

## A CONSULTANT'S GUIDE TO LIFE AS AN ASIAN AMERICAN MALE

I'm a Filipino American by birth rite, and as such, there are a lot of aspects about my life that set me apart from a life as your average male. My parents used to take me along to all of their parties as a kid. These parties would consist of mostly Filipinos, with the occasional white person thrown into the mix (more on that later). For the most part, my family remained a separatist and exclusive crowd, devoid of any interaction with members of other races. It should come as no surprise to you that my childhood experiences in preschool would be quite an eye-opener for me as it was to be the first time I was exposed to people who were different from me, or should I say, that I was different from. One moment in particular remains at the forefront of my mind.

It was November, nearing Thanksgiving time. My parents had just moved to the States some four or five years previous and my mom had no idea how to make a turkey (much less the significance of the holiday) so we used to get this Pepperidge Farm turkey loaf every Thanksgiving. I must say that turkey loaf was the best, if you were lucky enough to get a slice with a greater proportion of white meat marbled into it. Anyways, back to the story.

I was in class when the teacher handed out a couple of sheets of construction paper and crayons to each of the students. The assignment was to draw a picture of the turkey that each of us would eat during the coming winter holiday. As you could imagine, my depiction of a Thanksgiving turkey was quite a bit more rectangular in shape than the average student's picture. The class got a good laugh and the teacher called my parents, suggesting that my motor skills might be a little underdeveloped. It's funny how those most miniscule, yet embarrassing moments in our childhood can haunt us for the rest of our lives.

The Joy Luck Club did a pretty good job of portraying the hardships of life as a first generation Asian American woman. But what about the Asian male? Can I really take the issues that were presented in that movie and apply them to my own life? Probably not. I don't think I will ever have to worry about being sold off into marriage to a wealthy Chinese heir, or have to juggle my duties as a mother and a wife of a powerful Asian male in America, let alone be a wife to a white, upper class dude. Thank goodness!! Sometimes I think I'm better off being a male, but add Asian to male and I feel a little short changed in the game of Life (don't pick the yellow car, you'll always lose).

So when does MY movie come out?

The Asian fetish is in full swing, and every guy with some semblance of a libido seems to be interested in picking up one of their own flesh and blood AzN-hunnies. I have no idea why that's the case. Could it be all of the movies that have come out in the past year or two portraying Asian women as show pieces and sex symbols? Take a look at your local porn shop and you'll see more and more movies starring the lovely Asia Carrera, Kobe Tai, and Mimi Miyagi as the main attractions. Not that I would know.

Or maybe it's the stereotype cast on Asian women as being naive and pushovers? I was talking to my friend, Jay, about Filipino women back on the Island and he was telling me how the women back home really will do whatever the guys tell them to do. He was shocked when his friend told him to, just take her home, she won't say no to whatever you want. And these aren't even the hookers?!?! Just your average club-going women (okay, maybe they were hookers). Has this stereotype transcended the seas? Are the Asian women here in the US of A typecasted in a similar vein?

Either way, the Asian woman seems to have it easy with respect to meeting guys of varying races. Asian males, on the other hand, have a much harder time breaking through the color barrier in terms of dating. Just go to your local club with a larger percentage of Caucasians and you'll see that, unless you look like

Brandon Lee, the white girls tend to shy away from the Asian male. Why is that the case? Somebody please throw me a bone here!!! It's no wonder why there are Asian clubs springing up all over the major metropolitan areas. We Asian guys gotta get laid somehow (that's a joke).

But it gets even more complex than that. I can tell you this much, I've come to the realization in past few months that I could never date a white girl. Now don't get me wrong, I'm attracted to them, and I've even slept with a few of them, but my engagements with white girls have been nothing more than a dip in the vanilla, so to speak. I don't know what it is about white girls, and it's probably not them, chances are that it's me. Yup, it's me. I just don't feel that compatibility with a white girl that I feel I have with any Asian girl. If I remember correctly, the one Asian girl who was in my preschool class was the only person who didn't laugh at my turkey drawing.

The street racing scene is completely flooding the streets all over the United States. Take a look around, and you'll see at least one tricked out car parked on your street. I think we have the Asian American male to thank for this trend (I'm pretty sure Honda already wrote a formal thank you to all of the Asian males of America for increasing Civic sales 100-fold). I don't know what it is about modifying cars and Asians, but the term rice boy, would have never been devised had there not been an association with the two. Penis envy? Who knows? The question remains: how do they drive with their visors pulled way down over their eyes?

I drive a Subaru Legacy 2.5GT, by the way. It's not your average rice boy car, thank goodness. But I do wear visors a lot. Don't know why? They're cool, I guess. Strike for me. So I'm left to wonder . . . the cars seem to be some sort of statement made by Asian males. The need to stand out, the need to be noticed seems to be the Holy Grail to achieve when modifying your car. I'll admit it, my car's loud, probably one of the loudest in my area, and when I drive by someone they tend to notice. So why wouldn't they notice me without the car?

Asian's tend to be quiet, when compared to other minorities and our reputation as such precedes us. I'll sit in a boardroom meeting and find the clients are truly surprised when I speak up and make my opinions known. As a race, we tend to keep to ourselves, and again, it's stereotyped in the movies that we watch. That, and the fact that all Asians (that would be Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc – we're all the same, anyways) should know karate, which by the way, is a Korean art. Could it be that we can only be heard when we speak through our exhausts? Is that the universal translator for talking to people of other races?

Is it any wonder then, how my life has already come full circle and I find myself becoming the person my parents always were? These days, I tend to hangout with more of my kind as my parents did when I was growing up. But honestly, it doesn't really matter to me much. Nah, I'm not bitter. Just curious and inquisitive.

Written by: Jason Bengson, September 6, 2002