

Jaded

PROGRESSIVE CULTURE FOR ALL

ISSUE 7

FALL 2005

www.jadedmag.org





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Published with support from the Center for American Progress /
 Campus Progress online at campusprogress.org.

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WELCOME

Americans are afraid of the wrong things.

Our administration employs the politics of fear to take advantage of the legitimate concerns of citizens. We are told to be afraid for our security when the Technicolor alert is elevated from tangerine orange to salmon pink. However, our real security problem lies in the inability of our national emergency response system to help Americans in catastrophic events. The fear of terrorism is reframed to target illegal immigrants from Latin America, while the government sends more secret agents to track Fidel Castro than Osama Bin Ladin. Our fears are exploited to justify unchecked powers and invasion of nations. Issue seven of Jaded discusses the scary tactics of military recruitment in our schools, the profit motives of petition collectors, the antagonism of civilian border patrollers, the fear of the "other" in suburbia, the lack of accountability in police brutality cases, and our future with the oil dilemma. Now, that's some real scary shit.
 -Diana Jou

MISSION STATEMENT

Jaded is an alternative media magazine meant to encourage political, cultural, and social discourse among UCI students. We celebrate and support the Asian Pacific Islander community by retelling the past, engaging the present, and creating a vision for the future. We hope to build connections and bridge gaps between different people on and off campus. The goal of the publication is not only to provide a space where students can voice different opinions and artistic expressions, but also as a form of community activism through education and awareness. Despite the fact that we are misrepresented, our images misconstrued, and our culture misunderstood we are not jaded in spirit. This is what we are doing about it.

COVERS

Front and back covers by Albert Ok
 Inside cover by Jamora Crawford

WORKER BEES

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Entertainment Editor
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External Affairs
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Trinh Luu
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Eileen Rosete

Graphics
Jamora Crawford
Albert Ok
Jeff Tang

DISAPPEARED IN AMERICA: DISCOVERED AT UCI

TEXT BY GRACE HSIANG

“Art is often regarded as only aesthetic, something too abstract and too pretty to be politically empowering. That’s just not realistic. Perhaps the government didn’t consider art a threat, but now the lens has shifted and art is under attack.”



Photo by Chris Dea

September 11th, 2001 was a day that nobody would ever forget. Four years later and millions of American flag pins later most of the U.S. is back to dealing with diversifying stock portfolios and getting Billy to soccer practice. And although the momentum of the war machine is steadily fading as each improvised explosive device is detonated in Iraq and the potency of the image of the World Trade Center towers falling has diminished from excessive viewing, the consequences of being a Muslim in the U.S. have not.

VISIBLE, an arts collective composed of artists, activists, and lawyers, questions and challenges how America has changed since 9/11. It strives for objectives similar to as prominent civil rights activists groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Center for Constitutional Rights. Their latest project is an international installation tour entitled *Disappeared In America* that reminds their audience of issues that surfaced after 9/11 and which continue on to this day.

Disappeared in America's primary intent is to inspire and provoke discussion on what national identity means today in an “Islamophobic” society. It brings attention to what they call “ghost prisoners”, a group of mostly working class Middle Eastern detainees who were taken from society without notice or lawful prosecution. The exhibit speaks for victims that are unable to speak for themselves because they are not U.S. citizens and lack the proper resources to fight unlawful arrests.

Held at the UCI University Art Gallery, the exhibit addresses issues of identity, citizenship, and constitutional rights through five pieces, each in different mediums.

Jeeyun Ha’s paper tree sheds real rose petals whose thin branches are actually excerpts from books such as Tram Nguyen’s *We Are All Suspects Now*. A video trilogy simultaneously showing all three short films is projected onto the walls, telling of a Pakistani scientist who was falsely arrested, an examination of disappeared (a term used to refer to the many arrests that go unnoticed) New York city residents, and an Indian man’s tribulations with airport security. However, the boldest display is a floating line composed of six giant scrolls featuring the photographs of ghost prisoners, each with a unique story. Among these faces includes Chaplain James Yee, whose story was notorious in the public media when he was accused of spying at Guantanamo Bay. Consequently, Yee faced 76 days of solitary confinement in a maximum security prison only to be released when the government dropped all charges due to a lack of evidence. There is also American-born Tariq Abdel-Muhti, whose activist father was denied medicine throughout the duration of his detainment and later died after his release from complications which developed while in custody.

A superficial glance may bore the viewer into thinking that this sort of subversive subject matter was exhausted by the massive media attention surrounding 9/11. One questions whether or not these sort of projects can even make a difference. After all, it’s just art, right? In a lecture accompanying the

exhibit, VISIBLE director Naeem Mohaiamen explained that, “Art is often regarded as only aesthetic, something too abstract and too pretty to be politically empowering. That’s just not realistic. Perhaps the government didn’t consider art a threat, but now the lens has shifted and art is under attack.” He continued on to an incident in which VISIBLE participated at a collaboration show, where a non-VISIBLE member presented a fake suitcase bomb as an exhibit piece. This led the FBI to investigate the gallery and take down names of participants, which Mohaiamen believes was merely a scare tactic used to enforce art censorship.

VISIBLE is effective primarily because of its members, who do not come from the same backgrounds as those featured in the exhibit. Because its members legally reside in America and often have critical resources, they are able to voice their concerns without fear of retribution. “The people most affected by all this are also the most afraid to speak up” Mohaiamen remarks. For example, the collective contacted 60 detainees and found that some had previously volunteered for projects and were investigated by the

government as a consequence. Feeling intimidated and suppressed, some refused to volunteer again for fear of repeated investigation. The struggle of this group is a difficult one, for they are already at the bottom of the social hierarchy, often do not have some form of citizenship, and are thus easily targeted due to their lack of political power.

Since 9/11 we are constantly told to be fearful the “other” in order to fight terrorism and protect our democracy. These fears materialize as discrimination and silence the voice of Muslim Americans. This art exhibit challenges that rhetoric of fear and offers a voice for the people that are marginalized in the name of “democracy.” □

www.disappearedinamerica.org

