

a quarterly newsletter for I2I

inSIGHT



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Upcoming publication/deadline dates

Deadline for March 1 issue is *February 15*

Deadline for June 1 issue is *May 15*

Deadline for September 1 issue is *August 15*

Deadline for December 1 issue is *November 15*

Co-presenting at Reeling Film Festival a Win-Win

By Dwight Okita

It was great for i2i to partner with The Reeling Film Fest last November. We co-presented *Spider Lillies* (about 80 attendees) and *No Regret* (about 150 attendees).

We also got to debut our new i2i biz cards and do some networking. Both films dealt with stormy and quirky romantic relationships between same sex couples living in Asia. They both featured photogenic men and women portraying gay and lesbian Asians.

SPIDER LILLIES explored tattoo parlor culture, as well as the dicey online world where young girls offer themselves up to those with cash. I liked the tentative yearning between the

cyber girl and the somewhat older woman tattoo artist. Was cyber girl looking for a mother figure in her, or a lover who would be her equal? What did the tattooer see in her young tattoo-seeker?

NO REGRET dealt with the shifting relationship between a hustler and his client. I have to admit the actor portraying the hustler character was charming. When the business owner/client started to fall for him -- it seemed reasonable that he ask to end their professional relationship for a more personal one. But a kidnapping occurs later that seems to come out of nowhere. For me, *No Regret* had a few too many twists; I couldn't tell if the movie wanted to be a



Maggie, Karl, Kevin, Coman, Liz and Marie at Reeling.

gay romance, a psycho thriller, or a perverse exploration of how sex supposedly conquers all problems. Still, the movie gets points for telling a queer Asian story that is far from traditional or predictable.

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First LGBT API Open Mic Night

On Sunday, November 11, at Rogers Park Pressure Café & Billiards, i2i sponsored our first LGBT API open mic where our members performed original pieces of their work. The themes of the pieces ranged from love to humorous moments to memories of high school. The one commonality was the braveness each performer exhibited as he or she stepped up to the microphone. Other i2i members and friends/family attended and clapped furiously. See page two for I Li's full piece. *Pictured here to the right is Sokham and the audience.*



No Pressure at Pressure Café & Billiards for Open Mic

GENDER BENDING

By I Li

I got involved with The Radical Faeries in fall of 1996. For the first time in my life, I realized that what we wear could be dictated by society. Our society assign gender to clothing, men are suppose to wear suits and women are suppose to wear dresses. But, there are many unisex clothes like t-shirts and jeans.

There is power in gender bending. One can be a fabulous diva without the constrains of gender based clothing dictated by society. I believe that everyone has a feminine and masculine side. It's powerful to join the forces of both sides.

Often, men think men in dresses are in drag. Are they? Drag is defined as transvestite attire, or dressing up as the opposite sex. We are told how different sexes should dress. Society define gender for

clothing, it's sad if we are limited by that definition.

I believe it's hard for Asians to come out to their parents, it's even harder to come out as a gender bender. By being gay, Chinese and a faerie, I'm a triple minority. I was upset when my mom called me Mr. Confused, but I realized it's hard for her to get use to the idea that her son is queer and is comfortable doing gender bending. I also had to come out to some of my gay friends, and to explain to them that gender bending is part of my politic. A part of my divaness and definitely a mind game for many people.

By doing gender bending, I have great respect for transgendered people. I'm misunderstood by some as a transsexual when I wear a dress in public. But, I have no interest to change my gender or sexual organ. Also, by putting on a dress doesn't mean that I'm submissive. The



categories of top and bottom is too limiting. I believe it's unfortunate that gay men are constrained by that notion.

The bottom line is that you've got to have courage and willingness to understand and embrace the philosophy of gender bending. Beauty is not only on the outside but most importantly inside. Embrace your divaness!

Stuffed Mushrooms From Alana

- 1 lb. white mushrooms
- 2 stalks of green onions, chopped into small pieces
- ¼ bunch Chinese parsley (aka coriander or cilantro), chopped coarsely
- 3 large cloves of garlic, minced
- 1-2 t. soy sauce
- salt, pepper, and olive oil

Wash the mushrooms and then slice off the very bottom part of each mushroom's stem. Then separate the stems from the mushroom caps (you have to kind of pull and pick them out). Set the mushroom caps to one side -- you'll stuff them with their own stems later. Finely chop the mushroom stems and heat a small pan with 2 T of olive oil. Add the minced garlic, soy sauce, and chopped mushroom stems to it. Stir. Then turn the heat to medium and add the green onions and parsley. Add salt and pepper to taste, and then remove the pan from the heat.



Representation at Annual Chicago Dyke March

In 2005, Liz Thomson, Lola Lai Jong, and Jin first represented I2I at the annual Chicago Dyke March. However, this year, they wanted to really show their colors on Saturday, June 23, 2007.

"The first time we marched, we passed out fortune cookies with the group's contact information," retells Liz, "But this year, we wanted to be more visible." What could be more visible than a homemade banner? What started off as an

old, white bed sheet, quickly became a work of art and love.



Alana and Lani march with up Ashland Avenue.

The banner was a collaborative effort with setting up shop at Lola's house and new member Alana donating paints and brushes. It took about four hours to create the

banner (after we had chatted and eaten!). She then finished it up by sewing around the edges.

On Saturday, June 23, we met at Trumbull Elementary School for the March. While waiting, they met two great API women, Marie and Maggie, who joined in. We also passed out rainbow leis to other LBT API women. Over 100 people participated and picnicked. We ended the day by eating sushi together at Tokyo Marina. Look for video on YouTube.com under "Chicago Dyke March."



First Movie Night: Films, Food, & Friends

After many talks about a movie night, Kevin took great initiative and hosted it at his condo on Friday, June 22.

The original idea came from conversations among members about how they had actually been *in* a film. We discovered we had great talent amongst us. Then, we broadened movie night to

also show movies we had made via YouTube.com. We had 18 people attend and Asian Human Services provided the food.

The highlight of the night was watching "Strawberry Fields" (1997) with an appearance by our very own Lola!

We look forward to doing this again next June!



The audience watches the movies with popcorn.

Youth, Arts and Community Development field report



Coman pictured here with all smiles after the Gender Cabaret.

An excerpt by Coman Poon; to read the complete piece, please visit the Chicago i2i web site.

Gender identity is an act of engagement, a conscious performance. As a trans-positive queer Asian male, I have discovered that the definition of 'transgender' seems to change depending on who you speak to. Some refer to transgender persons as those whose *gender identity* (self-identification as female, male, both or neither) do not mesh with their gender assigned at birth. Others take it to a political dimension, using the term to refer to anyone who does not conform to normative (female and male) gender

binaries and to fight for equal rights and anti-discrimination legislation.

This past summer, in an effort to educate myself about trans issues, I attended a Trans Town Hall. As part of its ongoing commitment to dialoguing with its various constituencies, the Center brought in transmen, transsexuals, advocates and allies to bring a diversity of regional, racial, activist and vocational perspectives to the community dialogue. The timing for me couldn't be more perfect. One comment from a male to female (M2F/MtF) trans panelist that upturned my perspective talked about how in the eyes of non-transgender people, a trans individual's '*presentability*' (outward gender expression) is often collapsed and/or conflated with '*passibility*' (acceptability by others of one's chosen or lived gender). She pointedly reminded the audience that many transsexual adults feel awkward in their bodies and value the opportunity to learn the basics of

(their chosen) gender expression before all else, something not everyone had the privilege of being socialized with.

The information gathered from a Trans Youth Focus Group I co-facilitated with the Center's Youth Clinician echoed this sentiment. When asked what the term means, the Trans Youth Focus Group participants established that the term 'trans youth' comprises of three predominant sub-groups: transsexual youth, gender/queer youth and questioning youth.

They talked about the specific needs of each sub-group in general and imagined the Center as a place where a vibrant and integrated community of trans (including pre and post-op transsexual, gender/queer, cross-dressing, questioning) youth and young adults can have an opportunity to connect and support with each other, access a wide range of services including mental and physical health counseling services, legal guidance and advocacy as well as vocational assistance.

Lau LGBT and Aging Article published

I2I is pleased to announce that member Denys Lau has been published in *OutWord*, the online newsletter of the American Society on Aging's Lesbian and Gay Aging Issues Network (LGAIN). Lau explains, "The low visibility of Asian and Pacific Islander LGBT elders makes identifying their needs a challenge, yet service providers need to know that they face distinct concerns. This article provides a short overview of the issues facing LGBT API older adults." While we can't publish the article here due to copyright, we encourage people to visit www.asaging.org.

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I2I is a community group for Asian Pacific Islanders who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning. Started in 2004, the group has grown from four to 70 in only three years. This shows there is definitely a need for an inclusive gender, GLBTQQ API organization in Chicago. We are always looking for new and fun things to do. We welcome your comments/suggestions. Please e-mail us at chicagoi2i@yahoo.com

