

ELEMENTS

MAGAZINE

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Editor's Note

We're beginning 2017 like a 2016 hangover, wanting to move on from what people call a bad year, with deaths of pop culture icons, nationalist rhetoric that shifts away from the "inclusive, global" ideal and perceived injustices in local politics. These are times when the easy answer is to be self-centered when facing issues beyond our control. We feel more comfortable by focusing on ourselves, by keeping ourselves in our own bubble, our own echo chamber.

Nevertheless, our bubbles are not the answer. Imagine a society that functions with one-dimensional opinions, or with people thinking only of themselves. It doesn't work that way. We rob ourselves of a better society if we close ourselves off to other ways of seeing things beyond ourselves. It doesn't have to be that way.

In *Elements*, we believe in creating healthy discussions that give perspective. We bring to you the lens of Chinese-Filipino values and viewpoints in a world where this identity is distinct, substantial and open. We offer sides of the story in our perspective, in ways that aren't cliché, about every other story that matters to make our Philippine society inclusive.

Our staffers' perspectives range from pop culture to social issues: Two interviews of people in the start-up scene. A young woman's take on the Martial Law period from her conversations with her parents. A synthesis of the TV show "Fresh Off the Boat" using a multicultural lens. A practical use for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. And a provincial Chinoy's reflections on the love of her grandmother.

Besides feature articles and essays, we also highlight the craft of the photo-essay, fiction and illustration: A Filipino's judgment towards mainland Chinese. A third generation Chinese's reflections from visiting her ancestral land. A writer's take on the Great Wall through a series of fictional letters. And comics and illustrations for one's entertainment and viewing pleasure.

Last but not the least, we have a brief breakdown of the events of our organization, *Ateneo Celadon*, this A.Y. 2016-2017.

We hope you'll find a fresh perspective in our works, that you'll enjoy our issue as much as we had making it.



Joshua Cheng
VP for Documentations & Publications
Ateneo Celadon





Editor-in-Chief: Joshua Cheng
Associate Editor: Robert Cuartero
Managing Editor: Mark Yu
Art Director: Joshua Cheng

Copy-Editors: Alyssa Yu, Dann Dy, Ervin Llobrera, Marella Lozada, Tiffannie Litam
Photo Editors: Adrianne Xu, Justin Ang

Writers: Andrea Chan, Arwin Lao, Janelle Chan, Jodie Tanco, Katreena Chang, Leanne Lacaden, Patricia Jose
Photographers: Brittney Ong, Chenelle Co, Harvey Li, Janelle Ormoc, Joshua Cheng, Justin Ang, Mark Yu, Miguel Aguirre, Moira So, Tiffannie Litam, Timothy Tia
Illustrators: Matt Yu, Shanelle Lao
Layout Artists: Alexandra Purino, Angela Barranda, Arwin Lao, Cwenne Chua, Joshua Cheng, Justine Tan, Kelsey Lim, Mark Yu, Moira So, Robert Cuartero

Special Thanks to:

Front Cover: Anna Lim, Coleen Young, Justin Ang, Mark Yu
Perspective (Behind the Front Cover): Jonabelle Chua, Miguel Aguirre
Proofreading: Aldwyn Tan, Benedict Tiu, Katreena Chang, Patricia Jose, Quimbe Dy
Sponsors: Alexander España, Clarissa Chua, Selena So

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Trunkline: (+632) 426-6001 loc. 5409.

For questions, comments, clarifications and suggestions, message info@ateneo-celadon.org.

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In Case You Missed It: Highlights of A.Y. 2016-2017

Words @JanelleChan, @PatriciaJose, @AlyssaYu

Photos @JoshuaCheng, @TimothyTia, @JustinAng, @JanelleOrmoc, @HarveyLi
@MarkYu, @ChenelleCo, @Brittney Ong, @RobertCuartero, @MiguelAguirre

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MEMBERS

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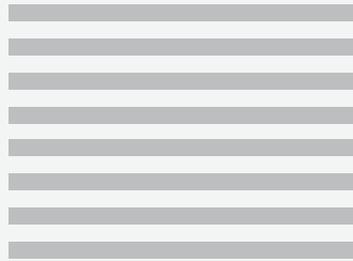
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PROJECTS



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A lot has definitely happened over the course of the school year. All these events have been centered in Ateneo Celadon's goal of promoting the understanding of the Chinese-Filipino culture inside and outside of the Chinese-Filipino community. Here's a recap of what Celadon's been up to.



RETWEETED ON SEPT 9
First General Assembly

Celadoneans kickstarted their Celadon journeys at the org's Pixar-themed First General Assembly, held last September 7 and 9, 2016 at Leong Hall. The event highlighted the various projects from the different departments via their own booth activities.



RETWEETED ON JAN 17

Dreagle's Cup

The Dreagle rekindles the spark in Celadon's managers as they get ready for the coming semester. Held at BEL205 and at various parts of campus last January 17, the managers were left with a colorful reminder that they were all part of one family.

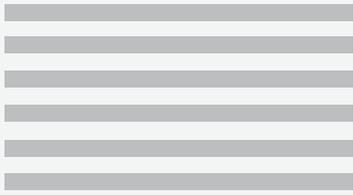


RETWEETED ON NOV 11

Tambay Week

Aiming to foster bonds of friendship or simply relax, last November 7-11, 2016, Celadoneans chilled and rewinded at the org's first ever Tambay Week of the school year. Following a time travel theme, the event concentrated on throwbacks to the past.





**RETWEETED ON SEPT 23
Marketing Workshop Series**

Corporate Relations had a bit of everything for everyone! Marketing Seminar gave participants a glimpse into marketing. Marketing Workshop dug a little deeper into department protocols. Lastly, the Marketing Executives Program took participants beyond the basics. #MarCOURTing101 #CelaNation

**RETWEETED ON FEB 2
Chinese New Year**

Celadon's Chinese New Year celebration last February 1 to 2 was a two-day food festival where noodles, dumplings, tikoy, radish cake, jellyfish, and century egg were served to the Ateneo community for free.



**RETWEETED ON JAN 25
Spring Film Festival**

Celadoneans and guests welcomed spring as the Gala Night of the Spring Film Festival took place last January 25 at the Shangri-La Plaza Atrium. The amazing line up for the festival included films such as *Everybody's Fine*, *Horseplay*, and *Wolf Totem*. #11thSFF



**RETWEETED ON NOV 5
Junior Manager Program (JuMP)**

Thirty-three Celadoneans emerged victorious last November 5! After going through tough challenges during various sessions since October 7, participants of the Junior Manager Program were trained to know what it takes to become a manager for Celadon.



**RETWEETED ON SEPT 16
Mid-Autumn Festival**

This year's Mid-Autumn Festival was held at the Zen Garden, last September 14-16, 2016, open to all Ateneans. The remake of this traditional festival had its participants go through booths that explain its history and significance in Chinese culture. #MAFisFAM



**RETWEETED ON OCT 29
Celadon R.E.A.C.H.**

Celadon gives back to the community with its annual outreach program R.E.A.C.H.! Volunteers developed a culture of sharing with the children of Pinag-Isang Palad (PIP) Community through a series of games, stories, crafts, and other activities. #outREACH



**RETWEETED ON NOV 19
Celadon Night Live**

Celadoneans gathered at Jess & Pat's last November 19 for a night of friendship and music. The first ever Celadon Night Live featured performances by some of our very own members as new friendships were formed and old bonds were strengthened.





RETWEETED ON SEPT 30
Teacher's Appreciation Week

Teacher's Appreciation Week 2016 took us to the Olympics last September 26-30. Ateneans nominated and voted for their profs at the Doghouse and Rizal Library, and the awards were given out during a culminating activity at Leong Hall Roofdeck. #TAWlympics



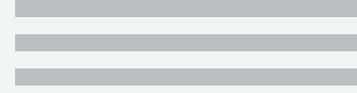
RETWEETED ON DEC 14
Leadership Development Program

This year's Leadership Development Program was held in Camp Benjamin, Cavite last December 12 to 14. Forty-eight Celadoneans discovered what it means to be unbound as they faced challenges that tapped their potential and pushed them to their limits. #BreakBoundaries #LDPUnbound



RETWEETED ON FEB 6
Binondo Amazing Race

Ateneans spent their President's Day holiday in Binondo! As they embarked on their journey to the finish line at YMCA, the participants had to go through 8 different stations that really put their speed, teamwork and determination to the test.



RETWEETED ON FEB 18
Ateneo Celadon Cultural Experience

Chinese schools from across the metro came to campus to attend this two-in-one event held at BEL208 last February 18. Formerly known as Strokes and Strikethrough, the event comprised of competitions and workshops on journalism and Chinese arts.

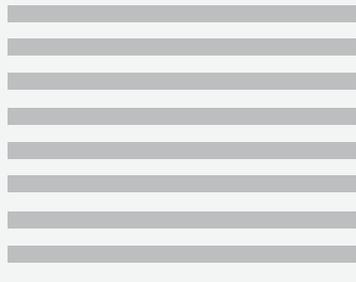
RETWEETED ON FEB 14
Rose Sale

Ateneans were reminded of the joy in the little things last February 9-10 and 13-14, as the organization launched one of its flagship events, Rose Sale. Aside from roses, daisies, and bouquets, stuffed toys were products also made available this year. #ItsTheLittleThings



RETWEETED ON DEC 18
Santa's Attic: Christmas Bazaar

Santa's elves were hard at work to put together this festive bazaar! With a variety of concessionaires and performers to entertain the Glorietta 5 crowd last December 17 to 18, it's no surprise there were jolly smiles all around from start to finish. #CelaChristmas #WhereIsSanta



RETWEETED ON MAR 20
Ayi Celadon

Still not satisfied? Fear not! Read up on them on the Elements website! You can also search for the official hashtags that we've included along with our year-long org hashtag #我愛Celadon on Twitter and Facebook. Also follow @AyiCeladon on Twitter to keep you posted.

ANDREW CUA

Man on a Mission

Words Arwin Lao



Andrew Cua, a Management Engineering graduate of Ateneo de Manila University, is the founder of Tralulu Philippines: the very first startup company that provides a digital marketplace for tourists and local guides, aiming to provide tourism experience in the most authentic way possible.

Since it first began in May 2016, Tralulu has continued to branch out to seven Southeast Asian countries. They have had over 500 bookings helping more than 300 local guides. Andrew shares the story of his journey in becoming an advocate of change and a believer of the power of youth today.

Trails of Discovery

Much of Andrew's inspirations come from his first-hand experiences with the locals in different countries. Back when Andrew was still a college student, he took up cultural classes that inspired him to see the plights and struggles of local guides by spending most of his free time travelling across different places all over the world like Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia. For him, there is nothing more exciting than to experience the world with his own eyes. His journey might have been for his personal luxury, but little did he know that these experiences would be able to make a difference in the lives of many.

He recounted three significant trips he took when the locals risked their lives to save the tourists. His first experience happened during his first hiking trip in Antipolo. While he was reaching the summit, he suddenly wasn't able to move anymore primarily because his feet were swollen and because he also has a phobia of heights. Not knowing what to do, he was surprised when six local guides who were in their sixties went up the mountain just to have a rescue operation for him. When he was already safe, he began asking how he could repay their kindness, but the local guides insisted that they not take any form of compensation. They even gave him free lunch and called in an ambulance to bring him to a place where he could go back home safely.

His second experience happened in Vietnam while he went through a hiking program called Fancy Van. Upon reaching the peak of the mountain, he was struck by hypothermia. When his local guide saw him, the guide immediately took his clothes off and used it to keep Andrew warm throughout the night. His body temperature went back to normal while the local guide had to bear wearing just his underwear throughout the night. Again, Andrew offered compensation but the locals kindly refused to accept it.

Finally, he went spelunking in a cave in Sagada which lasted for eight hours. When Andrew and his tourmates were on their seventh hour of spelunking, they encountered another set of travellers who were just at the start of their activity. Their local guide saw that the kerosene lamp of the other group was faulty. Out of his concern for the travellers, he voluntarily swapped the lamp with the other group to prevent any accidents from happening to the other group. In less than a minute, the lamp suddenly exploded at the top of his head and sprung up to the top of the cave. It damaged a part of his hair as the fire from the lamp passed through his head.

He risked himself just to save these travellers who he did not personally know. For him, the most important thing was that everyone was completely safe from harm.

From these events he personally experienced, Andrew was able to witness just how undervalued these local guides are. Not only that, these local guides sometimes don't even have any bookings at all. Ever since then, he has been thinking of ways to be able to uplift their livelihoods and repay their kindness for the travellers.

Beginning the Hike

During Andrew's senior year in 2015, he joined a startup competition in Malaysia called Global Startup, a global business competition where young startup entrepreneurs from all over the world would gather and meet. They would be grouped together to think of a startup idea that can solve a current social issue, and the winners will be able to get their

first funding to start building the startup. He was able to pitch his idea of making a digital platform to link travellers and local guides.

They focused on having an inclusive tourism so that the tourists can travel like locals—with the locals. Because the judges were impressed with their idea, Andrew's group won the competition and was able to get their first funding to begin building their startup. However, it wasn't sufficient enough to sustain their business, so they joined and won another business competition in 2016, pitching the same idea. From these two competitions, the group was able to generate enough funds for the startup to be sustainable. This is how Andrew built Tralulu. Their advocacy was to have

inclusive tourism where locals would not be forgotten in the midst of the development.

Mountains and Hills

Even if Andrew was successful in creating a startup, it was not easy to transition from being a college student to a full-time startup entrepreneur because he came from a Chinese family. Andrew didn't receive much support from his parents in the beginning. Traditional Chinese parents, like Andrew's, would encourage their children to build small-medium sized enterprises because the money generated from it is tangible, whether it's a store in Divisoria or a restaurant in Binondo, it is easy to gain monetary support from it as compared to building a startup wherein money making is not visible. Sometimes, his parents would also tell him to go corporate because it's more stable than building a startup to fulfill a vision. His parents didn't comprehend the process of run-





ning a start-up and are often paranoid regarding where their money would go when running a business in a technological platform.

Another struggle came from the nature of his college degree. After graduating in Management Engineering from Ateneo, most of his colleagues went for a corporate career. He was also offered jobs that can make a good income. During those times, he would usually contemplate and reflect in order to know what his next move should be. In the end, he chose this path to pursue his vision in spite of the many struggles and challenges he faced. Even during reunions, he was often asked about what job he has and the salary he makes. It was difficult during the first few months of operation when the business was only at the starting process because they had to cash out money to build the websites. There are even some months where they didn't have revenue, but that didn't make Andrew give up the startup industry.

Andrew said that the most difficult part in running the startup was actually choosing his business partners. The group he had during the Global Startup competition did not consist of the same people he has in his company today. Many of them have left and have chosen another path, since they believe that pursuing the startup further is a waste of time and effort. Fortunately, after a year of turnovers, Andrew is now confident with the people he is working with and believes that his group is really fueled in making their vision a reality. There are even days that the group would work all night to finish the tasks and meet the deadlines.

Summit of Change

The most important lesson Andrew learned was that resilience and grit were the most valuable attributes in running a startup. In times of struggle, one had to anchor on the vision in order to continue. Andrew and his group knew how much impact this venture would make and they would not stop until they see their vision come true. Even if they have impacted 300 local guides already, the team wouldn't stop from there. If by chance he was asked where he sees Tralulu in the next five years from now, he will say that the team's goal is to expand all over the world in order to change the tourism industry. He welcomes competitors because their ultimate purpose is to serve the local guides and to advocate inclusive tourism.

As for Andrew himself, he plans to pursue his master's degree when Tralulu can run on its own two legs. It is refreshing to see how much drive Andrew has in making his dreams come true. As he says, "If we can make the world a better place, the best way is to start now." And what a start he has made.

Photos taken from Andrew Cua and the Tralulu website



David Ongchoco

Visionary

Words *Katreana Chang*

A lot can be said about the youth today, but one thing's for sure: they're visionaries, and when they dream, they dream big.

David Ongchoco is the founder and CEO of YouthHack International, an organization that aims to empower high school and college students in their quest to unpack their education, to learn new skills, to create physical products, and to add value to the world. Credited for bringing the startup culture to the Philippines, his journey in doing so is quite the story.

In an article in Forbes, a startup is defined as “a company working to solve a problem where the solution is not obvious and success is not guaranteed.” In other words, it focuses on a problem faced by society and finds an unconventional way to solve it. It doesn't follow the status quo and the standards that society have set as the norm. In fact, crazy new ideas are welcome; and moreso, they are encouraged. After all, ambitious ideas are the lifeblood of startups.

Success should not be expected but is nonetheless much welcome, and valuable experience is always gained through startups. For David, “startups are an avenue for people to solve problems at scale using technology and entrepreneurship. In a lot of ways, startups are also an outlet for people to pursue their ideas and to turn [them] into sustainable and scalable businesses.” Compared to corporations, which are more established, stable, and have access to a lot of resources, startups are built on “being very scrappy” and “having the ability to try new things at a much faster speed,” allowing them to discover new solutions that corporations wouldn't even think about.

“Startups are an avenue for people to solve problems at scale using technology and entrepreneurship. In a lot of ways, startups are also an outlet for people to pursue their ideas and turn their ideas into sustainable and scalable businesses.”

- David Ongchoco

Rising Generation

In 2014, David, then a graduating student of Xavier School, was applying for colleges in the United States when he came across business plan competitions, hackathons, and startup weekends. He was exposed to brilliant and inspiring individuals and to entrepreneurs in meetups and conferences in Silicon Valley, the birthplace and nest of all things startup and technopreneurship.

He told himself, “Why not bring this same culture of startups, collaboration and innovation to the Philippines?” He got an idea that he wanted to pursue and he was determined to see it through. The Philippine startup scene itself was just in its beginning stages, and almost no one had even heard of the term “startup”. The companies in the startup ecosystem still kept mostly to themselves then—they hardly knew anyone and hardly anyone knew them. However, this was not to deter David.

Under the YouthHack banner, David then envisioned his first event to be an ideathon where high school students would come in with their ideas, create prototypes, and pitch it to a panel of judges to get a chance to develop their idea further and to turn it into a working, fully-functional business. “When we were starting out, nobody really knew about YouthHack and a lot of high school students didn't know what exactly the words ‘startups’ and ‘technopreneurship’ were. So after the first two weeks of registration, there were only three teams that registered and all three of them were composed of people I knew already.”

David gritted it out and brought out the resilience, enthusiasm, and gutsiness that the youth of today are known for. “With three weeks left before the event, I didn't know what to do to get more people to come. However, I came across one of my friend's Facebook photos during a summer camp she attended with all the top high school students. I immediately jumped on this opportunity and started randomly messaging every single one of them, asking them not only to register, but to also share the event in their respective school groups. With a lot of hustling and random messaging, we were able to get a total of twenty-three teams—nineteen of [which] showed up to the two-day event—to actually register for our first ever event.”

Challenges are unavoidable and inevitable when trying out new ideas. In the world of startups, challenges are the norm. Even when you've gotten off to a good start, challenges just keep coming your way and you have no choice but to face them head on in order to keep up with the fast pace of the industry. As David puts it, “I guess the beauty in these challenges is that albeit being super stressful in the moment, I come out of each challenge having learned something new.”

Planting Roots, Spreading Wings

While the image of success in business is traditionally asso-

ciated with old people in suits, it cannot be denied that the youth have a lot of potential for success too. They have access to resources that older capitalists don't have—time and the invigorating passion to pursue all things new. They aren't afraid to and can afford to tinker, to test, and to fail, and they gain valuable lessons and experience in the process. “[The] media has labelled [them] as the ‘millennial’ generation, often times [with a sense of entitlement attached]. However, at the same time, because [these millennials are those who] grew up with technology, [they are the ones who] have the opportunity to use this [very] technology to really solve problems at scale,” said David.

Even when YouthHack hadn't fully taken off just yet, David said he wouldn't have wasted any time in jumping right into another of the many ventures he was working on the summer before he went to college. He didn't believe in failure, but in trying again and again to bring a change in society. Little did he know just how widely the organization would spread its wings. Now with chapters and events in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Australia, Italy, Korea, and Philadelphia, David's dream of turning YouthHack into a global community that would empower young people is slowly but surely gaining ground and establishing a technological revolution.

“I envision YouthHack becoming a go-to resource and community for students who want to learn more about startups, technology, and entrepreneurship.” Even in its beginning stages, the organization had already become a huge part of empowering the startup culture, not only for students but in the entire country as well. When YouthHack started, the Philippine startup scene was on the cusp of breaking out of its shell, and the exposure from YouthHack's events only fueled the aspirations of the youth even more. At the same time, it allowed for the propagation of the startup culture. “There's definitely a lot more people interested in the world of startups—[people who] are trying to dive into the startup scene. We're seeing a lot more dedicated startup programs, investors, venture capitalists, and government support as well.”

David sees the startup scene expanding widely, tackling problems ranging from education to real estate, and to human resources, and constantly advancing in the fields of artificial intelligence and biotechnology. “[Particularly in] the Philippines, I think we'll be seeing a lot more young founders starting their own technology startups or joining an early-stage startup, especially since that will be at a time where a lot of the students who've gone through our YouthHack programs would have graduated already.”

Grounding Passion

It's easy to get carried away with the excitement that comes with working on a startup, especially at such an exciting time as now. It's all about turning your own ideas into reality and the enjoyment and satisfaction that comes with it; and while

“I envision YouthHack becoming a go-to resource and community for students who want to learn more about startups, technology, and entrepreneurship.”
- David Ongchoco

there's much to be gained from it, it's not a glamorous job in the slightest. You'll have to hustle twice as much, to work twice as hard, and to fail twice as often. That's why it's important to know why you want to launch a startup and more importantly, that you're not just doing it because it's a cool thing now.

For David, it's okay not to know what to do. His advice to those unsure of where they want to go is to “just think about [the] issue you care about and what you want to learn about, and go from there. As long as you keep exploring, stepping out of your comfort zone and trying new things, you'll eventually find something that keeps you up at night and wakes you up in the morning.” David himself found this in YouthHack and watching the students use technology to solve social problems. “I always feel inspired by [their] excitement when it comes to our events. I love seeing students come up with different ideas and pitching it to our mentors and guest investors.”

More than just providing a platform for the youth to make something out of their ideas, David also envisions himself playing an active role in solving social problems through startups and technology, changing the world one small step at a time. Having interned at UBER over the summer, David speaks from experience as he encourages young people to try working for a startup because of the hands-on experience you gain and of the crazy learning curve. “I wouldn't worry too much [about not immediately succeeding] because there's no one right path, and all the experiences we put ourselves in helps mold us and everything always has a silver lining.” Ultimately, it's his dream for YouthHack to be a self-sustaining organization that continues to impact the youth from all over the world, and to inspire them to pursue their ideas for many years to come.

All photos provided by David Ongchoco or taken from the YouthHack Manila Facebook Page with permission.

MARTIAL LAW *Beyond the Wall*

Words Leanne Lacaden
Photos Tiffannie Litam



The year 1972 signaled the beginning of a period that would change not only the lives of Filipinos at that time, but also the course of Philippine history altogether. On September 21, former President, Ferdinand Marcos, placed the country under Martial Law. To this day, almost half a century later, the country is still divided in its stance against this pivotal period.

Statistics from the said period paint an era of growth and development, yet more recently collected data portray a time which led to crippling debt and reports of brutality. When collected fairly, numbers do not lie. Facts are irrefutable; moreover, they are objective and without bias. But perhaps what makes numbers so unrelatable and so impersonal is precisely that—their lack of a form of human compassion. Perhaps this is why people find it hard to believe numbers and to trust in them. Perhaps personal accounts will allow us to better understand what transpired in that period.

When the topic of Martial Law arises, there will always be more than one side of the story. The authenticity of each account is incontestable and absolute, which is why we need to hear out every perspective, for an experience is a manifestation of the truth for the person involved. And frankly, no amount of dissuasion or discussion can alter what a person finds to be his or her own truth.

A Progressive Perspective

“Peaceful” is the word which came up the most when I asked my dad about his experience during Martial Law. Only ten at that time, all he could remember was the unmistakable peace and quiet that was apparent throughout the streets. As a child, he was fascinated with the military trucks patrolling the streets.

“I recall waiting by the window every morning...for the military men to drive by,” he mused. Alongside this child-like wonder was a fear of the undeniably unordinary things occurring around him. “Cable TV only featured government-approved channels and broadcast stations. People were afraid to leave their houses,” he said. Though fascinated, he was also very much afraid of what was happening. He recalls that the atmosphere had this undeniable tension to it. “It felt as though war would break out at any moment.”

“My parents attempted to comfort my siblings and I by reassuring us that since [my] auntie worked for the government and was connected to all the right people, we would be safe.” To my father, that was not much of a reassurance. Since the only sources of news were controlled by the government, he was not aware of all the atrocities which transpired during that time. He could only assess the situation through the things he could see firsthand. The curfews allowed for safer and quieter streets. Little to no stories of crime were ever heard of.

“Your angkong, who was then a retailer of alcohol and

canned goods, experienced nothing but convenience with the implementation of the Martial Law.” He stated. To him and

“It felt as though war would break out at any moment.”

to any other law-abiding citizen, as far as they were aware of, Martial Law only brought with it good things. They did hear news about rallyists and protesters who were jailed during that time. “At a young age, I was aware that being jailed without the proper juridical processes was wrong,” he continued, “but the media painted those people as extremely volatile and harmful [to] the country, to the point that we were made to believe that they were nothing more than that.” These rebels were portrayed as mere, unavoidable hindrances to the peace Martial Law effectively provided. They started seeing these people not as human beings, but solely as casualties to a war against criminality.

“I realize [when I grew older] that maybe the Martial Law wasn’t all that good.” During that time, he saw nothing wrong with what happened, perhaps because he was looking at it from such a narrow perspective—one that only included his immediate environment. He realizes now that since his immediate family was never really harmed in any way, he forgot to consider the circumstances other people faced. To the other Filipinos whose loved ones were never harmed, Martial Law actually provided them safety and peace, so why wouldn’t they support it? However, what we all have to understand is, we as citizens and as people should never think that human lives exchanged for any perceived notion of safety, order, or development is an acceptable trade. Accounts of rape, torture, and murder were never confirmed and only transpired through hearsay during the time of Martial Law. This equivocal aspect of what transpired during that time is one of the reasons why my mother’s disdain towards Martial Law then was not as firm as it is now.

Resurfacing Regrets

My mother remembers constantly living with an unsettling feeling of fear and anxiety. “Nobody dared to mention or to even think about the Marcoses,” she expressed. Phone calls were direct and to the point because people were afraid of possibly saying something that would displease whatever uninvited party whom might be tuning in on their conversations. During that time, she and her family saw these instances as minute sacrifices for a life of guaranteed safety and peace.

She eventually found the stiffness of having to always be aware and careful of the things you do, the things you say, and the people you associate with fade into everyday life. No news of atrocities and cruelties ever reached her knowledge. She thought that everyone else in the country was experiencing the same reassuring peace that she was.



A tapestry hangs inside the Museo ng Bantayog at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani Foundation.

Two specific instances led my mom to be more critical of the controversial period. “On my way to my university to enroll, I was held at gunpoint for my money.” She expressed that never in her life had she felt more powerless nor more insignificant than in that specific moment. She felt as though her life and her future were in the hands of someone she did not even know. “I waited for the soldiers to come marching to my aid, but none ever came.” She reluctantly gave up the money in exchange for her life and went home visibly shaken by the experience. Days after, her mother was arrested for playing mahjong with her friends in her private home. “Your gua-ma, who was already in her late sixties at that time, was dragged to Camp Crame with her friends to hand-pluck weeds from the field within the military compound.” she shared, shaking her head in disappointment. “They were let out the morning after, but seeing my mother made to accomplish such an irrational task certainly stirred something in me—but never enough for me to speak out.”

“All around me, people my age—the youth of that time—were going up in arms to rebel against the dictatorship.” As the rallies grew larger and the protests more intense, more and more news transpired by word of mouth. Accounts of rebels being arrested, jailed and never to be heard from again deterred my mother from ever joining in. Now, she regrets having never joined any of the protests.

“I [felt] so cheated by the fact that for a long period of time, I was deprived of the truth.” She added, “I hated the fact that I was made to believe that the Martial Law was something heaven-sent when in fact, so many people were living in hell.”

Venturing Beyond the Wall

The stories of both my parents bear striking similarities. During the Martial Law, neither thought anything particularly vile was happening simply because they had no means to know otherwise. Having to look back to what they know now as a very dark time triggers a sense of inner turmoil, wherein they cannot come to terms with why they were so nonchalant with the subject of Martial Law, given that so many terrible things happened.

This might be one of the many reasons why so many Mar-

tial Law supporters find the need to nullify or to invalidate personal accounts of people who were mistreated during that time. Experiencing cognitive dissonance is actually a good thing in the sense that this disconnect only occurs when the people experiencing it feel something fundamentally wrong with their opinion in relation to new found information.

To try to resolve this unsettling discrepancy between personal opinions and what is perceived to be right and wrong, people either attempt to discredit the new information or they try to convince themselves that something as horrific as deception, rape, torture and murder are but small prices to pay for alleged national advancement. Another way people get around this form of dissonance is to avoid the source altogether by displaying apathy towards anything remotely related to the issue at hand.

“I hated the fact that I was made to believe that the Martial Law was something heaven-sent when in fact, so many people were living in hell.”

Anyone who has experienced anything similar to this, whether they be for or against Martial Law, knows that there is a part of them trying to recalibrate and adjust, that there is a part of their humanities fighting to emerge. This does not mean though, that cognitive dissonance should stop the people who experience it from ultimately coming to terms with the brutality of Martial Law. Although being deprived of the truth excused them from being apathetic then, it does not excuse them now from being aware of and trying to defend other people’s humanities.

Hearing my parents discuss their experiences during this time was very eye-opening for me. As a family, we are used to talking about political issues. Oftentimes, there is disagreement, especially between my sister and I and my parents. There seems to be a barrier between the two groups, perhaps

due to our differences in age. My sister and I were quick to dismiss any pro-Martial Law talk as being backwards and lacking the initiative to be more compassionate.

After hearing how unaware they were made to be during that time, I cannot blame them for not being entirely against Martial Law. Their explanations made me realize that the people who experienced Martial Law were conditioned to be silent, to be selfish, and to be passive by one very compelling threat: death. The death of not only themselves, but the death of the people they loved as well. This continual need to suppress any urge to fight, to speak out, crept its way into their subconscious and conditioned them to feel apathetic. And this, although unchangeable, we have to admit is not entirely their doing.

“Their explanations made me realize that the people who experienced Martial Law were conditioned to be silent, to be selfish, and to be passive by one very compelling threat: death.”

Our Nation as a Work in Progress

In the end, our experiences define how we perceive the world; nonetheless, it does not take a lot for us to understand and to empathize with other people. Moreover, it also does not take much for ignorance to shield our eyes from the truth. For us to think that something as complicated and as sensitive as the Martial Law period can be summarized by just a few people, when it was experienced by an entire country, is another form of ignorance altogether.

Each experience is as valid as the other; each opinion as valuable as the next. What we have to realize is that in the discussion of a topic as divisive as the Martial Law, it does not matter which account or side is right or wrong. What matters is that we are able to see beyond our own perspectives, beyond our own walls, because only then can we really begin an attempt on their demolition.





判断

JUDGMENT

Words and Photos **Miguel Aguirre**

The Mainland Chinese. Rude, arrogant, and ill-mannered. This was how I saw them. Sadly stereotypical. The emergence of social media posts and rants has shaped my view on them, with my own judgements already predetermined by other people's experiences. What should have been an unbiased view was unintentionally shaped by another person's bias. Trust me when I say that when I was invited by my mom to visit Shanghai, I wasn't looking forward to the trip.

It was dawn as the plane reached Pudong International Airport. Bathed in the rays of the afternoon sun, I must admit that Shanghai had a great first impression. The view from up high was a sight to behold. As I disembarked, the surroundings did not disappoint either. As the bus from the plane shuttled me to the terminal, uniform silhouettes of trees were constant company. However what surprised me the most was how clean it was. From the air to the infrastructure, I was pleasantly surprised.

From the airport, it was around a 30-minute drive to our home. In the car, I was expecting a plethora of rude drivers and constant honking. While the driving style was certainly more aggressive than safe, it was interesting to see how disciplined majority of the drivers were. So far, whatever predetermined notion I had of "China" was quickly being debunked. I had yet to experience all the negative posts I had seen about how "Mainland Chinese" were. However, I was still skeptical. I was adamant that I would definitely experience what apparently so many others have experienced.

When one visits another country, they are usually tourists. While there is no real problem in this, tourists usually don't get to fully experience the place that you are in. To be able to fully appreciate a certain culture, they must act, live, and be a local. Thankfully, I was able to do all these things, thanks to people I met. I was taught the best way to get to certain places, shown "real fake" products, and where to get the best food. Food especially was a big deal amongst my so called "tour guides". It was like I was in on a local "secret". I was able to try a Xiao Long Bao recipe that has apparently been passed on thousands of generations. Yet again, the stereotype so many people have claimed to have experienced was non-existent.



Sun sets on Pudong International Airport.



Shanghai Disneyland was the biggest surprise of them all. Online, there have been countless rants on how unsatisfied they were with their experience. Anecdotes of locals allowing their children to defecate anywhere and not lining up are consistent frustrations. However, my experience was nothing like that. Whether it was because I visited on a weekday or I was just lucky, I'm not entirely sure, but my Shanghai Disneyland experience was honestly one of the best I've ever had. The staff, as well as the people in line, were accommodating. No one was unnecessarily loud and majority of the people were well mannered. One moment I vividly remember was when I dropped my hat on a ride, and a local had picked it up and waited for me by the exit. It was at that moment that I felt guilty about all my presumptions.

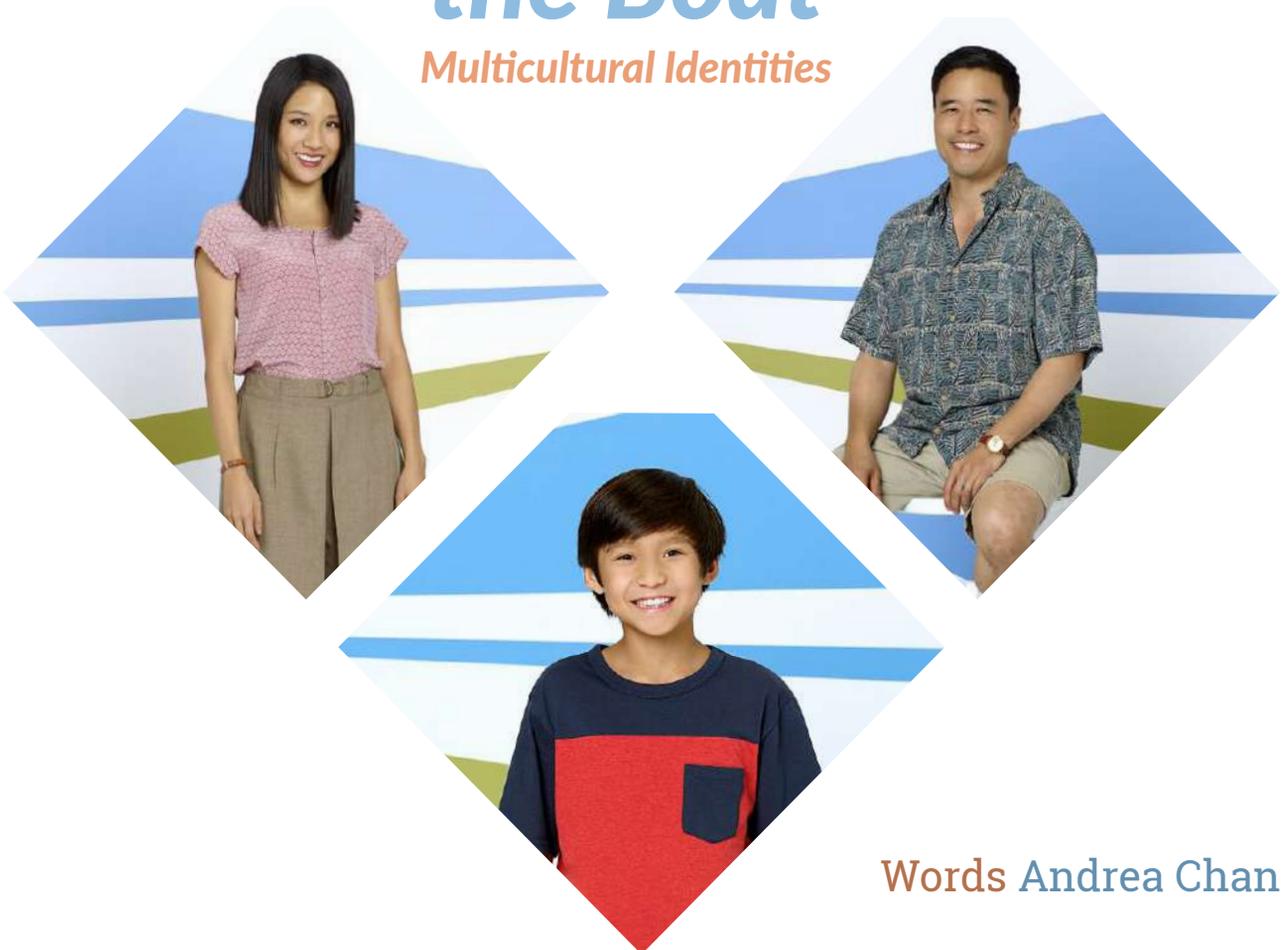
For the rest of my trip, I was guilty of seeking out this imagined community of stereotyped individuals. Wherever I would go, albeit public or private, I would watch people, look for something that would actualize this idea that many people would rant about. Yet, time and time again, I was pleasantly surprised. These people that had been judged by so many as rude, were actually welcoming. Never had I ever felt so welcomed in another country as I did. I went to China expecting the worst. Never had I ever been more glad to be wrong.

The Mainland Chinese. Civil, modest, welcoming, That is how I see them now.



Fresh Off the Boat

Multicultural Identities



Words Andrea Chan

What's up with Fresh Off the Boat?

Come on, admit it. You've probably heard or seen the show *Fresh Off the Boat*, whether it be scrolling down and watching a newsfeed clip or Youtube episode. Imagine a Chinese family eating at a restaurant. The family relative excuses himself from the table to go to the restroom, and after a little while, the mother of the family also excuses herself to pay the bill. To her surprise, she finds the family relative waiting in front of the cashier. He says to her, "You didn't think I'd really go to the bathroom, did you?" The ensuing fight over the bill includes both parties intensely wrestling for it while chanting a series of "No, no, no's." Neither wanting to relent and let the other person pay. That's only one of the things *Fresh Off the Boat* is about.

Why is there so much hype?

In an industry where American TV shows and movies are predominantly white, *Fresh Off the Boat*, which is based on a best-selling memoir by Eddie Huang, has become a stand out with its Asian-American cast starring Randall Park (Louis Huang), Constance Wu (Jessica Huang), and Hudson Yang (Eddie Huang). It's the first time in 20 years that an Asian-American family's been featured on American TV since Margaret Cho's 1994 show *All American Girl*. It's understandable that *Fresh Off the Boat* carries a huge burden and would draw the attention of critics and reviewers alike.

Luckily, *Fresh Off the Boat* is a genuinely funny sitcom that surpasses one's expectations. However, the show is more than just for laughs. Beyond its comical and entertaining aspect, *Fresh Off the Boat*—right at the first episode—is a commentary on race, an authentic depiction of alienation, and a representation of multicultural identity—because Eddie and his family have a distinct culture formed and shaped from belonging in different cultural groups.

The show starts off in the year 1995, when the Huangs, a Taiwanese-American family, moves from the Chinatown area in Washington D.C to the sunny suburbs of Orlando, Florida. The family is composed of optimistic dad Louis, who strives to open up his steak restaurant after buying the idea of an "American dream"; mother Jessica, who often assumes the role of a tiger mom; two younger brothers Evan and Emery, who both seem to have no problems getting used to the neighborhood; Chinese-speaking Grandma Huang, who can't walk because her feet were bound; and last but not the least, young Eddie.

Eddie is what you would describe as an outspoken and confident kid with an obsession with hip hop and rap. He makes an engaging character when the show humorously surveys his love for the hip hop culture while portraying his status as an outcast among family, friends and sometimes even people from the same ethnicity. "If you're an outsider, hip hop was your anthem, and I was definitely the black sheep of my family," he narrates right at the start of the first

episode, and it encapsulates how Eddie felt different from others, and how hip hop spoke to him as a multicultural individual who struggled with fitting in.

With a great soundtrack filled with old-school hip hop and great musical cues, *Fresh Off the Boat* manages to capture Eddie's love for hip hop in a funny manner without making fun of why he loves the culture and what it means to him. In the opening scene, the camera pans to show Eddie donned in baggy, bright-colored clothes, shiny gold accessories and a tilted cap that was synonymous to the hip hop uniform of that time. He asks his disinterested mom if he can buy the outfit, only to be shot down when she sees the price. Again, this is one scenario that is relatable, it's only too often that a handful of thrifty Chinese parents say "No," when their children ask for expensive stuff.

It's also wonderful how the show portrayed Eddie bonding with a white classmate over a shirt with rapper B.I.G.'s face on it. The commentary made by the only black classmate adds to the irony, "A white dude and an Asian dude, bonding over a black dude, this cafeteria is ridiculous!" The bond doesn't last long though, because the moment Eddie opens his lunch of Chinese noodles, the other students get repulsed by the pungent smell and promptly kicks him out of their table.

Feelings of alienation aren't just limited to Eddie. Even his parents experience the hardship of assimilating into the American community. His dad Louis experiences difficulty enticing more customers to come to his restaurant, and he chalks it up to people finding it strange to walk into an American Steakhouse and see an Asian host. He tells Jessica that his solution to the problem is to hire someone with a "nice, happy, white face" so that when people go in, "They'd say, 'Oh, hello white friend, I am comfortable!'" which Jessica finds as a ridiculous idea.

"Now given all of these similarities and differences, how exactly can we cultivate the ideal multicultural environment both here and in abroad?"

Jessica also faces difficulties fitting in the neighborhood. She is bewildered by the group of rollerblading, white women who invite her to join them. When she does join them, it becomes painfully obvious that she doesn't know how to rollerblade and has no interest over the topics they talk about. She even gets judged with simple actions such as cutting cake into equally sized portions—"because of Communism."

As a mother, Jessica is also faced with the challenge of entering an American supermarket for the first time. She found

it uncomfortable, with its orderliness compared to the traditional Chinese street markets. Her cultural idiosyncrasy also shows when someone offers her free taste. She grabs the whole plate instead of just getting a piece!

Now, with all of these scenarios, it's clear that the show aims to capture the complexity of the Asian-American experience. It's a big step to making Asian-Americans visible. However, with this mission comes the danger of possibly creating inaccurate, desensitized depictions, or stereotyping the characters which the show revolves about. For example, Jessica could easily be labelled as a stereotypical strict Chinese matriarch, but because the show was well-written and the brilliant, on-point performance of actress Constance Wu, her character became more fleshed out rather than a mere 2D character.

Memoir author Eddie Huang himself is one of the producers of the show, and he knows that the show has to be well-crafted and well-portrayed by all the actors to get its point across. He expressed his dissatisfaction due to his desire for less interference from the production aspect in order to more accurately convey the message of the story. Nevertheless, the show gives an apt combination of humor and anecdotes, but not bordering on offensive. *Fresh Off the Boat* is universal in the way that it tackles experiences anyone can relate to, but at the same time, specific; representing the people with multicultural identities and emphasizing that they do exist.

Beyond the Laughs

Culture is both individual and social, and it's part of our identity and self-perception. Like Eddie and Asian-Americans, Chinese-Filipinos are also part of a multicultural group of people. Perhaps this is why they find many moments in *Fresh Off the Boat* to be so relatable.

It's almost an everyday thing for us when people assume that just because I'm part-Chinese, I'm great at math and

academics like Eddie's two younger siblings. When I'm eating normal Chinese food like pickled jellyfish or century egg, people also stare at us as if what I'm eating is peculiar. When it comes to territorial disputes such the one we have over the West Philippine Sea, people seem to be walking on eggshells, as if I'd go straight to defending China like how Eddie did when his friend said that China was nothing but pandas (although those are two very different issues).

But despite these topics and stereotypes, we don't usually experience the feeling of exclusion because unlike Asian-Americans, our Chinese-Filipino community is highly integrated. Here in the Philippines, it's almost second nature for Filipinos to take part in Chinese holidays such as Chinese New Year. It's also very interesting how Filipinos have adopted Chinese customs and traditions such as Feng Shui and giving out red envelopes. The Chinese-Filipino presence here can also be felt in many fields and places, not just in the Chinatown areas of every province.

Now given all of these similarities and differences, how exactly can we cultivate the ideal multicultural environment both here and in abroad? It comes down to engaging in intercultural dialogue, which means participating in open and respectful exchanges between people from different cultural backgrounds and views to foster cultural understanding.

This can be done in everyday life, like having a conversation to exchange perspectives about food or even politics. If these kinds of exchanges happened in the society in *Fresh Off the Boat*, perhaps Eddie and his family wouldn't have to experience as much alienation as they do now. Not all Chinese are Communists or mathematicians, and one can be Chinese and enjoy hip hop. People are more than what others think of their multicultural group, and our societies have a larger shared space than the alienation or tolerance we offer now.

Photos: ABC Network.



The Road Once Taken

Words and Photos Moira So

The thing about journeys is that it's easy to forget about the beginning once you've lived its end. And it's no different with migrations. With migrations, it's easy to think of it as a constant whirlwind of movement and new experiences—a storm of changes that you can barely keep up with, much less begin to comprehend.

But, if you were to spare just a moment for the stillness in the eye of its storm to simply think and feel, this is what it feels like:

You start in the end when your mind is consumed by the honeyed promises of the future: of new homes and opportunities to justify why you've left in the first place. At this point, the world has faded to the black and white of the here and now, and you're left marching on the path you've chosen.

Wait a little longer and your mind thunders further back to how you were during the journey itself. The storm clouds grow darker as you worry about how your journey will be like: if complications will crop up like weeds or if it will be smooth sailing ahead. However, your determination to see it through buoys you past this sea of uncertainty.

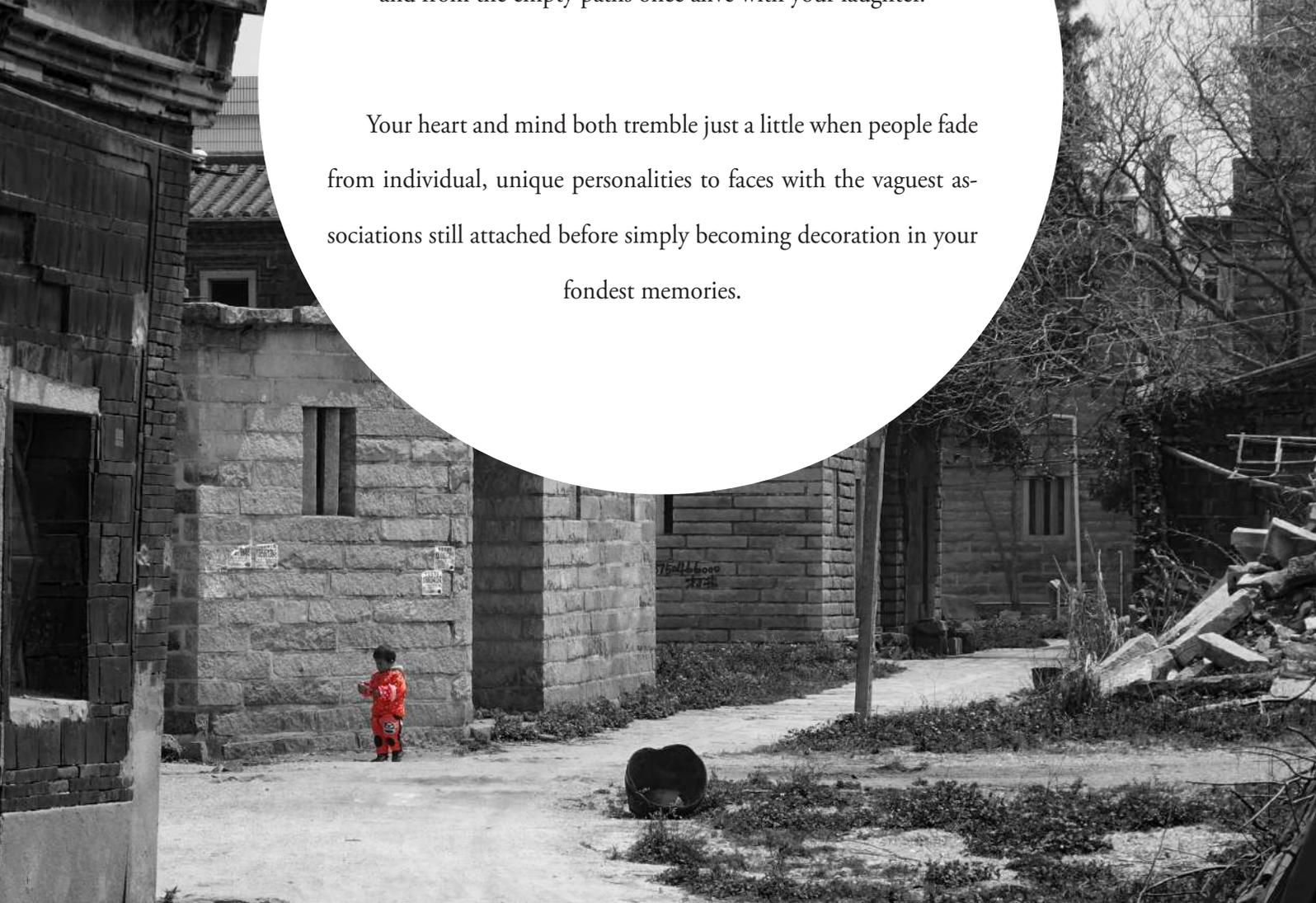




Finally, you return to the beginning,
although tremble at this past. Your
mind shudders away from the thoughts
of an old home left abandoned to
its new occupants of vine and weeds.



It shies away from the memory of a threshold still warm with your ghosts, from the echoing cry of ancestry in their lavish tomb, and from the empty paths once alive with your laughter.



Your heart and mind both tremble just a little when people fade from individual, unique personalities to faces with the vaguest associations still attached before simply becoming decoration in your fondest memories.

When the stillness of your reminiscence fades, you're tossed back into the cacophony of the present. Your journey has ended a long time ago; your migration is complete. You find that the beginning was easy to remember but forgetting those humble roots was even easier, simply because what is done is done.



Instead of harbouring pain and regret, you've chosen to find peace. Instead of trying to change the past, you've embraced it. And, in embracing your past, you can now let it go. All the better for having embarked on the road once taken.

MBTI

Beyond the Millennial Horoscope

Words Joshua Cheng

Horoscopes are vague. They give you mystical interpretations, for better or for worse. You can try to convince yourself, “Hey, it could happen!” But they don’t tend to be convincing. People can feel the same way for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Some people “change” every so often. Some people find the descriptions vague, like horoscopes. Some people can find the entertainment in identifying themselves with one of 16 types, comparing themselves with others in a bunch of scenarios like “How long will I survive a horror movie?”

MBTI doesn’t have to be that way. It’s more than a millennial horoscope, and I’ll show you how to use it on a practical level.

Understanding Yourself

MBTI is easier to understand deeper when you begin with yourself. We will get an idea of the cognitive functions, as theorized by Carl Jung. When used with MBTI, each personality type can be said to have a functional stack, 4 cognitive functions arranged in order of priority. It gives a clue of how we behave, think and feel.

The chart on the right shows the cognitive functions for each type in the order of priority. You can check the description of each cognitive function in the next pages to see how they are like.

People more often than not use their dominant functions often. What may be confusing is the usage of the auxiliary and tertiary functions.

The auxiliary function is a strength one can use. But it’s the opposite orientation of the dominant function. For extroverts, you’ll notice they have extroverted functions (-e); for introverts, introverted functions (-i). This can explain why extroverts have an introverted side, and introverts can have an extroverted side.

Given that the auxiliary function is of a different orientation from the dominant, it can feel uncomfortable or tiring to use. An extrovert can feel tired of prolonged periods of introversion, and vice-versa for introverts with long periods of extroversion.

This tiring feeling explains why individuals can prefer to use their tertiary function. It is of the same orientation as the dominant. Extroverts have extroverted tertiaries; introverts have introverted tertiaries.

A person’s horrific experiences can also trigger a loop. It is when the dominant and tertiary functions are locked in a spiral. Extroverts in a loop may feel the need to engage outwardly until it becomes unhealthy. Introverts in a loop may lock themselves into their inner worlds, in an unhealthy manner.

Types	Dominant	Auxiliary	Tertiary	Inferior
ESFP	Se	Fi	Te	Ni
ISFP	Fi	Se	Ni	Te
ENTJ	Te	Ni	Se	Fi
INTJ	Ni	Te	Fi	Se
ESTP	Se	Ti	Fe	Ni
ISTP	Ti	Se	Ni	Fe
ENFJ	Fe	Ni	Se	Ti
INFJ	Ni	Fe	Ti	Se
ENFP	Ne	Fi	Te	Si
INFP	Fi	Ne	Si	Te
ESTJ	Te	Si	Ne	Fi
ISTJ	Si	Te	Fi	Ne
ENTP	Ne	Ti	Fe	Si
INTP	Ti	Ne	Si	Fe
ESFJ	Fe	Si	Ne	Ti
ISFJ	Si	Fe	Ti	Ne

A chart with the cognitive functions for each personality type.

Using the auxiliary function gets individuals out of their loop. It breaks the cycle of excessive extroversion or introversion.

Lastly, there is the inferior function. It usually feels the least comfortable and most draining to use. Because it is the opposite of the dominant function, one’s usage may come off as too much or too little, and one is prone to have ego issues related to it.

Cognitive Functions in Detail

The fun part about MBTI, besides understanding yourself, is understanding others. Here are some descriptions of the cognitive functions as I've seen others use them. You may see some descriptions that may describe you too!



Introverted Sensing (Si)

Si-users tend to have a good memory and sense for tiny details. They perceive the environment like a magnifying glass, in comparison to Se-users.

They are more comfortable with the tried and tested, with what they can rely on. When working, they tend to think, "How was this done before?"

Si cares about norms. They tend to appear conservative.

Dominant to tertiary users are often sentimental. Tertiary and inferior users tend to be more forgetful, more likely to procrastinate, and less mindful of following norms.



Introverted iNtuition (Ni)

Ni-users are keen on the insight. Their intuition envisions with the ending in mind, which they feel confident of, even if they find it hard to explain. Their vision of the ending makes them comfortable with ambiguity with near present details.

Ni usage means seeing things in the long-term. Users would likely ask themselves, "Where do I see myself in the next 5 years?"

Those less versed in Ni might be more averse to planning ahead or might be less comfortable about thinking of the future.



Extroverted Sensing (Se)

Se-users tend to have a desire for thrill and sensory novelties (e.g. food, clothes, experiences). They perceive the surroundings like a camera flash, in bulk. Their perception of the environment makes them the type to have fun pointing out the obvious.

Those versed in Se have a fashion style or body language makes them stand out. They are the type to boast street smarts and keep their options open for spontaneity.

Tertiary and inferior users tend to be more clumsy. Under stress, they can eat a lot of food or purchase a lot of items.



Extroverted iNtuition (Ne)

Ne-users think like fireworks, making broad strokes of connections to form ideas. They come off as random, whimsical and idealistic. Chances are, a Ne-user invented the parody.

Ne usage involves imagining possibilities. Users would likely ask themselves, "What if we did this? What if we did that?" Given Ne's scattergun nature, they are more likely to pick up multiple skills, since they're not as interested in mastery as Ni-users do.

Those less versed in Ne might be more averse to brainstorming or trying out new things.



Introverted Thinking (Ti)

Ti-users are analytical. Their minds like to collect information and take them apart. They are likely to have a lot of tabs in Google Chrome. Ti is very particular about accuracy, which comes off in their handling of terminologies.

They look at information as subjective, so what matters is their personal understanding of how things work. The idea of “asking the right questions” matters to them, because of their wiring to fit data into their understanding of things.

Tertiary and inferior users of Ti are more prone to overthinking.



Extroverted Thinking (Te)

Te-users are about productivity and fast decision-making. Dominant and auxiliary users don't question their ability to pull off insane amounts of work.

They enjoy having and checking off their to-do lists. Te also constantly thinks of, “What needs to be finished?”

Te looks at the information as objective facts, which focuses on the application. “What can this be used for?” They also form their opinions fast.

Tertiary and inferior users of Te are more prone to questioning their ability to make their ideas a reality.



Introverted Feeling (Fi)

Fi-users are masters of emotional self-awareness. They use it as the starting point for understanding others.

They handle their emotions independently and have less of a need to talk about them with other people, compared to Fe, which may make them come across as aloof.

Fi-users will value uniqueness, just as their personal values and beliefs are unique and deeply-held.

Dominant and auxiliary users come off as sensitive, with a subtle feel for other people.

Tertiary and inferior users come off as insensitive, with a more all-or-nothing flair for what Fi cares about.



Extroverted Feeling (Fe)

Fe-users are very relational. They come off as warm and friendly with an attention to how people will feel.

They have a stronger need to talk to people about how they feel. And given their relational nature, they are better at understanding other people's emotions over their own.

Fe-users are good at reading people's faces, body language and tone, with dominant and auxiliary users displaying a broad range of them.

Tertiary and inferior users are less confident about expressing their emotions and read them slower.

Lost Words Between a Mother and a Daughter

Words Arwin Lao

Dear Mom,

I wonder how you and Dad have been since I last saw you guys. The last time I saw you, I remember giving you the tightest embrace despite knowing that it wouldn't be the last. I just knew that you wouldn't accept Reuben and I, and that is why I left for Canada. I overheard you and Dad chatting about how wrong it was of me to marry Reuben because he was a Filipinom and I was tired of being restricted to the things that you guys want me to do. And so, I secretly left—I had my own dreams and my own journey to take in life.

It has been nice living here in Canada for the past ten years. People seem more relaxed compared to Filipinos, the weather is perfect, and there is definitely no traffic in any streets. During my stay here, I pursued culinary while being a housewife of two children and counting. Dad doesn't have to worry, though, his legendary family name is their second name. It felt just like yesterday when I told you that I wanted to take up culinary in Benilde as my major.

“Mom? Would it be okay for me to take Culina-”

“What? You want to take Culinary? No! I know that you are good in baking and cooking, but you won't get rich there. Take engineering, use your brain! Besides, your dad and I are the ones paying for your tuition, Monica. We just want the best for you.”

In a way, I understood that there are more chances for me to have a good future in Engineering, but Culinary was in my heart—and so was Reuben. I followed your commands from childhood up until graduation. I used all my free time to learn how to use the abacus, how to play the piano and violin, and even joined the China Tour for three consecutive years! However, none of those were truly my calling. I felt that my life was being controlled; I was like a robot being

programmed to do what the owner wanted. I knew then that the final blow for me was when you refused to allow me to date the guys I wanted just because they were of another race. And when I fell in love with Reuben, I just had to hide it from you because I knew that at that time, both you and Dad weren't going to accept it.

For a twenty-five year old graduate of BS Engineering, it was hard to transition into Culinary and to join my younger batchmates in Canada simply because I was out of their time. However, Reuben believed in me so much and supported me every step of the way, so even if it was initially hard to socialize and make new friends, I persisted in doing my best and meeting new people because I was doing what I was passionate about.

Now that I have graduated and built my own restaurant, I feel fulfilled. I hope that you can visit me and your grandchildren and I here soon. Please know that I didn't leave because I hated you guys. I left because I knew I had to be who I wanted to be, not who you wanted me to be. I really miss our family gatherings, shopping sprees, and family days. There are too many priceless memories that I miss; but more than that, I miss being with you and Dad.

Sincerely,



Dear Monica,

We miss you a lot. You are a treasure to the family and you were about to become the engineer I wanted you to be. I was really hurt when my own daughter left me, especially for a Filipino man. I had always told you that it's hard for two races to understand one another, which is why I always forbade you from dating Filipinos or boys of other races. Yes, you have your own choices and you have your own life, but why couldn't you respect and trust our choices?

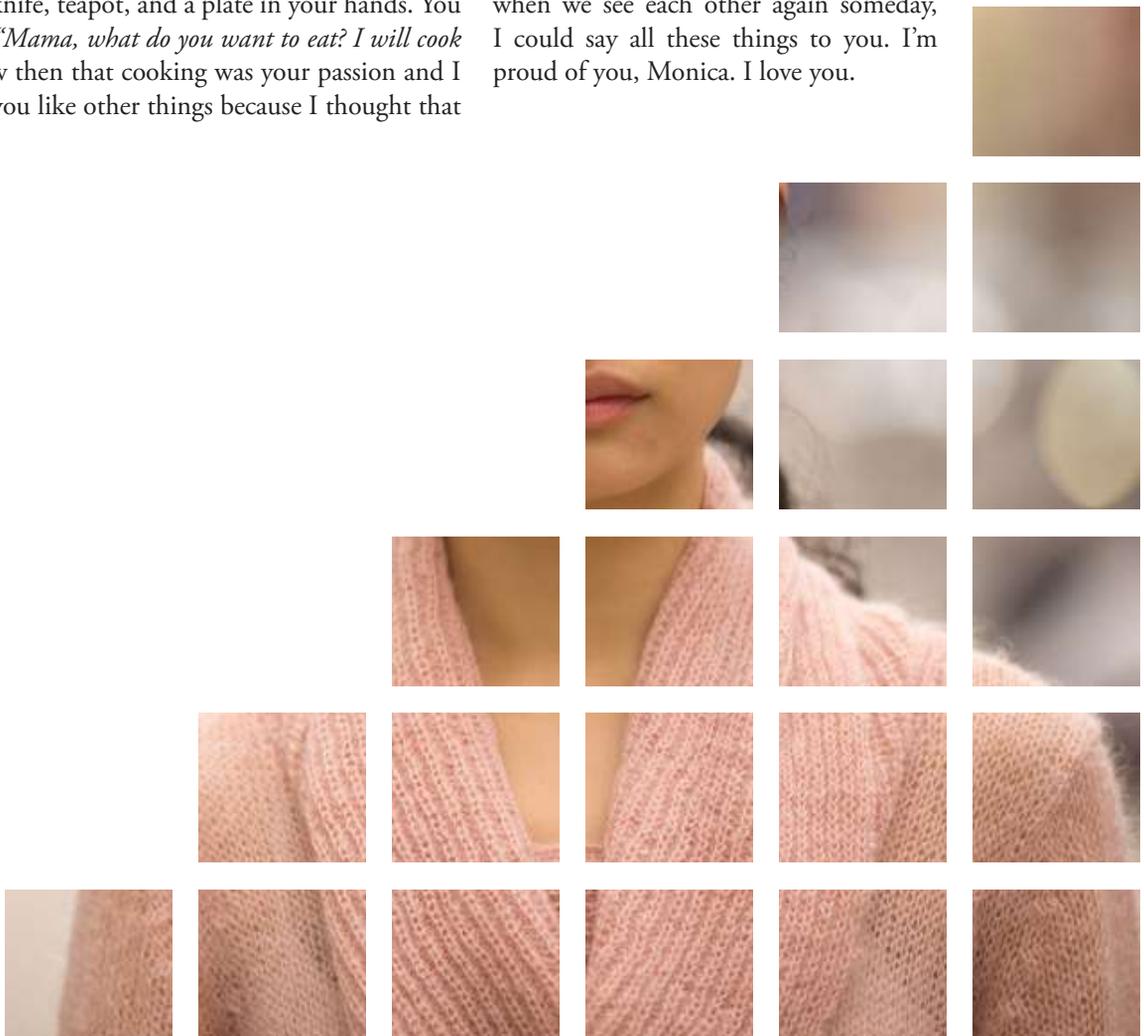
Your dad and I know what's best for you because we only want the best for you. As a mother, you have to know how to protect your children. I only wanted to give you the best life possible without having you to deal with all the problems I have faced myself before. I'm sorry I became overbearing and strict, but that is how I was also raised and so, that is also how I raised you and Fabian.

I heard many good things about you and Reuben over my friends in Facebook: that you had your own restaurant running and have two kids already. Those ten years went by so slowly. Every single day, I would reminisce all of the memories we have shared. I remember when you were just eight years old and you were playing with your cooking toys. You had a miniature knife, teapot, and a plate in your hands. You were telling me, *"Mama, what do you want to eat? I will cook it for you."* I knew then that cooking was your passion and I needed to make you like other things because I thought that

you wouldn't get much money from that—a usual Chinese saying. I enrolled you in so many lessons because I wanted you to become either a lawyer, an engineer, or a doctor.

When you were taking abacus lessons, I was very impressed because you learned it faster than the kids your age. From that time on, I showered all my energy on guarding you while you answered. You won so many awards because of your practicing. I was a proud mom, especially during the awarding of medals and trophies. Sometimes, I would see you frown onstage, but I guess I thought I was doing the right thing. You know what they say: no pain, no gain.

I remember it vividly when you asked me if you could go take a culinary course. I wasn't shocked, but I guess I knew you had so much potential in you to instead take engineering. I didn't want you to waste all the hard work you invested in Math, only to throw it all away just to cook. I think I was being too idealistic, and it was really my fault why you left. I wanted to go there and see you again, but I'm just too afraid that you would no longer forgive and accept me. I just want you to know that I love you and that I did all that I could to be the best mom I could be. I hope that when we see each other again someday, I could say all these things to you. I'm proud of you, Monica. I love you.





Ama and Her Bird's Nest Soup

Words Jodie Tanco

There are four white bowls on the table—one for each of my brothers, one for my mother, and one for myself. My father is allergic to the dish, so he doesn't come down to the kitchen with us but instead waits; his temporary isolation never lasts long as my brothers receive and quickly devour their share, running back upstairs the moment they're done. While my mother finishes hers at a more sedate pace, it isn't long before she goes to join them as well. Meanwhile, I opt to enjoy my soup as I wait for my ama to finish preparing her own.

The bowl is warm to the touch, and I gently blow on a spoonful of honeyed brown liquid. The taste of it is sweet with the faintest tinge of bitterness coating my tongue, evident of the complementary flavors of sugar and ginseng. I take another sip, and this time, I feel the gelatinous, rough texture of the rare delicacy, savoring the dish that my ama has meticulously prepared for me. Although the warmth of the soup fills me, somehow I am inexplicably chilled, reminded of my bittersweet feelings towards our much too short semestral break. Sighing, I realize that it is this sense of home that I will miss over the next several months when I leave for Manila again. It is this feeling of being unconditionally loved and cared for that I remind myself of when I am stressed out of my mind because of the multitude of exams, projects and papers that never seem to be in short supply.

I didn't always have the luxury of drinking bird's nest soup. In fact, when I was much younger, my ama once said that she would no longer make the dish—the ingredients were expensive and the effort to pluck out small flecks of dirt and

feathers present in the nest became too troublesome for her, especially in her old age. She stopped; seven years flew by uninterrupted until I decided to leave home—and my family—for college. News reached ama, and suddenly, she immediately decided to recreate the dish.

"I will make you bird's nest soup," my ama insisted firmly as she fussed over my general health and wellbeing. It was as if she were trying to make up for the time that she knew she

"This is what home feels like, I remind myself months later amidst my dwindling supply of chips and cup noodles. This is what family does."

would lose with me. "It is made of the saliva of the bird—very nutritious."

Ama now repeats this with some regularity; and oftentimes, I find myself having difficulty trying to swallow a lump in my throat.

As the months have slowly turned into years, this has become something of a ritual—a delight to look forward to almost every time I fly back home to Cebu for a short visit or a break. Ama would not only prepare bird's nest soup but would also offer a variety of other medicinal herbs and concoctions.

"Drink this. It will help you grow taller."

"Yaya cooked sibus. It has native chicken—very healthy."

“Do you still have ginseng in Manila? You didn’t run out yet?”

I would laugh at her attempts, but of course, I would never refuse. We both know how effective Chinese medicine could be.

“Ama, I’m eighteen. I don’t really grow anymore.” (“You can still grow, even just half an inch!”)

“Yeah, I ate. Ho tsia—it was good.” (“Did you eat the herbs?”)

“I’m running out na.” (“Here,” she says, handing me a small sealed plastic of ginseng. “This is the last of my supply. It is over twenty years old.”)

Please take care of yourself. This is the message that she desperately tries to impart both with her actions and her words. Her worries are not unfounded, and so, I find myself being constantly lectured on. *Sleep early. Don’t always eat instant food—that’s full of chemicals!*

“Sorry, ama. I’m a college student and a dormer. I don’t exactly have the time to do everything,”

I say sheepishly in an attempt to appease her. It doesn’t work. She frowns disapprovingly. The cycle repeats.

When I leave for university again, with my luggage packed and the small packet of ginseng safely hidden in the pocket of my bag, she leans in to hug me. Her hug is warm, I think. Just like her soup. As she lets go, I am reminded of the bitter-sweet flavor of leaving home, already missing it as I start to face the new semester.

But I am not alone.

When I leave for Ateneo, I bring with me several precious things: a small sealed bag of aged ginseng, the well-remembered warmth of bird’s nest soup, the countless treasured memories I have of my family, and the knowledge of being loved and cared for. I leave with all of this burned into my heart. I leave with words of advice and encouragement etched into my mind to push me forward and beyond. But what is most important is this: I leave knowing that I can and will always return to my family—to my home.

Photo from the Food Bible



in his little planet moon, the prince stood
thinking of events that may not happen
and those that could
the little prince was happy but afraid
not only of the journey ahead
but for the small flower that stayed

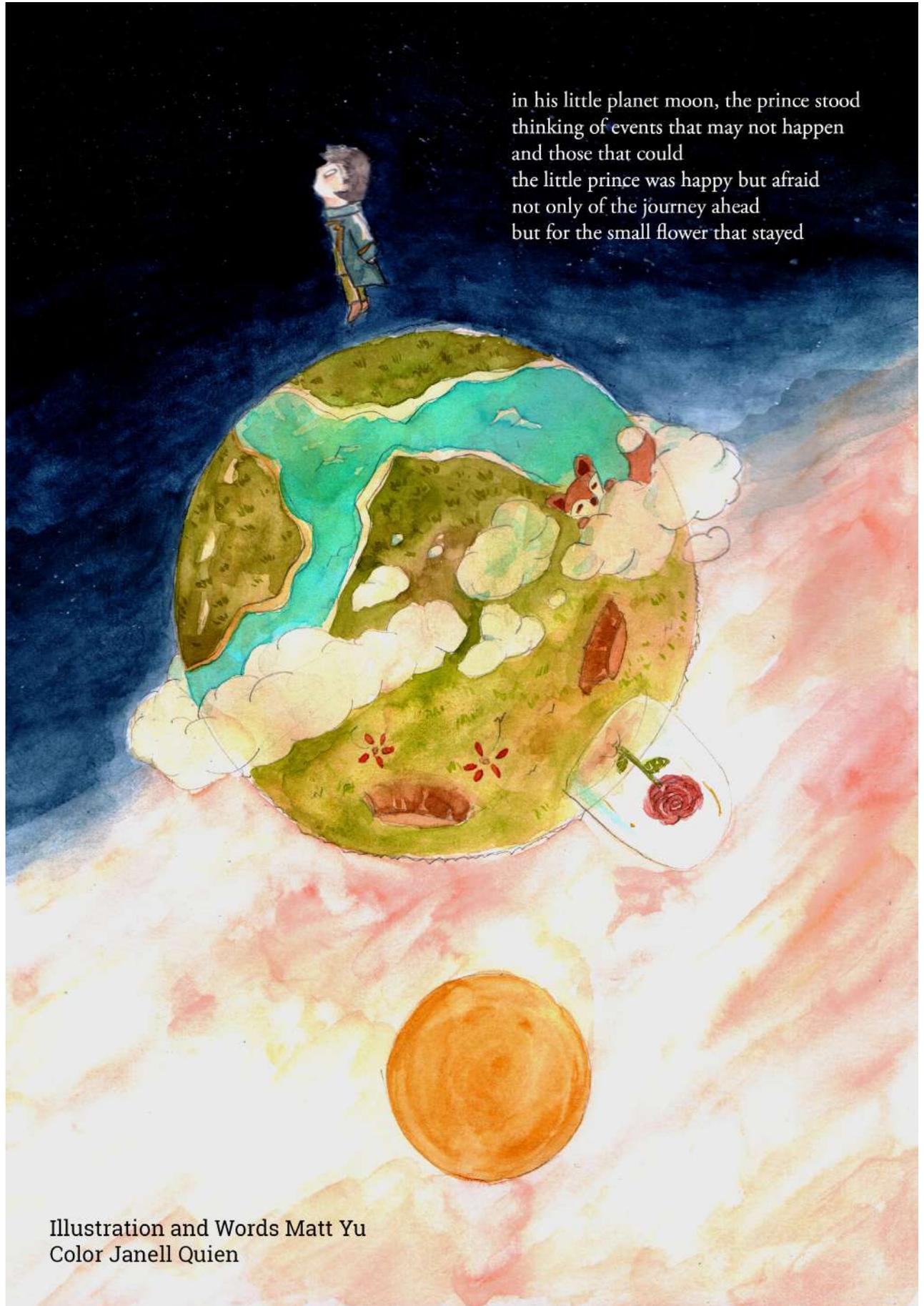
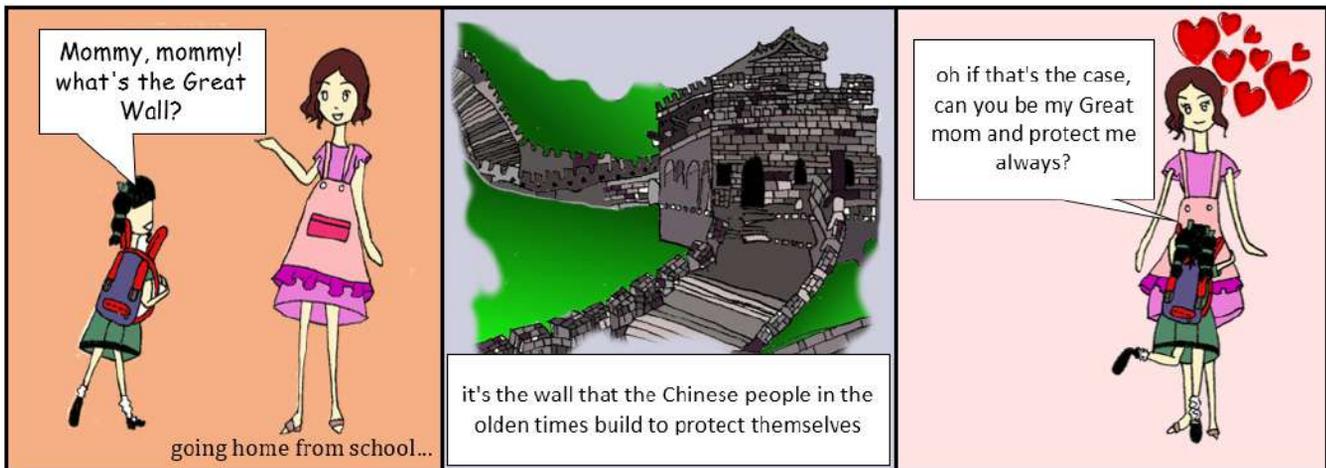


Illustration and Words Matt Yu
Color Janell Quien

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Story and Color Arwin Lao
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