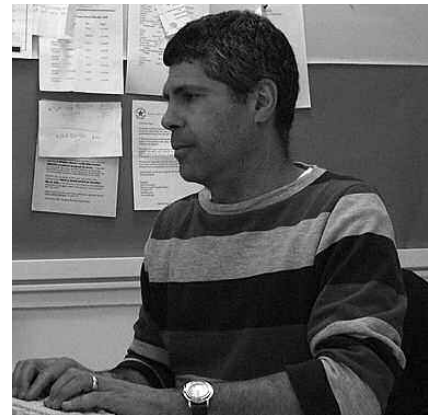
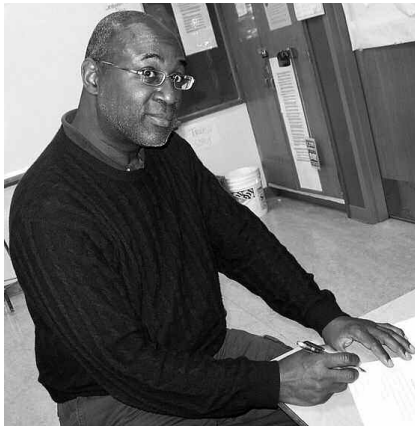


# San Francisco Lives in a Time of Globalization

A Documentary Interview Project by Students at the Build San Francisco Institute



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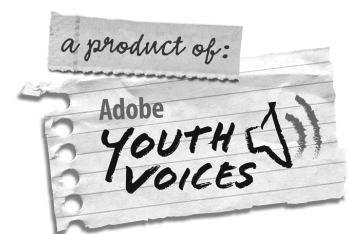
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# The Truth About Hip-Hop

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*A Conversation with Sinneo by Michole Forks Ling Chen*

**What inspired me to music? Not wanting to kill myself.**

**A**s far as I'm concerned, it changed my life because it saved my life. At a very critical time in my life, I was considering that this living sh-t wasn't for me. Excuse my English: I'm not from England. But please understand that at the time it was very emotional, very trying, and I had to question all the things that had come to be for me. The only thing that had kept me around was music.

Me and my friend was having second thoughts about all that we wanted to do, all that we saw that mattered. It didn't have much of a say or value to us, so we sit there and we sit there thinking, well, what else are we going to do at the time? We just started seeing [rap] battles more and more, and after a while that was our whole hype. That was our whole mindset, battles. After awhile, that was the thing that kept us going. That was the thing that kept us happy, motivated, wanting to wake up.

In any given moment, music evokes emotion and compels you, overcomes you.

## **Hip-hop evolved**

Hip-hop evolved out of lack, of people not having much. People at the time couldn't afford going to the disco, so they went and got whoever had the best sound system at the time, put it together and had a party. People started coming to the parties and they vibed off each other. It was a relationship. All these different elements came together—whether it be through painting, graffiti,



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Hip-hop has globalized the world because it unifies and brings people together . . .  
You feel hip-hop; you feel-hip-hop.  
It's good music. It transcends all languages, transcends all barriers.

dancing or movement, breaking, you know, or being able to manipulate instruments and things that give sound. The way I see it is, like, black culture's got all these different systems set in place to keep us apart, to keep us divided. Rap music, hip-hop—that was our connection. That created a new culture out of the soul that we had.

I feel like hip-hop came out of many years of oppression, many years of wanting to express ourselves and not being able to. We took whatever little we had, and made the

## The Truth About Hip-Hop *(continued)*

most of it, and now today you've got hip-hop around the world. You've got rap music everywhere. It's a commodity. It's something that you can purchase now. But as far as I'm concerned, I'm having fun and I don't really care.

Hip-hop has globalized the world because it unifies and brings people together. It's kind of like—everybody has their reasons for liking what they like. It's like me and the color blue: I like it because I like it. I can't explain why I like it, but when you feel something, you can't deny it. You feel hip-hop; you feel-hip-hop. It's good music. It transcends all languages, transcends all barriers. Seriously, when you think about it, hip-hop can unify in mass quantities people of all likes, all walks, all ages.

Hip-hop is going through a metamorphosis, a period of change. It's going to change. It's always changed. It's always evolved—I don't want to say a rebirth because once it's dead, it's dead, but it's taken on a new life. It's taken off, the fire is being passed on to somebody else with more fuel. And their fuel is different. Hip-hop's not dying, hip-hop is changing, but it's for the better and it's what's needed—because you can't have the same thing forever.

To me, the message that is being conveyed in hip-hop music varies. On a big public scale, you got the message, "I sold crack, let's party and shoot each other." Unfortunately, that's the byproduct of the world in front of us; we are direct descendants of our environment—so some hip-hop is really violent, really disgruntled, really hostile music. We come from areas where death is common and it's not natural. Guns don't kill people, people kill people. There's no way to say it's okay. There's nothing okay about

it. It's like the world we live in today: you can go anywhere from Africa to friggin' Central America to the Middle East, and every kid's got a gun. That's just how it is; people get mad, people get all frustrated, and the first thing they're going to do is shoot somebody.

We went from Columbine, years ago, to Virginia Tech now, and it's like—that's us, we're the outcasts. We are the people that you spit on, frown upon, and look down on because we're different. We don't adapt to what society says because we're looking for a way out. We're looking for a different route. You don't want listen to us until it's too late. You don't want to hear us yell. You want our barrels to explode. You want to hear our guns go off. You don't want to hear us talk about it, you want us to shoot the point into you. Dang, you got me going on a topic that's so relevant to life!

The way I see it, hip-hop—the image that it portrays and what it says to people in the public, is: if this is the end of the world, you might as well have one big party before we go out. We're killing each other off one by one right now. So, hip-hop music is the party. It's the sound track, it's the anthem to lead to our final days.

People say, "I only talk about what I've lived through. I only talk about what I've seen." Well, if that's all we ever say, then damn, what does that make for our future? It looks bleak. The light is starting to descend. Hey, the sun is setting. ■

# An Immigrant in Technology

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*A Conversation with \_\_\_\_\_ by Ling Chen*

I was born in China in 1961.

**W**e arrived in the U.S. in 1974. Life is different here. The luxury I was looking for is automatic water, electricity, hot water, transportations—we really don't have those back in China.

When I came here I started in fifth grade. I really didn't know what the teacher was talking about. One thing is for sure: I was suffering because I came here late, at thirteen years old. I'm a bit behind in terms of catching up with the English language.

I had to decide as a grownup to be adult: do I need to go to college, or do I need to go to a trade school where I would be able to come out and get a job? That motivated me to find a career that is fast growing. In the early '80s, computer was one of the fast-growing industries, so that motivated me to get a certificate under my belt and then go out and look for a job.

I attended a trade school called the DeVry Technical Institute, and there, we learned the basics: electronics, how a resistor works, how a capacitor works, how to build an amplifier, how pretty much physics are also included in there, conductors, semi-conductors, and electronics, electricity, how it flows. I came from a hardware side of the computer so I enjoy doing it, taking it apart and recompiling it again.

I started as an electronic computer technician and from there moved up the ranks to different companies and



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The computer right now is so advanced that you are able to communicate and translate from English to Chinese to Russian to Italian to Spanish, everywhere in the world.

different acquisitions. I've been with this company about twenty-five years. Right now I am responsible for New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey—I'm responsible for about sixty people at the current time. We do partnerships, and we also manufacture banking equipment, high speed, to reprocess utility checks, such as ConEd and Bell's credit card bills.

I first started in the computer industry working in a department store where every register is connected to a

## **An Immigrant in Technology** *(continued)*

main frame. The main frame will house all the sales, all the different clothing, all you have to do is punch in what they called a SKU number and it automatically registers the dollar amount of each individual item. Also it keeps inventory stock of the clothing that they have in the warehouse, and does easy compilation with tax, and also easy compilation in terms of how many items you purchased. So that can pretty much eliminate calculator.

The computer really started to materialize at that time, moving on to what they call a personal computer. Pretty much every household has one, or is able to get onto the World Wide Web and retrieve almost any information they are requesting. The computer turns a lot of manual processing into automated and at the same time is decreasing the amount of labor, manual labor. So the computer helps the world but it also eliminates jobs in a lot of senses. The disadvantage, really, is to reduce the amount of jobs.

I think for the future generations, it will affect a big amount because everybody has to learn an additional language. Not only to help the U.S., but other countries—so you can communicate widely with different cultures in different countries. It is an advantage to using computers to help the poorer countries.

The computer right now is so advanced that you are able to communicate and translate from English to Chinese to Russian to Italian to Spanish, everywhere in the world. It is a great thing, yet it is also creating a lot of security dangers if used incorrectly. ■

# I Don't Want People to Cry For Me

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*A Conversation with Antonio Lopez Trujillo by Sergio Saurez*

I am about to turn 40 years the 26th of May.

I was born in the state of Mexico. As a child my life was kind of rough, because we were a lot of brothers and sisters. I was one of the last to be born. I have nineteen other brothers and sisters, so whatever money came to us was very little.

I have exactly ten years living here in the United States. I am an illegal immigrant for ten years. I am scared of being deported because here is where I have my life, my stuff, my family.

When I was a little boy I had many interests. I kind of wanted to follow the footsteps of my brothers. One of my brothers was a mechanic. I had a brother that was a soldier, it's true. One of them was an electrician. I wanted to be an electrician. So in my life I studied math. When I finished high school I went to a university for a semester. I didn't last long there because I didn't have any money and my father made little money.

I started working from the age of 13. One of my jobs was to clean up houses, paint them. Whatever little money I got, I gave it to my mother to help out the family. Another job I had was making cardboard. Also I used to make a type of vitamins. I used to work in a factory where all sorts of soap was made. I lasted making soap just about five years. After working in the factory I repaired cars, machines. After that job I decided to come to the United States



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Look, when I pass away, I don't want people to cry for me. I just want them to think that I was a hard-working person.

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From Mexico I came in a bus. The bus ride took three or four days to the border of Tijuana. What was very difficult was the passing over. "The jump," as you may say in the United States. I was captured three times but that didn't stop me from trying again. The fourth time I went in a group. It was around 14 of us in a small truck. I was on top of some other ones. It took us from where they picked us up to Arizona. Everyone in the truck was tired. Some had to go to the bathroom on themselves. We weren't

## **I Don't Want People to Cry For Me** *(continued)*

allowed to move, you had to do it on yourself. I'm serious, there was no stopping for us—just the driver.

There we arrived at a horrible house. Right there is where the “coyote” was. [Person who assists immigrants in entering the United States, for pay.] He treated me and my two other friends very nice. He brought us meat, hard bread. From there that good man drove us to Las Vegas. In Las Vegas I lived only 15 days. There is where that nice man had enough money to buy me a ticket to San Francisco. I lived with a friend I made in San Francisco, but I didn't want to depend on him, so sometimes I lived on the streets while we looked for somewhere to live and somewhere to work. From there we got jobs and we were able to get a small apartment, all 14 of us.

Those three years that I lived in that small room were very hard for me. The rent was very little but still very hard and fatal because some of us worked, others stayed up all night, some of us drank.

Today, I feel kind of tired, because I have two jobs. My energy is used up all in the first job. I am a cook, and I am serving food here at the café. The other job is a restaurant twenty minutes from this job. In my life what makes me happy is my wife, my kids, my job, and what I give them, which is clothes.

In five years, I hope I'll still be working hard. If my body still allows me to work, I hope I'll still work double jobs. Well, when I get home I have to check if everything is how it should be. Before I ever fall asleep I check that the bills are done right. I fall asleep most of the time around

2:30 a.m. That's around only six hours of sleep I get every night. Some time I have a third job. I prepare papers. That job sometimes I work three to four days a week. It starts from 10:00 at night to 2:00 in the morning. I only go to this job when they call me. Sometimes when I work there I only sleep up to three hours a night.

Look, when I pass away, I don't want people to cry for me. I just want them to think that I was a hard-working person. I was a person that helped his kids: my kids aren't gang members. That I was strict with my kids, but not bad. I want them to remember me of the good not the bad. That's what I tell my partner—to put music and some speakers on [when I die] because I don't want to leave this world alone.

I already lived my life to the fullest. I'm not going to lie to you. In a part of my life you can say I was a sort of a “player.” I sometimes drank, I sometimes didn't. But now I am very well. I have had what I have dreamed of. Everything I dreamed of, from when I was a little boy, I have had or I have right now.

About the immigrants, there's a lot of them that don't work well. They get too into the gangs. That's not the way it should be. The immigrants should help each other. We are all Latinos and we should all help each other. I would really love that—for all the Latinos to get together and work together as one. ■



# The Global Movie Audience

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*A Conversation with Steven Sasso by Daniel Okamura*

**I was born in 1957 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My father was born in Panama—his parents go back to Italy. My mother was born in Germany and her parents were Jewish.**

**S**he came as part of a kindred transport, escaping the Nazis in World War II. They met in Wisconsin and that's where they married and made a family. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, there were a number of Jews who had collected there as part of people escaping. There were little pockets, little communities. That's where people from her town went. Growing up for me was sort of a typical baby boomer life in the suburbs.

I went to UC Berkley for my university education and I majored in film studies and English. I went into film because I just loved movies—I like it as storytelling. Film has been a major part of my understanding in any way of creativity or storytelling. Film was a major part of how I grew up, intellectually, and in my creativity.

Hollywood has a real strong influence all over the world. It's become a commercialized thing that has overwhelmed a lot of cultures, and the voice and style of international cinema. There's a powerful film industry in Japan, in Sweden, in Italy and powerful film movements across the globe. I think these countries began emulating Hollywood products because they became so overwhelmed—it is like McDonald's.

When you get into a theater and see a large screen and the lights go out, there's something that relates to your



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The action picture is the most influential type of film because violence happens without words. Stories help you think about what it is to be human, are things that don't translate from culture to culture.

subconscious; your dream consciousness. I think the images and the messages are presented in a sensory way that is more powerful than any other medium. It hits us in this deep, almost dream-like level. They affect our behaviors and our tastes and how we function in the world.

## The Global Movie Audience *(continued)*

The action picture is the most influential type of film because violence happens without words. Stories that are deeper and more meaningful, that help you think about what it is to be human, are things that don't translate from culture to culture. Something that translates from culture to culture is violence.

The more thoughtful films are powerful, but reach only a few people. What reaches the most people and has the most influence are ones that have a lot of violence. What all people can understand is something that's beyond language, that's why violence is so internationally popular.

You can't have real, complicated, intimate portrayals of different cultures because people won't relate. So a more generic and whitewashed portrayal of all cultures is produced that appeals or is understandable to everybody. Things that might be very specific to a culture become part of a larger mainstream and then the mainstream becomes part of the standard for different cultures and become 'Hollywood-ized'.

Everyone takes their news in from television. Things that are stereotyping or not truthful are taken as truth. It can lead to lack of understanding and generalization

and a disability of ignorance. It makes and prepares for a population that is very ignorant and manipulated by the media. Also, the whole idea of viewing a movie in a big auditorium is becoming a thing of the past—now everybody's looking at their visual media on iPods and computers.

If I could produce one film, it would be about how our ignorance and lack of understanding on an individual level create the global conflicts that we have. People lack the ability to communicate in a civil way; this country's lacks understanding, for example, of what people could possibly be going through when we engage in war with them. If there were just more understanding and communication on an individual basis—instead of behaviors of fear and aggression—the global conflicts would go away. ■

# Once You Shoot the Gun, the Bullets Are Not Coming Back

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*A Conversation with Officer Annie Valenzuela by William Wong*

**I get up at 5:00 am and shower, make sure the cats are okay, make sure my two sons are set for school, and I'm out the door to work.**

**I** make it there by 7:00 am. My day starts by making contact with my supervisor and going out to different schools. I patrol the area making sure that there is no suspicious criminal activity going on.

A lot of times, I get called away to different schools. I'm here in the schools to educate young people about the law, so I try to educate them before they get to that point. I have been in this [school] community seven years and I'm probably more connected to it than the community I live in.

I'm a police officer in San Francisco, California. I was born here in San Francisco 44 years ago. My father is from Guadalajara, Mexico and my mother is from the Philippines and they married while he was in the Marine Corps. My parents were positive people. They helped me make some good decisions in life.

I am of mixed race, so I was raised and well socialized by my parents. Until the age of ten years old, I went to school here in the United States. After 5<sup>th</sup> grade, my Mom and Dad sent us to the Philippines for a year and a half so I had to go over there and learn how to speak Tagalog. When I was there it made me appreciate everything I had here. All of those luxuries like clean bathrooms, and warm water. I learned how to appreciate life quickly at a young age. I speak three languages: English,



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I don't understand how a youngster kills someone then turns around and walks away like nothing happened. I don't know how they sleep at night.

Tagalog, and Spanish. In my nine years as a police officer, juvenile violence has increased. Not just more fighting, but more shooting. It seems like it is so much easier for juveniles to get their hands on weapons. They just don't understand once you shoot the gun, the bullets are not coming back.

It becomes more serious and the number of deaths increases. It is very sad because now the deaths are getting closer and closer to the schools. High schoolers

## Once You Shoot the Gun, the Bullets Are Not Coming Back *(continued)*

in the area all know each other, so when there is a young death, a lot of kids know the child.

Gangs look for younger ones as the older ones get killed off, and they look for more members. It's almost like they're expendable. What they don't realize once they're dead is that another person comes and replaces them. A lot of that is from a lack of education, too. They come to school, but they don't learn—the only thing they focus on is to be a gang member and commit crime.

This is the world of opportunity: if people want, they can have the opportunity; if they don't, then it sits there waiting for someone else. There are so many immigrants coming into the United States—they know this is the “land of opportunity.” It's unfortunate that we have some US citizens not taking the advantage of the opportunities they have.

My contribution to young people is giving them a positive experience with law enforcement, and letting them know officers are regular people. And, that it's never too late to turn your life around.

As a police officer, there are many different situations where you don't have to use your weapons. Some people can talk them down; you can use your verbal persuasion. If I'm given information that the person is armed, I may have to draw weapons and order the person to put their hands up. I've never had to fire at anybody, but I've had to release it from the holster several times during burglary situations.

An incident I vividly remember was when I first became an officer in the southern district, near Bryant Street. There was a shooting in a nightclub on Halloween. All of

a sudden we were two blocks away from the shooting. I was a rookie and my training officer said, “Get your gun out, that guy got a gun,” and I said “Which guy?” He said, “That guy right there.” There were only two people on the street, there was nobody there, like a ghost town.

I'm the passenger. My gun's coming out and I'm looking at the two guys walking and I pop out of there, gun drawn, ordering them to get their hands up. He will not get his hands up. I order him to get his hands up several times. My training officer came out and my gun was drawn on them.

I'm not going to back down. The officer grabs the guy's hand away from his pocket—he had a gun in his pocket. I feel adrenaline, but they ended up going to jail. The other guy was actually shot and didn't know it. He was shot in the arm.

As far as American issues, the Iraq War concerns me the most. The son of one of my closest friends is over in Iraq. He is only nineteen years old and joined the Army after high school.

As for gang violence with juveniles, it is disturbing that many teenagers don't realize until the incident is over what they did, and how many people were impacted. I don't understand how a youngster kills someone then turns around and walks away like nothing happened. I don't know how they sleep at night. ■

# I'm a Lover, Not a Fighter

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*A Conversation with Jessica Jaber by Julian Wong*

**I was born in South San Francisco on July 18, 1983. My mom and dad were born in the Middle East. They came down here when they were relatively young.**

**M**y brother and sister were born in South San Francisco too. I have a good childhood and a lot of good memories. We are very family oriented and pretty standard. Since I was in preschool I was sent to private school. Even throughout my college, I went to University of San Francisco. So school was priority to my parent. So we all go to private school and I was very important to them.

I'm 23 now, so I'm kind of considering myself as a grown-up. While I was in college, I was working for a broker and I decided to do real estate. So I had been doing that as well

Every day I wake up around 8 AM. As far as Philz Coffee, I deal with the people behind the scenes and once in awhile I come and help out if they need extra help.

The most global issue that I see is racism or discrimination. I haven't traveled anywhere but I know that Starbucks' goal is to be on every corner. To be honest, I wish everyone the best in their own business. Everyone is doing what they've got to do.

For us personally, we're really confident in our product and I don't feel regret at all. I'm sure Starbucks hurts small businesses in some cases, but in our case, I don't believe it does. Our coffee pretty much speaks for itself.



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The best thing in our world is family and good coffee . . . I'm sure Starbucks hurts small businesses in some cases, but in our case, I don't believe it does. Our coffee pretty much speaks for itself.

In no way am I putting their coffee down. I'm just saying I'm very confident in ours. Starbucks, in my personal opinion, is just more of a convenience because it's everywhere. But as far as true coffee drinkers would understand, their coffee is not one of the best. And they have those frappuccinos and tasty drinks that cater to a lot of the younger crowds as well, which really don't drink coffee. I think it's for the convenience and because it's a fad. If you think about it, Starbucks is so well known;

## **I'm a Lover, Not a Fighter** *(continued)*

the name has established itself so much that they don't need to advertise or anything, as being secretary of Philtz Coffee dealing with international business affairs. So I do two things.

My parents, they brought me up very well, and I'm very spiritual, you know. God is #1 in my life and I try to live and treat everyone the way I like to be treated. I think that things are becoming so much more difficult to live a wholesome and moral life just considering all of the stuff going on right now.

The best thing in our world is family and good coffee. Seeing the people I love happy makes me happy, as if I'm fulfilling my purpose here on earth. I want people to remember me for good deeds and treating people in wonderful ways, and just leaving a very positive mark on the world. ■

# Consuming a Fashionable Life

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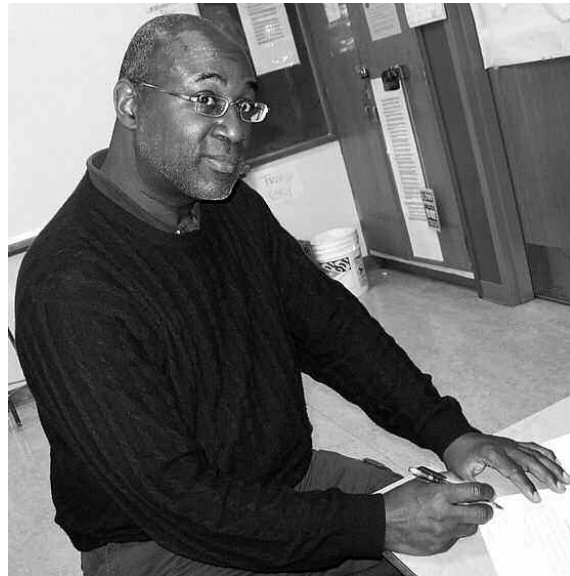
*A Conversation with William Sloan by Sandy Lam*

**Consuming** When I was young, I dreamed of becoming a baseball player for the San Francisco Giants and President of the United States; but I ended up becoming a high-school teacher.

**M**y life changed because I didn't achieve all the goals I once had. My parents were originally from Belmont, Texas. They migrated to California during the black migrations. My mother was in education, my stepfather was in education, and my brother went into education. I went to New York and worked for Reader's Digest because I wanted to see what corporate America was like, and when I moved back to California, I went into education.

My mother was an elementary school music teacher; she used to drag me to work with her to set up bulletin boards and hang up her posters and stuff. My reward was getting a hamburger and a Coke afterwards. I guess that was really the training ground for me. Some of her students that were my age would say wonderful things about her.

Our world isn't perfect. The issues that concern me the most are Civil Rights and Human Rights. I am personally concerned with Women's Rights, issues throughout the world, travesties that continue to exist around the world, and recycling. Our over-abundant use of resources, in particular fossil fuels, also concerns me. I think we have to seek other alternative energy sources than those we're currently engaged in.



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I don't think global consumerism is a problem because I've grown up in a capitalist society.

I think to be restrictive in what you can buy and what you can choose limits your versatility.

I don't think global consumerism is a problem because I've grown up in a capitalist society. I think to be restrictive in what you can buy and what you can choose limits your versatility, your freedom, and your personal creativity. It's only a problem when the market prices aren't affordable to everyone, and then it becomes exclusionary.

There are positives and negatives on consumerism affecting society. Negatively speaking, there's a very high push

## Consuming a Fashionable Life *(continued)*

toward consumerism through companies, endorsements, promotions, and marketing. People fall into a trap of buying \$200 shoes because they're Nikes instead of putting food on the table or paying their mortgage.

The positive things in terms of consumerism are the unlimited choices. For example, fashions throughout the world: different designers; styles; schemes; and colors. It's very extraordinary that people are so different. I sort of copied and imitated some of the styles that fit me. I don't wear my pants down below my waist; I don't do that now.

Fashion in different countries consists of different styles in the South and the North, because of the difference in climates. They are similar because globalization exists in the markets. Fashions that are in other countries are transferable to markets that they ordinarily don't exist in.

For instance, China has become one of the biggest merchandisers in terms of manufacturing. It's only natural that Western clothing will seep into the markets where it hasn't been before. When you look at labels, clothing is made all over the world.

I spent some time in Africa as well as throughout the Caribbean and the United States. I've even been throughout Latin America. I haven't been to Asia yet, but that's going to be my final stop.

Fashion tends to survive because of the industry, and the industry tends to survive because fashion is a need. People aren't wearing branches, leaves, paper sacks, or plastic.

It's not an issue because it's a requirement. It starts to become a problem when people fight over it. Like the Crips and Bloods, people fighting over colors. When that happens, it's the wrong place and idea to quarrel over. ■



# Sneaker Freaker

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*A Conversation with Matthew Alexander Chu by Rolando Tirado*

**I'm from San Francisco, yeah, born and raised.**

I've worked at Recon for nearly four years. Started as a lowly shoe clerk to manager, pretty in touch with the scene, helped see it grow to like crazy degrees.

I started collecting sneakers when I was eleven. What really got me into it were Jordan Elevens. Jordans came out in '85, right? I was born in '85, so when I was eleven, the Jordan Elevens came out. I had multiple pairs—black, white, red, from middle school onwards, man. At my peak my total collection might have been around 180 pairs. Mostly Nike, be it originals from like the '80s, mid '80s, everything up to now. I had a good collection of Nikes, good collection of Jordans, Vanns, Converse, everything.

This is how crazy I used to be: for my 18th birthday, I decided to go to Japan. I literally spent two days going into any sneaker shops I could, buying up as many shoes as I could. I think I spent nearly 7G's [\$7000] at the age of 18, just buying shoes because I knew I could flip them in the States. It was an investment, you know. That was insane.

I know people from all around the world, like bar none, all over Europe, all over Asia. Because of sneakers, networking is really important. Nike has regional releases, you know. Sometimes, like those Amsterdam AirMax—they're green, white with the gum outsole—my friend really wanted a pair. They only came out in Amsterdam. So I called my friend up in Amsterdam and I'm like, "Dude, get these shoes for me, I can get you something



It is a worldwide common interest, you know . . .

My parents told me that there would be no future in shoes. And I said, "I think there's something here."

from over here." If it wasn't for sneaker collecting, I would not know as many people as I do.

It is a worldwide common interest, you know. The US is very big on Dunks and Air Force Ones and Jordans, versus Europe, which is really big into AirMax. It's cool to see how people will take that and kind of translate it to their own lives. It's definitely a hobby, a shared interest we have, a way to a conversation.

## Sneaker Freaker *(continued)*

When I first started collecting, you would rarely ever see other collectors. You'd rarely see people walk in with shoes that would really break your neck. Versus today, you just go on a busy street, go to Union Square, a show will collect fifteen minutes, I guarantee you would see shoes that you never thought you would see in person, let alone some dude wearing them. The sneaker game has gotten huge compared to what it used to be.

Collecting is so easy to get into. There's so much opportunity—like, you can be collecting by buying two pairs of shoes at a shoe store. You're always going to need one. And the second you start buying multiples of shoes that you could wear every other day, you're pretty much collecting shoes. You're beyond necessities of life, into a little bit of special-ness for yourself. It's a way to really express yourself and allow other people to see what you're into without even saying anything.

I'm against fakes—fake copies of shoes—in all senses. I believe in intellectual copyrights and I believe there's pride in what things are. The whole initial reason that you'd want something fake is because you're fronting as if it's real. There have been times where I've been taken for fake shoes. I bought a pair of fake Retro Elevens before, and I figured out they were fake when I got them in the shipment because they used the wrong picture, etcetera. I actually got a chainsaw, cut it in half to see what it was made of, and the insole was cardboard. It doesn't do the brand justice. I'm against it, for sure.

Shoes are a necessity: you have to have something to protect your feet. But you want to express yourself. You want to do things that set you apart from other people. When it comes down to sneakers, a lot of it is status. I mean, that's how I started out. It was all about “damn, you got those” versus “I'd never even seen those before.” It was bringing new things to the table. It's a game, literally, a sneaker game, for sure. People really do have skills in it.

I think the good thing about shoes is that you have to wear them. Shoes have durability to them. You can wear shoes with anything. It's almost like a mode of transportation. It's not just how much money you have, it's not just how well-connected you are, it's knowing what you want, what's hot, and how to flip it.

I remember my parents told me that there would be no future in shoes. And I said, “I think there's something here.” Nike is a multi-million dollar company, so it's not small change. It's an industry. It's integrated in a culture and it's an important part of life. It is a big part of the world, without people even noticing it. ■

# The Boundless Internet

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*A Conversation with Robert Roth by Connie Leong*

**Do kids waste their time going on MySpace? Of course. But we wasted our time, in my generation, on other things. I don't think it's the worst thing in the world.**

I never had a computer in my childhood. I'm already in my fifties. When I started off being a teacher, which was 19 years ago, I didn't have a computer. I don't think I got a computer until about 10 years ago.

The Internet has changed the way we communicate because there are fewer restrictions and many more opportunities for people to communicate all around the world that just didn't exist before. The Internet provides incredible amounts of information out there that is easy to access with the ability to communicate a much broader way. The fact that you can e-mail anyone around the world is astounding. And the fact that you can look up websites from all over the world is amazing.

Even with all the positive aspects of the Internet, I believe that a bunch of the information that's on the Internet is false! The Internet opens up the users to all sorts of stuff like pornography, and all the spam that comes your way. I remember the first time I had the Internet—I must have gotten 500 ads from all the things I didn't want. With so much phony information out there, unless you're educated, you can really be misled because the information on the Internet is totally unmonitored and unregulated.

I think students should be able to conduct research through the Internet. However, I feel that students are



I think I'm addicted to e-mail, though I often feel like I'm invaded by them. When I come home, I'll have 30 to 50 e-mails waiting for me every night, from different parts of my life, and I feel like I have to respond to them.

not taught well enough how to figure out whether a site is biased or not. I also think that teachers need to monitor the ways that students grab information from the Internet and present it as their own.

Even though Internet replaces a lot of other forms of entertainment and everyone uses it in many ways, there are still some things that I enjoy doing the old-fashioned way. For example, I like to read the paper. Like, my

## The Boundless Internet *(continued)*

youngest son, he doesn't even read the paper anymore, he just uses the Internet. I grew up on newspapers, and there's something about holding and reading it that makes it special. So, I don't love to do all of my stuff on the Internet.

E-mail is a method of communicating with each other, but sometimes it replaces getting to know people.

If you just sit there and all you're doing is communicating on the Internet and you don't speak to another person, you're considered antisocial. E-mail tends to replace hand written letters and it's a problem. There's something really nice about getting a letter. E-mail also replaces the phone. It's not as personal because e-mail is a much more distant way to communicate then if you're actually hearing that other person's voice.

I think I'm addicted to e-mail, though I often feel like I'm invaded by them. When I come home, I'll have 30 to 50 e-mails waiting for me every night, from different

parts of my life, and I feel like I have to respond to them. I have to turn on that computer, even when I just want to relax! I know that sitting in that inbox are messages that people expect me to respond to. I'm in that loop where it's almost like, "You have to communicate." I realize it, and I'm trying to do something about it, but it takes a lot of willpower . . . it's too much to take.

I'll give you an example: this former student of mine e-mailed me in January. I read it quickly and moved on and forgot to answer it. I saw it again two days ago, and realized that it was a personal e-mail. Her mother had died, and I felt terrible, so I responded yesterday.

On the one hand, it opens a lot of communication but it's also so quick, that it's easy to screw up. ■

# Working For the Future of My Son

A Conversation with Li \_\_\_\_\_ by Si Cheng Zhou

**I like to be with the students, and this is why I chose to be a teacher. It is also part of the reason that I would like to stay here.**

I teach Chinese in a private local school, and I have over 30 years experience on teaching students. At first I was just looking for a job to earn some money and spend time, but now, I like this job more. I feel like I'm more blending into the American society because of what I do here.

I was born in Guangzhou [the capital of Guangdong Province in Southern China.] Most of my friends and relatives are in Guangzhou. I'm not very adapted when I came here. As the day goes, I have more friends here; I feel better now. It took me one year and a half, to two years, to adapt.

I live with my son. My husband is working in Guangzhou. My husband loves America very much, but he's getting old and can't find a good job without knowing English. So, he's staying in China. My son didn't like here, especially the first year he came. He left his friends and his hometown then came here, and it's very hard for him to adapt. Even me, as an adult, think this is hard. The only thing I can do is inspire him to go through this hard time.

In China, I was a music teacher in a high school. Before I came here, I've already known United States has better education than China. My family had been waiting for this opportunity to move in about 13 years, for more opportunities for our son. I emigrate here because I want my son to struggle for himself.



I'm lucky that my relatives and friends helped me a lot, though, I've met many obstacles . . . If you ask me what's my opinion of America, I would say the children are too spoiled.

Because of the overpopulation in China, the jobs seemed to become scarce in recent years, and the wages are getting lower and lower. Even a university-graduated student might hold a job that pays less than \$200 U.S. a month. America is a stable place that provides plenty opportunities to my son.

With this hope, we took on the plane three years ago and landed in the City of San Francisco.

I think I'm very lucky: many friends help me here. If you ask me a troublesome problem, then I'll tell you that the housing is my problem. Yeah, especially in SF, everything

## Working for the Future of My Son *(continued)*

is expensive, even house renting. I think I need to wait for my son to buy me one.

I'm lucky that my relatives and friends helped me a lot, though, I've met many obstacles. San Francisco is a place with many Asians and has good weather and environment. I think this is the reason my family chose to live in San Francisco. Because of its such a good city, the increase of immigrants has caused the increase of house price. Honestly, I can't afford to buy one, and I'm sure I won't ever be affordable to buy one. Even the renting is too high, so high that my part-time teaching job wage can't cover it, and I think this is the thing I don't like here.

But at least, unlike the others, I don't need to worry about earning money. My husband works in China; he provides enough money for the school fee and living expenses. A few years ago, I compromised our responsibilities with my husband; I'll take care of our child and he'll take care about the money. I don't feel any pressures now; I'm adapting to the American community very well, and people here are so nice. As I know more and more friends, getting touch with more and more people, I no longer have the lonely feeling I had before.

If you ask me what's my opinion of America, I would say the children are too spoiled. American education style is very different to Chinese style. Some children are not respecting other people at all. I had a hard time to deal with the kids in the school in the very first few months. I would like the children to be more polite and follow the rules. Although it has not become a problem to me to teach the kids so far, but I still not so agree with the way American education is. I would combine my style with American style and shows the society my opinion.

I really want my son to have a stable place to develop. This is the thing keeps me struggling: for the future of my son. ■