

INTERNATIONAL



HOUSE



NEWSLETTER

spring 2003

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*upcoming next year:*

Anniversary  
**25<sup>th</sup>** Alumni  
Reunion  
2003

# "It's Just Me"

by Sindy Mulyono

I am hope! I am joy! I am love!

I am God's special gift to the world

I am a delicate yet hardy flower

My true essence will grow and unfold as the blue petals open on a bright sunny morning



I want to play

I want to have fun

I want to taste the sweetness and the bitterness

I want to shine brightly in the darkness of life

I am not afraid to cry

I am not afraid to take chances

Or to make decisions

This is my life and I will take charge

I don't need to explain who I am

Nor to defend who I am

I don't need to act in ways that please others

I am myself; learning and growing into the best me I choose to be

My body is my sanctuary

My eyes are the horizon

And my heart is the key

Open it and you will see.

## I-House Snapshots





# The Lost Colony of Hong Kong

by Edwin Cheng



After leaving Hong Kong for the United States in 1998, I have been asked many questions about my home territory. As a result of China losing the Opium/Trade War back in the Qing dynasty, Hong Kong was leased to the British under unequal treaties for more than a hundred years. Due to the highly westernized culture, capitalism and the free market economy system, the people of Hong Kong, mainly all Chinese, are different from people who grew up in Mainland China. That's what makes Hong Kong pretty unique and interesting. I recall the most frequently asked question was probably: How has Hong Kong changed since July the first, 1997, the date on which Hong Kong was returned to China?



At first, I felt quite awkward when trying to give my new friends a good answer. As a teenager, I experienced no change whatsoever in Hong Kong since the handover of the ex-colony of Great Britain back to China. I had the same freedom as before: Going to my favorite clubs and discos, local arcades and malls, enjoying freedom of speech and other civil rights which the British had granted the people of Hong Kong. Even the education systems haven't changed much at all, except that Mandarin (the official language of China; there are many other dialects spoken in China) is being implemented into the schooling system as a third language which students have to learn. Students now have to learn Cantonese (native tongue of people living in Canton province, Southern China), English and Mandarin. As for the media, we still read cartoons making fun of the government, criticizing society, and all the same stuff as earlier.

A few things have changed, however. First, the Peoples' Army replaces the Royal British Army. All the offices and departments once named as "Royal" or "Her Majesty's Service" have all but disappeared. Moreover, of course, we now listen to the national anthem of China under the new Hong Kong special administration region (SAR) flag, and the flag of China. These are the same as a state flag, and the national flag of the United States. The SAR basically means that Hong Kong, although ruled under the Chinese government in Beijing, has its own unique and different set of constitutions and laws: "One country, two rules" policy. Basically, under the new laws, Hong Kong is promised and granted the same liberties, civil rights and democracies as the British laws provided.

For the better, the people of Hong Kong are more certain of whom they are. Hong Kong people were not British citizens to start with, but just permanent residents of the territory. Before the handover of Hong Kong and also now, the British government offers the people of Hong Kong a semi-British passport, which is only good for traveling purposes and does not grant the right to live and work in Great Britain. Now, people of Hong Kong have the option to apply for a new Chinese passport also, known as the SAR passport, basically, providing Chinese citizenship.

Despite how hard it was to handle the case of Hong Kong due to the vast differences between China and Hong Kong, the Chinese government has actually done a respectable job as to governing and maintaining the unique "way of life" in the lively city of Hong Kong.



# Prague Highlights: "Czech them out!"

by David Lorenzo

A beautiful summer morning. *Havelská* street was already crowded with active and curious tourists who put all their emphasis on examining every single market stall. It did not look like the same street we found the night before when we finally reached our hostel in this privileged and central area of *Praha* ("Prague" for the Czechs). None of us could wait any longer. Through the window, Prague was calling to us.

We walked downstairs to *Havelská* street immediately and followed the human avalanche that led to *Staroměstské náměstí* (Old Town square), right at the heart of Prague and barely two minutes away from our hostel. Suddenly, the most popular landmark of this treasured city turned up before our eyes: the *Orloj* (Astronomical clock). Hundreds of people already surrounded this genuine clock with their cameras prepared to capture that singular moment in which the clock...proves to be alive!! As a matter of fact, every single hour a skeleton rings a bell and all the other movable sculptures located at both sides of the sphere begin to play their role in the show. Tourists usually react with a loud laughter. This time was not an exception.

After contemplating the other highlights that endow the Old Town square with its magical charm ( the *Týn* church, *Jan Hus* statue & *Franz Kafka's* house), we headed for the *Vltava* river. As we walked towards the boundaries of the *Staré mesto* (Old Town), puppeteers and musicians entertained the numerous visitors, who irresistibly stopped and stared at these awesome artists.

Finally, we reached our destination: *Karlův most* (Charles bridge), without any doubt, the most significant and notorious bridge that merges both sides of the city. The bridge is the most



suitable place to take a break, turn around and admire Prague's silhouette dominated by the Castle of Prague at the *Hradčany* area.

Sarah, an art history major, was still amazed with the architecture and cultural strength that Prague irradiated. Countless buildings, churches and museums had captured her attention. Emma did not expect the outstanding hospitality that Czech people granted us. Absolutely everywhere and since the very first moment we arrived, none of us felt in a foreign land. Dan fell in love with the Czech language...and girls, especially with Ratka, the lovely girl that helped her parents to run our hostel. My feelings towards Prague could not be described with words. It was something within me, something that would lose its sense and value if written.

As the four of us noticed, there is no one Prague. There are tons. As many Pragues as one can experience. There is only one common feeling amongst all those lucky travelers who spend some time here: the need to come back one day in the future. A sense of belonging that makes Prague different from most European capitals.

The experiences described above only illustrate our first hours in the Czech capital. Narrating all our anecdotes and tales would take a while...and it would certainly be useless to all those of you who consider visiting Prague. After all, your experience there will be unique, exclusive, distinct. Because there is one Prague for each of us.

# A Short Bedtime Story About Spartans

by Constantino Kouyialis

They marched from dear Lakonia... from sacred Sparta. They marched. For honor's sake... for glory's sake. They marched. Into hell's mouth... the "hot gates" (Thermopiles)

480 BCE. The army of Persia - a force so vast it could shake the earth with its march - was poised to crush Greece, an island of reason and freedom in a sea of mysticism and tyranny. Standing between Greece and this tidal wave of destruction was a tiny detachment of three hundred warriors.

But these warriors were more than men... they were SPARTANS.

*"There has never been, nor ever will be a civilization like the ancient Spartans. Since the ancient times the Spartan way of life has attracted much moralizing. These warriors had no boundaries, had no fears, and fought like giants. Many admire the physical courage, military discipline and the general obedience at Sparta".* (Plutarch)

Sparta was the ruling city of the area of Lakonia in the southern Peloponnese, ancient Greece. It lies in the valley of the Eurotas River.

Everything was dedicated to making each Spartan a superb and unquestioningly loyal soldier. The process started at birth. A committee of elders inspected newly the born babies, and, if considered too weak, they were left to die by exposure on the sloped mount Taygetos. Those who survived were brought up as soldiers.

At the age of seven, a Spartan boy came directly under the control of the city, and remained so until the time of his death. At this early age the boys were brought up in packs, and were under the general charge of a State Director of Education: the Paidonomos (Paidi + nomos = child +

law). Plutarch gives a great explanation of the military emphasis:

*"They learned reading and writing for basic needs, but all the rest of their education was to make them well disciplined and steadfast in hardship and victorious in battle. For this reason, as boys grew older, the Spartan intensified their training, cutting their hair short and making them used to walking barefoot and for the most part playing naked. When the boys reached the age of twelve, they no longer had tunics to wear, but got one cloak a year. Their bodies were tough and unused to baths and lotions. They only enjoyed such luxury, only a few special days a year. They slept in packs on beds, which they got together on their own, made from the tops of the rushes to be found by the river Eurotas. These they broke off with their bare hands, not using knives".* (Plutarch)

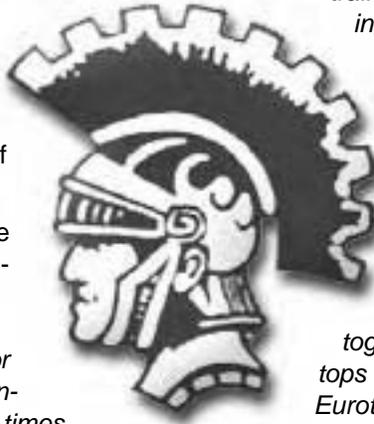
They ate and drank a fixed quota of barley, wine, cheese and figs. A diet plain and nasty - gray in color it was named "melanas zomos".

Spartans were forbidden to practice any manual trade. For that they had the Helots. "The Helots (helots = elotes = slaves) worked their land for them, supplying the fixed amount of produce".

These are the men, Xerxes the king God of Persia, the empire of the hundred nations, came across in the spring of 480 BCE.

When Leonidas, the Spartan King, the bravest of the bravest, was asked to surrender his arms, his answer was short and sharp, typical of the Spartan way: "Molon lave". Come and get it...

So big was the Persian army in numbers that it was said that the large number of the thrown arrows would darken the sun. A Spartan, called Dieneces, to make light of the Persian numbers answered: *"Great! If the Persians darken the sun, we shall have our fight in the shade".*



The Spartans would never accept Xerxes' terms, for that would reduce Greece to slavery. Even if the rest of Greece surrendered, Spartans were sure to join battle with the Persians. And once in battle there was only one command given: "Whatever the number of their enemies, fleeing the battle was forbidden".

The women used to say to their men before battle: "E tán, e epi táς" which is translated into: Come back with your shield, or on it!...

The battle was fierce. The Spartans chose Thermopyles, a narrow pass between the sea and a mountain, to make their stand. The Persian army couldn't fit for battle in there. Only small numbers could fit, which weren't enough against the outstanding fighting skills of the Spartans.

The Spartans joined their hearts in a silent song. They charged. Shoulder to shoulder. Shield against shield. Eyes looked on those of their enemies...relishing their mounting terror. They struck. Joined, fused...a single creature. Indivisible, impenetrable, unstoppable... They pushed, and pushed. No chance to catch their breath. No time to slow down their pounding hearts. An ocean-heaving wave after wave against an unyielding cliff. They shudder with each advance.

But somebody wanted to steal the glory. Disgrace them. A traitor. The name: Efiates (ironically in Greek it means "nightmare"). He led the Persians from a hidden path behind the lines of the Spartans. There at some point Leonidas was killed. The battle was fiercer over the body of the Spartan king. The Greeks four times drove back the enemy, and at last succeeded in retrieving the body to encircle and protect it. This battle was scarcely ended when the Persians that came from the hidden path surrounded the Spartans. The Spartans changed their formation and formed a circle around the body of their king. Once again they denied an offer for their lives. They defended themselves to the last and they died.... for freedom, for democracy.

Simonides, a Greek poet of that time wrote this epitaph after the battle had ended: *"And dying, died not"*.

Today, almost 3000 years after the battle, a gravestone stands over the tomb of those who died those days. On the stone is written:

*"Go tell the Spartans, passerby: that here obedient to their laws, we lie"*



PS: (This article was written for all those who gaze at the statue between the art building and the Student Union, and wonder about the spirit of Sparta and Leonidas)

Sources:

1. "300", Frank Miller, Lynn Varley, Dark Horse Comics, 1999, Oregon
2. The Spartans, Nicholas Sekunda, Richard Hook, Osprey Publishing Limited, 1998
3. "Plutarch"
4. Website: [www.bedokroversfc.com](http://www.bedokroversfc.com)
5. Image: <http://www.wzzm13.com/images/spartans.jpg>

# Labyrinth Of Our Sojourn

by Souleymane Ongoiba

**T**hrown and abandoned into this world, Asama sits pondering and wondering about the complex labyrinth of life, its meaning, when finally he comes across Oom, the principle of life.

**A:** Oom, I was wondering how one could be in harmony and be successful in life. What are your secrets and knowledge that would help me to have a successful life?

**O:** Dear Asama, you should first understand that what you consider as success might not be a success for someone else; however, *knowledge alone does not suffice*, because it has no heart; life requires more than knowledge Asama.

**A:** Aren't wisdom and knowledge supposed to be the keys that open all the doors of success Oom?

**O:** Theoretical knowledge is not a complete knowledge, one should experience, accept and tolerate and make sure to avoid labels and judgments in every action, because the actions just "are"; yes, indeed those things that seem painful at the moment or make you cry or laugh or make you feel, instruct in reality. Each circumstance is a gift and in each experience exists a hidden treasure. That's why we should not wait for a "special" occasion, because every moment that we spent is a "special opportunity."

**A:** But, I still remember very well those painful moments when there was not a slight light shining around; I still remember, those days when there was not an ounce of air to breathe.

**O:** What it does mean to you, Asama, who or what do you want to blame?

**A:** Oom, should I conclude that we have neither friends, nor enemies but only teachers?

**O:** Partially yes, in a sense; but Asama when you come to a point to accept that we cannot live alone or only for ourselves, you would realize that truthfulness and sincerity with yourself and friendship within the universe are supreme values of your sojourn here.

**A:** How could I befriend my enemies for their harm, bad and evil?



**O:** Asama, what are good, bad or evil if not the values that our ancestors have transmitted to and through us? Indeed nothing is bad; even "bad" is "good" itself; how would you know what is good if you had no compass of "good values". Therefore you should thank your adversaries and enemies, treat them with politeness and courtesy

even those who are rude to you, because they taught you what you should do.

**A:** Oom isn't all this theoretical?

**O:** No Asama, if you just realize that the definitions that we give to things in our lives are just "perceptions" that we had acquired from our education, culture and environment; the concepts learnt so far by anyone of us had been influenced and determined by the way our mind has been trained to think and act.

**A:** It seems scary to think that way!

**O:** It is the way of people that have decided to be fully responsible and take control of their lives. It is the same thing about our lives and its meaning; life has no "specific" meaning; the meaning of our lives is the one that we have decided "consciously

or unconsciously” to attribute to it.

**A:** In other words we can do what we want with our lives!!

**O:** Apparently yes, but also when you will come to understand that nothing remains the same or that the only certainty in life is change, you would understand that humanity should develop, work and expand themselves to get the best from every situation; live life as it happens, but you should and must try to make it happen the way you want it to happen. Know who you are, be proud of who you are, fix your goals before anything else, after all, understand that as a human you are powerful and free beyond measures to be and to achieve.

**A:** Oom, are we really free?

**O:** Yes, Asama you are free. Trust life and the universe. Thank the universal principle creator or God(s) as it is called in different cultures, for being

here right now. Thank the principles for the blessing of family and friends. Thank the principle for the mind with which one can discuss.

**A:** I am still pondering Oom!

**O:** Try to understand only one thing Asama: Life is the only teacher; the secrets of the universe are imprinted on the cells of your body as the ancient had always told you, it is within you.

**A:** What does this mean? I am more confused than even before!

**O:** Again you must remember, do not trust my words, but listen to them, more importantly, go and experience yourself, just: "BE" Asama.

**A:** How?

**O:** Wonder and "be" as much as you can, "BE".

## "Joy"

by Bhavini Joshi

Enjoy the thrills that you have in life,  
You may not get a chance to have them again.

Enjoy the friends and people that pass by,  
You may not get a chance to see them again.

Enjoy the places that you visit,  
You may not get a chance to explore them again.

Enjoy the scenes of Nature that you pass by,  
You may not have a chance to drive by again.

Enjoy the songs that people sing,  
You may not have a chance to hear them again.

Enjoy the lessons in life that you learn,  
You may not have a chance to learn them again.

Enjoy the ups and downs that you encounter in life,  
You may not have a chance to overcome that again.

Enjoy the conversations over coffee you have with friends,  
You may not have a chance to have a sip of that coffee again.

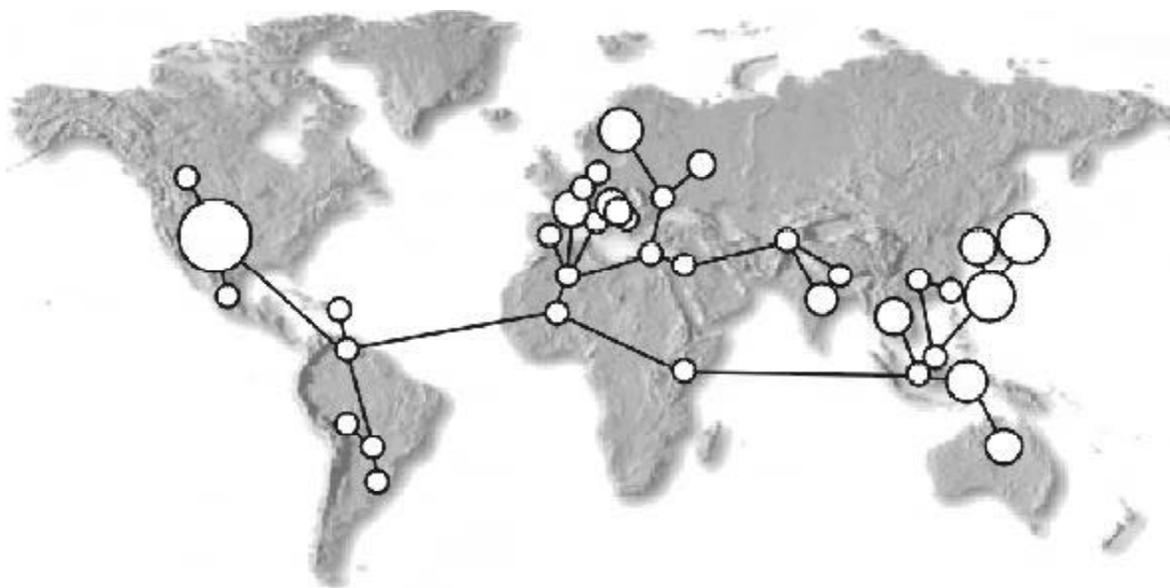
Enjoy the miracles that life unfolds,  
You may not have a chance to feel them again.

Enjoy the chills and the heat of the weather,  
You may not have a chance to experience them again.

Enjoy the dreams that you have on starry nights,  
You may not have a chance to dream about them again.



## Our Network of Friendship



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**M**ark your calendar!

**S**et aside your vacation time!

**S**ave your money!

**B**uy your plane ticket!

July 2003  
(that's 2003!)

You've got one year to plan a visit with your friends from around the world, and re-visit one of the best times of your life...

*It's time for our*  
**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**I-House/I-Center Alumni Reunion**

Celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day in the Bay Area. Meet for a special dinner and evening of fun on Saturday, July 5<sup>th</sup>. Wake up for brunch at the International House (okay, International Center for many of you) on Sunday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, and that's just the start of what's in store for you. For more details, send us your e-mail address at [ihousesjsu@aol.com](mailto:ihousesjsu@aol.com)

We'll have a page up on our website any day now [www.sjsu.edu/depts/ihouse](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/ihouse). All we need for a perfect weekend is YOU! Help us spread the word. People have been e-mailing to say they'll be here. What about you? The more people who come, the more people will come (got that?!).

Let us know how we can help you plan your trip to sunny California. You can always reach us the old-fashioned way, by calling: 408-924-6570. We'll be happy to hear your voice.

Leann Cherkasky Makhni  
Director

# "Reflections"

by Elizabeth Kmetz

*Phyllis, you have touched so many lives in so many ways. Thank you for touching my life.*

**A**t San Jose State,  
A freshman,  
I am new.

Walking on campus,  
Hearing music on the wind.  
A marching band,  
I join in.

On a yacht,  
It's a beautiful day.  
Then the invitation,  
"Won't you all stay?"

Ice cream on a platter.  
I thought I should lend a hand.  
You said, "Let me serve you..."  
I did not understand.

Wasn't it I,  
who should have served you?  
I was amazed by your generosity,  
And now by this kind act, too.

Now a junior  
And moving around.  
The International House

Is the place I found.

Pancake Breakfasts,  
And Friends forming bridges across  
the sea.  
The semesters...  
They passed by so quickly.

Now at graduation time,  
I stop to reflect.  
To you I owe these memories,  
Along with all of my gratitude and re-  
spect.

## Credits

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