a necklace from Africa.

**Personal Style:** "For day-to-day wear, never ever girly. There has to be a tomboy element.

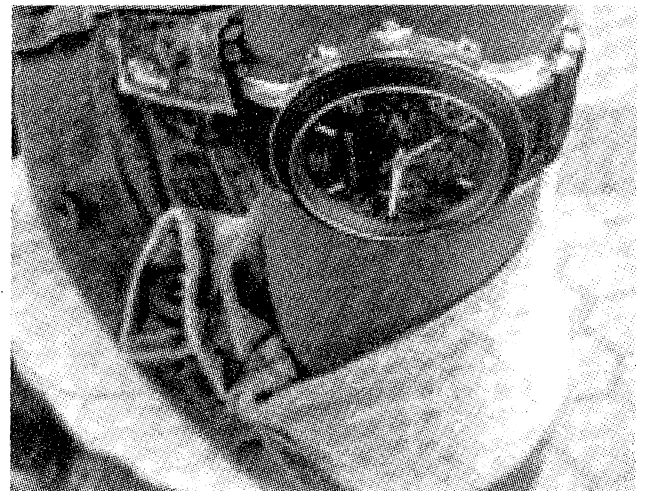
I also really like things that go with my hair, as crazy as that sounds. My hair is wild and free so I like to wear more earthy, bohemian things. If I wear something girly like a sundress, I'll throw on combat boots."

**Style Icons:** "Rihanna and Amber Rose are bosses. I am always inspired by the way they mix things up and add a little off-kilter element to every outfit."

**Favorite Look of the Past:** "I love the elegance of the 40s. I would never take it too literally but I incorporate elements of the 40s into some of my outfits."

**Fashion Rule:** "Never wear tight clothes. Wear the right bra ALWAYS. If you wear something sexy, avoid it being all sexy. Mix it up."

**Final Thought:** "There is a difference between fashion and style. Style is eternal."





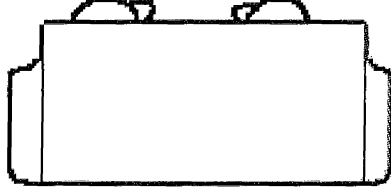
# THE COMICS SECTION

MARK GREEK

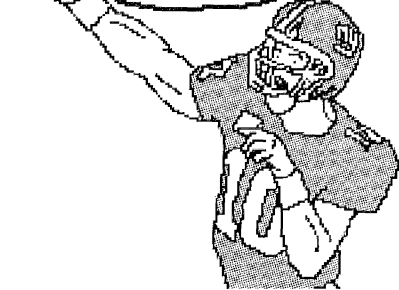
## Spotz

By Mark Greek

Hey man, who d'you think is the best QB in New York?



I mean, Eli already has a Super Bowl ring, but he's such a doofus. He throws a ton of picks and he has a giant helmet...



Sanchez clearly has a bright future. He's getting better every year and he's cut down on his mistakes.



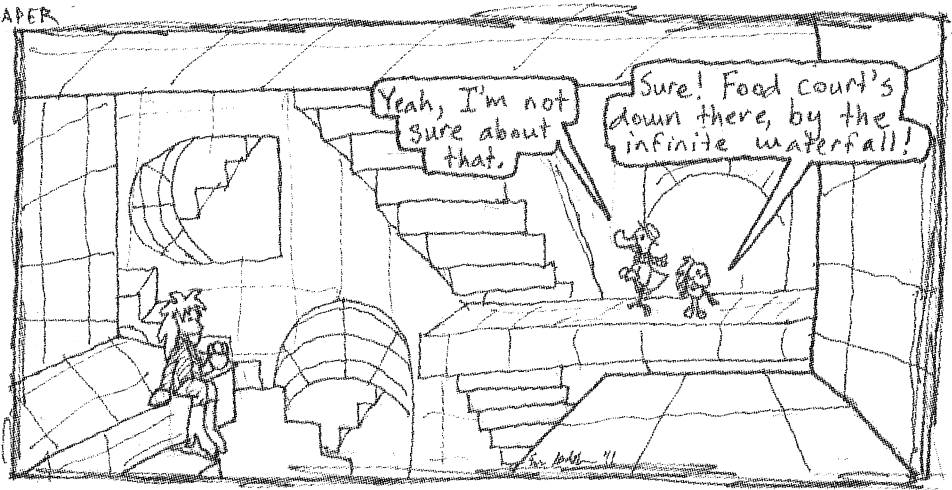
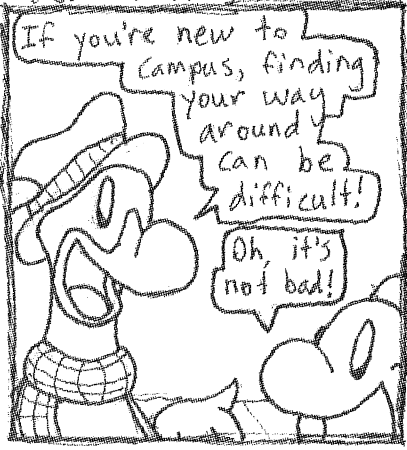
It's neither! It's Tom Brady. His glorious hair and chiseled bod will earn another MVP trophy this year...



I said "in New York."  
Not in your dreams...

EVAN GOLDAPER

THE BORING ROCKS by EVAN "SG" GOLDAPER



# Reboots! My One Weakness! (Analysis of the DC Reboot)

By Evan Goldaper

As recent trends in film, video games and clothing have indicated, Americans love comic book characters. But, as recent sales trends have indicated, Americans don't love *comic books*. We're talking about an industry where \$4 gets you 20 pages of material that doesn't tell a full story, and you won't be able to read the next section for another month, mind you. So it's no surprise that, aside from a few select fanboys, no one's been buying many comics lately.

Everyone in the industry has realized this, and each company has its own way of dealing with it. DC Comics, the folks who bring us such big guys as Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and...um...Static Shock, has approached this with the *The New 52!*, meaning they've ended every single series they run and are slowly rebooting every comic from Issue 1. Considering most people's problems with comics is that their sprawling mythos is hard to get into, this seems like a great plan.

But any change is bound to bring up critics, and DC has had its fair share even before the books launched. Notable arguments involved the lack of female authors and illustrators: a trend in the industry, that, when coupled with such things as Power Girl's "chest-window" and Green Lantern's "girlfriend-in-a-refrigerator," makes comic books look like they're trapped in the time when female superheroes' main team roles were moral support, fashion design and being kidnapped. Indeed, many fans complained during a period of never-ending Wonder Woman redesigns that I've dubbed "Pantsgate." Should Wonder Woman finally start wearing pants in a stance of visual equality to Superman and Batman, or should she still wear a one-piece bathing suit all day because it's "sexier" and "classic?" Ultimately, weeks of internet argument ended with the only visible change being



an increase in Wonder Woman's bust size, which I suppose isn't exactly the feminist victory some fans were hoping for.

Additional early complaints included accusations of racism. Every single member of the new Justice League is a white male save for two: one white woman and one "Cyborg," everyone's favorite 'half-black, half-machine, all-attitude' bruiser from TV's *Teen Titans*. Th is time, there aren't even racially-ambiguous aliens like Martian Girl to save them, nor is there a black Green Lantern. It's just that. It's a step forward, insists DC, but early press material that often excluded Cyborg completely made it clear to many fans that he was truly the "token."

I was able to pick up a copy of Justice League #1 before my comic book store inevitably sold out of it, and I have to say that, though I'm not blown away, it was good, clean comic book fun. Oddly enough, this issue only features Green Lantern and Batman, but my two favorite superheroes do make an excellent team. The whole issue is basically the duo engaging in witty bantered around centering on Batman's incredible competence but lack of powers and Green Lantern's general idiocy but godlike skills. It's great fun, and well-written, but "witty banter and little else" seems like an odd way to say "Welcome to the re-launch of our primary comic series!"

The comic also features the beginning of a subplot about the creation of Cyborg. We see our hero, prior to being roboticized, as a high school football star, and there are implications that he's destined for more than he realizes. But there's not enough time to chat with Cyborg, because we have to see Green Lantern and Batman exchange more witty lines.

There's not much else to this. The art is tragically overworked, with every character's costume covered in random lines to make them look "cool" and explosions riddling every page. A cleaner, simpler art style would've gone further, and indie comic creators across the web have been trying their hand at redoing this in that style for a while now.

But at the end of the day, all of those original complaints have yet to shine through. Wonder Woman's not here and half the team does nothing, which leaves no way for audiences to judge Cyborg's usefulness. Of course, this just means that the anger will flare up again, and by the time Issue 3 comes around, I'll be parsing through pages and pages of angry internet comments all over again. But for now, this reboot could've been much worse. And I'll be picking up the next issue, if only because someone's got to be the hero whose purchases save this industry, and it might as well be me.

# Give Yoko Ono's Exhibit a Chance



By Eileen Quaranto

For anyone who hasn't noticed the huge banners outside the Staller Center, Yoko Ono has come to Stony Brook. No, not literally. *Imagine Peace*, an exhibit of conceptual art by Yoko, is showing in the University Art Gallery from September 6 to October 15.

For all you freshmen out there—and for those of you who may not know where the University Art Gallery is or that it even exists—the gallery is located in the Staller Center and can be visited from 12-4 Tuesday through Friday and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday nights.

While the gallery is usually a peaceful environment with few on-campus visitors each day, Yoko's name has prompted a large number of fans and otherwise curious art-gazers to visit Stony Brook for her exhibition. Attendance numbers, normally remaining well below 40, have reached over 100 people a day since the exhibit opened last Tuesday.

One reason so many people are interested in this exhibit (well, besides the fact that it's Yoko Ono) is because it's interactive. Yes, that means when you come to the show you can actually touch some of the art. Not all of it, of course. Don't try to touch John's portfolio bag, or his doodles of Yoko, or that neat bowl-shaped overhanging speaker that plays

the "Radio Peace" jingle because you'll get yourself kicked out of the gallery.

Parts of the exhibit, however, are meant to be touched. Large maps of the world are placed at the front of the gallery so that visitors can pick up a stamp and imprint "Imagine Peace" anywhere on the map, with the idea that you "imagine peace" somewhere in the world. Just behind these maps, a life-sized chessboard is set up with movable pieces. Visitors may take off their shoes and put on a pair of booties to walk on the board and play chess. Just a fair warning, though: all the pieces are white and it's hard to play chess with one color. As with all conceptual art, what you see is not necessarily what you get. The chessboard is a metaphor. Get it?

After you've tried your hand at the monochrome chessboard, you can venture over to the 74 minute-long film about John and Yoko's Bed-In, in case you've got some time to fill between classes. Then along the back wall you can check out the video installation of Yoko talking about her Onochord project, a work dedicated to spreading some love in the world. You can even pick up a free Onochord and Imagine Peace pin after watching the film, as a gift from the artist herself. A few paces over on the other side of the gallery is Yoko's "Wishing Tree," an ongoing project

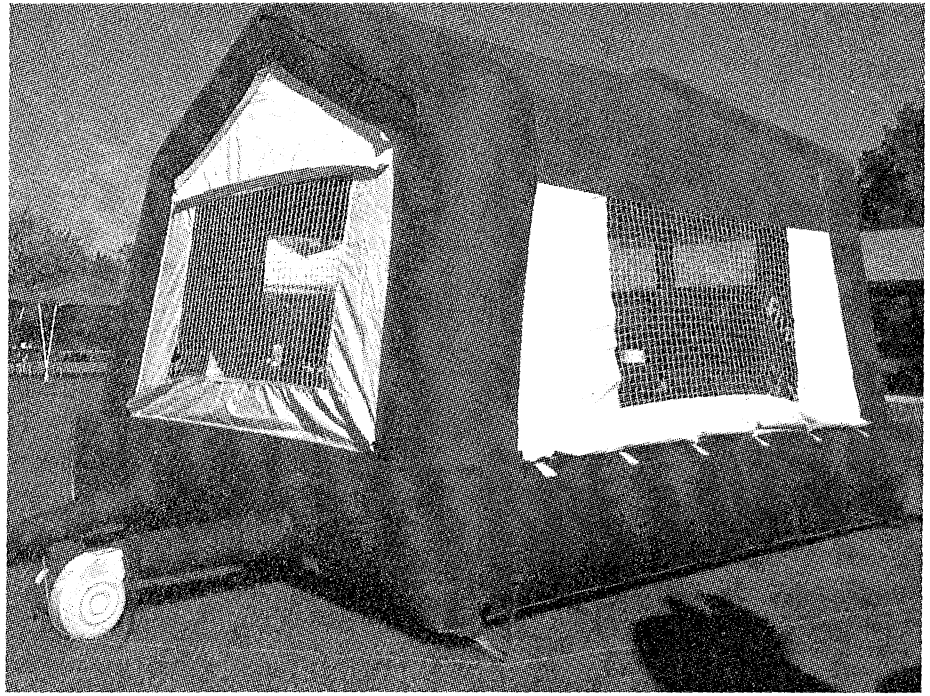
like the Onochord in which Yoko invites visitors to help make the art with her. Write down a wish on a piece of paper and tie it to the tree; the wishes are supposed to go to the big collection of wishes at the Imagine Peace tower in Reykjavik, Iceland. Then on your way out you might as well stop and check out the other shorter videos on the far side of the gallery. Here's a clue: step on the furry white carpet and perk up your ears to hear Yoko and John's radio jingle.

Imagine Peace is a traveling exhibition that started in 2007 at the University of Akron and is curated by Kevin Concannon and John Noga. Yoko, aside from being John Lennon's post-Beatles second-half, is an established conceptual artist. While the form is usually plain and boring on the outside, it bursts with philosophical and ideological meaning, or usually some sort of metaphorical connotation. So even if you're not interested in those heavy underlying concepts, you should still go and check out the exhibit to see all the cool stuff. And hey, by the way, it's free. For those interested in seeing another Lennon tie at Stony Brook, Ono's son Sean Lennon will be performing at Staller on October 15 alongside Charlotte Kempf Muhl.

# Why Stony Brook is Unhappy



Moiz Khan Malik



We have all heard it. Stony Brook is often considered one of the least happy schools in the nation. Before spending the last few years involved in the student government, I figured it must be lazy students or something of that sort. Now, I realize why no self-respecting student even makes an effort to get involved.

I have had the chance to speak to quite a few former students (back when fun wasn't a rare commodity) and the major difference between now and then is those entrusted with the job of facilitating student life (the "administrators") weren't always trying to do it themselves and weren't interested in finding ways to say no. The task of this article is twofold: to speak to the growing problem of the lack student autonomy and also the complete inability on the part of many administrative offices and departments to understand the desires of the student body.

No college student wakes up and thinks, "You know what I really want to do today? Bounce around in a giant inflatable chair!" And yet, like clockwork, some student club (suspiciously co-sponsored with certain administrative departments) always ends up paying thousands of dollars of their budget in renting these absurd items.

This year the victim is the Resident

Hall Association (Sept 18<sup>th</sup> on the Academic Plaza), but they are certainly not the first, nor will they be the last. It used to be USG's own Student Activities Board, but due to the recent reform of how SAB works, it looks like no student actually elected to their position is willing to sponsor giant inflatable castles or chairs. If that is not clear enough, let me make it a bit clearer. Most administrators (this obviously does not apply to all of them) are just looking to use student events for their own promotions. There are some administrators (a very small group) genuinely interested in helping the students achieve their own objectives, but unfortunately they are far and few between.

Stony Brook is obsessed with a false sense of safety. Safety on this campus is almost always for show more than it is for utility. When I was planning a concert last year, someone familiar with the situation said to me, "it looks like they (police, facilities, etc.) are just looking for a way to say no, whereas they should be looking for a way to say yes."

An example of this obsession is in the recent White Panda event. Originally the plan was to hold the event on the Staller Steps—and the potential security/safety measures would have doubled the cost of the event. While the event was moved inside

because of predictions of poor weather, it is this sort of behavior from administrators that makes it nearly impossible to hold events. This is of course putting aside the university's idiotic security check process that is applied to all performers (except comedians). The process consists of little more than a few phone calls and a simple Google search, and yet it takes nearly a month or more to complete. Anyone familiar with booking talent knows that every day that passes makes it harder to get an artist. Last year, events didn't occur because the security check process just took too long.

The Stony Brook student body is starved of fun events, or at least, events that are fun for people above 18. The reason is clear—students are not given the ability to plan their own events as they originally envisioned them. Then you have departments that seem to exist solely for driving up costs that should never exist in the first place. We have reached a point where competency is not a rarity in the student government, but it most certainly is near extinction in most administrative departments. The stifling of student creativity and autonomy is beyond frustrating; it is the reason why Stony Brook is not fun.



# ASIAN AMERICAN E-ZINE

WWW.AA2SBU.ORG/AAEZINE

**I am AKO SI // 私は // 我叫 by Melani Tiongson**  
**fil-ameri-asian-ish @ <http://procrastinazn.tumblr.com/>**

Don't you love it when people play the "Guess The Ethnicity!" game with you?

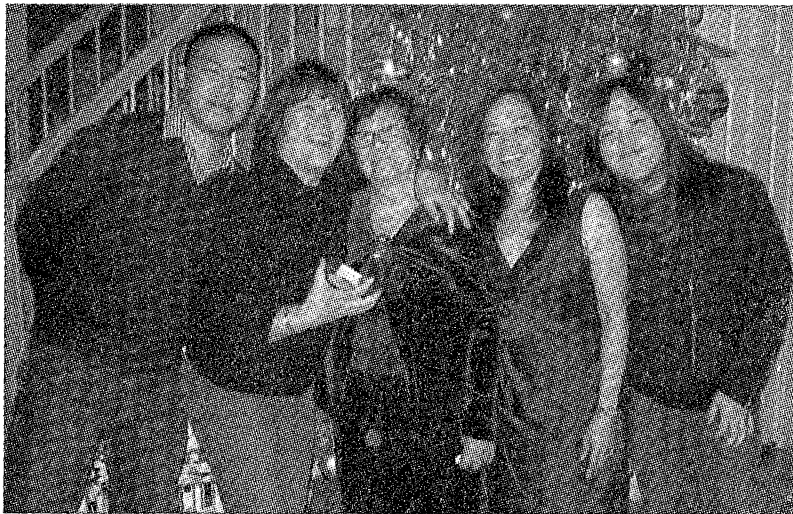
**I don't.**

My friends always bash the way my family and I look. We're Filipino, but we look Chinese. We're "supposed" to be dark, but we're blindingly pale. Whenever we visit our relatives back home, we look like relief workers visiting the poor. We don't assimilate to the stereotype of a "typical" Filipino. And I'm proud of my contradictory existence. I'm grateful that I don't fit into any societal generalizations at all.

But it wasn't easy when I was growing up. When I was a kid, I never knew exactly where I fit in. And when you're five, ten, fifteen, and on — well, you just want somewhere to belong.

I was the quiet kid in kindergarten. I read every book in the room, but because I was Asian and taciturn, teachers thought I didn't know English. Little did they know that English was my first language. Little did they know that my parents *barely* spoke to my brother and me in Waray at home. Little did they know that even though I was an immigrant, I was coming from a nation with the second highest English fluency rate in Asia (the first is India). But thankfully, this all got sorted out relatively quickly. Gradually, I made friends and spoke more in class (and my mom had a screaming match with the school board). They realized that I knew English, and life proceeded as such.

It wasn't until 3rd grade where I started having issues with my ethnic identity. The many people were everyone raised their teacher asked how their parents were born in New York; hand. I did, too. Just because I would look say *now* that I'm proud of my foreign- then I had never felt of the fact that I was would make fun of me had an Alien card, or President when I grew thought it was best to rather than face the comes with telling the God that night, telling Nino (Baby Jesus) sorry, and I envied strong enough to



grade where I started ethnic identity. The many people were everyone raised their because I would look say *now* that I'm born roots, but back so ashamed in my life Filipino. All the kids if they found out I that I couldn't be up. At the time, I tell a little white lie, ridicule that often truth. I apologized to the statuette of Santo that I really was him for always being stand for what he

believed in. And I prayed that one day, I might be able to do the same.

The following week our class was having an ethnic food day. My Italian friend brought garlic knots and pizza. My other Italian friend brought cannolis. My *other* Italian friend brought spaghetti. And my Greek friend brought pierogies, which were "a little weird" according to my peers, but good nonetheless.

I brought cassava cake; my mom's special recipe, to be exact. And considering all the *other* Filipino dishes I could've brought, I was pretty convinced that cassava cake would be a safe bet. I was still a little afraid that no one would like it — that I would bring food that wouldn't nourish people and make them happy. Every so often, I would look at my dish at the end of the dessert table —

And there it stood, in its lonely perfection: my mom's cake, untouched, save for a few sympathetic nibbles by parents who were chaperoning our luncheon. I remember wanting to cry that day; I didn't want to show my mom the tray that was completely unscathed. But when I came home, she just smiled and said how great it was that we had leftovers. I baon'ed (packed) cassava cake for lunch that entire week. And I loved it.

The great thing about growing up is that as we grow, we discover — or perhaps, create — other facets of our personalities. We develop interests in sports, or the arts. We pick up a violin and fall in love, or photograph the memories we never want to forget. We start singing, writing, drawing, and experiencing life in different ways. We learn what we like and don't like. We learn to live with what we've got and work for what we've yet to attain. We carve our own niches, and eagerly anticipate for the world to accept the layers that lie beneath our skin.

By the time I was in sixth grade, I was known as "the writer." Not "the quiet Asian" or "the one good at math." I had won a poetry contest or two, and I just could *not* get my nose out of any novel I was reading at the time. My teachers all encouraged me to keep writing, even as I continued into junior high. They behooved me to join the



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school newspaper and to never stop writing, for even a single day. They sincerely thought I had a gift — and surprisingly, it had nothing to do with math, science, or playing the violin.

It was around this time I began abandoning my Filipino heritage; I had adopted this new persona as a “writer.” I no longer cared about the color of my skin or the strange spelling of my last name. I was who I was. But unfortunately, whoever I was didn’t fit in with the other Pinoys around me.

I always felt awkward around Filipinos. I loved my relatives, adored my titos and titas, but I never really meshed with the kids that drank, danced, and were in cotillions. I don’t know why. When I think back, I can only say that I *probably wasn’t cool enough*. Dancing was something my older brother did; he was a bboy and had the swag that comes with it. But me — I was a dork, to say the least. I got along with the Asians at my school; I shared similar interests in k-pop/j-pop/anime/video games/etc. I went to karaoke boxes in the city and watched dramas with Rain and Rainie Yang. I fit in well with Asians; but Filipinos were a different story. I tried during my freshman year in college to get involved with the Filipino cultural club — but I just couldn’t find a place for myself amidst the tinkling, eskrima, and house parties. I didn’t know half the chorus of Bayang Magiliw, and I just couldn’t see myself in a modern dance crew.

Not to mention people would rag about the fact that I couldn’t speak Tagalog:

- A) I’m not from Manila.
- B) My parents don’t speak Tagalog at home, but Waray.

There was this one time — not during my childhood, but last summer when I was at a block party one of my friends was throwing. It was your typical Filipino soiree: line dancing, turon-all-around, lolos trying to jig with you, and some light-hearted gambling on the side.

And lechon (of course).

One of the titas that night was ranting about how Filipino kids today don’t know jack shit about their heritage. They don’t know who Lapu-Lapu is (A: Isn’t that a fish?), they don’t know how Marcos screwed over the nation (A: Don’t they own Macy’s?). Hell, they don’t even know what the word *tubig* means (A: Did you just misspell ‘tubing?’). But her biggest gripe was how kids today don’t know Tagalog.

I could only wonder how many of them knew Waray.

Admittedly, however, I had lost touch with my Filipino roots. I was more into Japanese culture — to the point where my father criticized me for wanting to learn Nihon-go more than my “native tongue.” My Filipino suitemates had to consistently catch me up on NoyNoy’s latest political endeavor. My parents earnestly tried to rejuvenate my passion for the Philippines. But no matter how many scholarly books from UP my father threw at me, it was only through stories — of my mom’s life on the farm, of my dad’s doctoral residency in Baguio, of my relatives’ tumultuous times living in the utmost destitution — that my heart came home.

I’m still a dork (I think, at this point, this is irrevocable).

**But if there’s anything Filipino about me — it’s the strong sentiment for family that resounds in me.**

To this day, I still struggle from existing in various medians. I’m Asian, but I like to write. I’m Filipino, but I look Chinese. I’m a girl, but I’m a (tom)boy. I’m not ashamed of my sexuality, but I’m a devout believer of Christ. Everywhere there are labels. Choices to be made, sides to take. Identities to adorn the personas we present to the world. But for every choice we make, there is a choice we don’t make — and as human curiosity would have it, I sometimes wonder how life would be if I chose A instead of C.

But those contemplations are quickly dissipated by the overall satisfaction with my life. On the whole, I am proud of who I am. I couldn’t imagine it any other way.

**I am me.** Ako si ako. 私が私だけ。我叫 Melani. And, y’know I’m okay, with the me that exists today.

## AAJ : Asian American Journal & Weekly Photography Workshop

Although we share an office with AA E-Zine, they write, we create! They’re journalists, we’re their photojournalists... as well as artists and poets. Each semester a beautiful full color hard copy journal of y/our creativity is published. At workshop, semi-pros learn from each other and teach newcomers. Fall 2011 weekly meeting time: Fridays, Union 071, 2 pm / aajsbu@gmail.com www.aa2sbu.org/aajsbu

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