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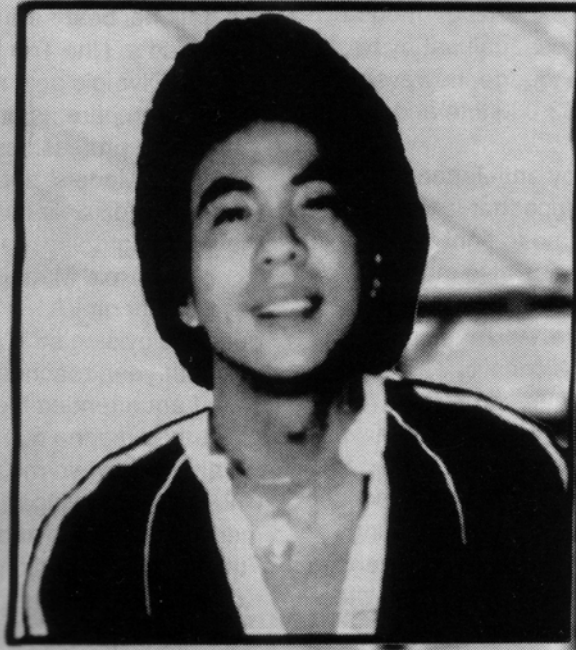
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## Vincent Chin?

By Lauren Yokomizo

**What would it take** to inspire the world to move toward justice especially within their own culture? For Tony Lam, a Chinese American independent filmmaker, freelance producer and screenwriter it's all been "a labor of love." In June 2007, Lam began his latest film, "Vincent Who?" a documentary exploring the story and legacy of Vincent Chin, whose hate crime murder gave rise to a pan-Asian civil rights movement.

In June 1982, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man, was beaten to death with a baseball bat by two white auto workers in Detroit. The judge, however, let off Chin's murderers with only a \$3,000 fine and three years probation.

The hate crime, motivated by anti-Japanese sentiments, and the miscarriage of justice that followed, united Asian Americans for the first time to fight together for racial justice. The Vincent Chin case also marked the historic expansion of the definition of civil rights protection in America to include people of Asian ancestry and Asian immigrants. Thus, the case constitutes a defining moment for civil rights in all American history.

Upon the 25th anniversary of the case, Lam was inspired to retell the Vincent Chin story and moved forward with a budget that has come from his own pocket. It all began when Lam attended a town hall meeting commemorating Chin's death and encountered people in the Asian American community who were motivated toward activism by Chin's story.

Given the major impact of the Vincent Chin case in making progress for Asian Americans, Lam was surprised to find that so few had still not heard the name Vincent Chin. "When I think about civil rights heroes I thought to myself, the black community has Rosa Parks, the Hispanic community has Caesar Chavez, but who do we have in our community?" he says.

Part of the reason why Lam feels this oppression has occurred is because our communities don't tell these stories. "In addition," he says, "Asian American history is largely neglected in K-12, high school, and even college curriculums. We must tell these stories, or else someone else will tell them for us and it might not be to our benefit."

The main objective is not to reopen the case but to do a broad overview and introduce Vincent Chin to a younger generation and rekindle his memory for older generations who have since forgotten him.

When Lam completes the film sometime this spring, he will enter his documentary into the film festival circuit and possibly air it on television stations like PBS. "Vincent Who?" is probably the film I'm most proud of because it deals with something I believe every Asian American should know," he said.

The Vincent Chin story, however, is not Lam's first attempt at profiling key figures in the Asian American community. Lam produces "Our Role Models," a monthly broadcast program portraying some of the Asian American community's most influential figures

like national best-selling author Helie Lee, Superior Court Judge Nho Trong Nguyen, and first Asian American US Olympic gold medalist Sammy Lee. Many traditional Asian parents push for their children to pursue the "honorable professions" in medicine, business or law, but "Our Role Models" showcases hundreds of individuals in an array of disciplines who have become successful in their own right.

"Our Role Models," sponsored by McDonalds and Toyota, airs on LA18 KSCI-TV, the largest Asian language television station in Southern California and now, in its 8th year, reaches over 6 million households.

Lam attended Georgetown University, where he graduated magna cum laude in literature and history. He also holds two master's degrees from Yale and the University of Michigan. He has received over a dozen merit scholarships and awards, including the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship which took him overseas to Hong Kong.

Lam began his professional career serving as Systems Administrator at Deloitte & Touche, Manager of the Multimedia Technology Lab at the University of Michigan and an entrepreneurial founder of his own business. Through a series of serendipitous events, Lam wound up in Los Angeles, and in 2004, decided to leave the tech field and pursue a full-time career in media and film.

Lam said that his inspiration toward a new life path came after reading words from Hollywood film editor Walter Murch, which said, a person's chances for happiness are increased if they do something that reflects what they most loved when they were somewhere between the ages of 9 and 11. After doing some soul-searching, Lam recalls that between those years he was immersed in a world of storytelling.

"Ever since I was a child, I've always had a very active imagination. As an adult, however, you're expected to think and act like a serious adult. Edward Bulwer Lytton famously said, 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' I believe that in the 21st century, the camera is mightier than the gun."

And so the story continues as Lam breaks ground in this medium.

"Hopefully, during the course of my career, I will not only have the chance to exercise my creativity and imagination through the visual medium of film, but also to bring about some measure of positive social and community change through all this."



Tony Lam in production (above); Tony in New York

