



Moving Pictures

In a photo exhibit that comes to Portland by way of Seattle, queer Asians and Pacific Islanders break silence

by Christopher D. Cuttone ▼ photos by Zone Montoya

Putting faces to names, that's what Hoang Phan hopes the upcoming exhibit of photos and personal histories of queer Asians and Pacific Islanders will accomplish. Of course people know on an intellectual level that queers come in all shapes, stripes and states, but it's easy for some of them to

fade into the harsh white background of a city like Portland. That's why the juxtaposition of visual and written media in this exhibit is an important opportunity for everyone, queer or otherwise, Asian, Pacific Islander or not: The combination creates a more personal impact on the viewer and a sense-memory that means more than intel-

tual understanding.

"People touch the humanity of people, not politics," says Phan, a member of Asian/Pacific Islander Lesbians and Gays, the local organization responsible for bringing the traveling show "Leaving Silence" to Portland. While he doesn't view his own orientation as particularly political, Phan recognizes that as a gay man he is a de facto activist. He believes the queer community is saturated with activism, and wants to see that same awareness carried over into the heterosexual, and too often heterosexist, world in which we all live.

In fact that's one of APLG's goals, too. Members credit the group, which is one of a few groups of its kind to include

lated to her sexual orientation) says APLG has done a lot of advertising for this event in both the larger queer community, as well as among Asians and Pacific Islanders, because the organization seeks to foster more interaction between these often self-segregating groups.

Not many Asian and Pacific Islander queers are aggressively out, says Kristi, and there are so many still in the closet, not just because they fear immigration problems but also because they live in a family-centered culture where continuing the family name and saving face is most important and being gay is more than a moral question.

Don't underestimate the significance of shame, she says. That shame



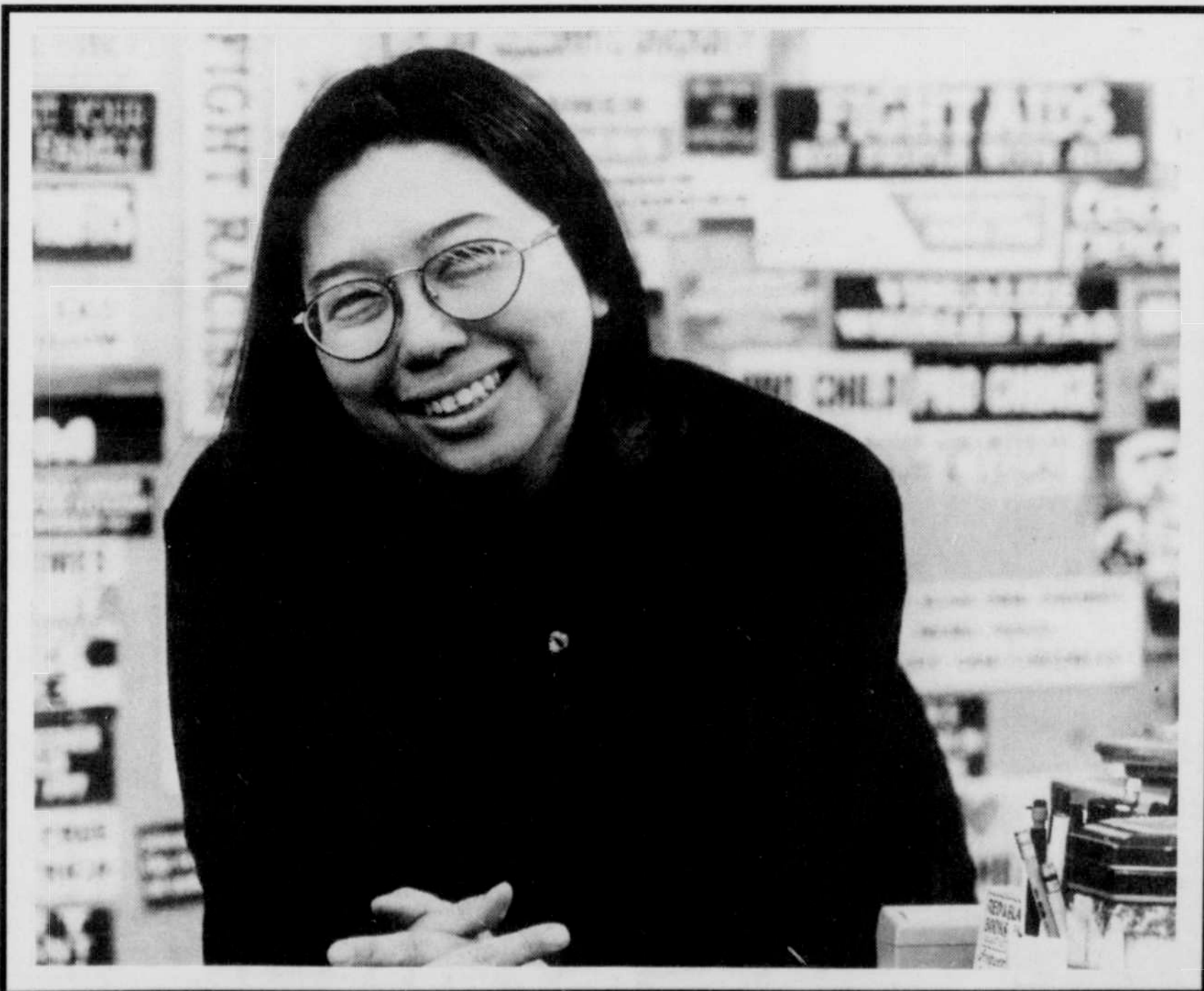
and discomfort with one's identity leads many gay and lesbian Asians and Pacific Islanders to date outside their ethnic

both men and women, with building a community of shared history and experience and making an alternative family of people who would not have met otherwise. Now they want to share with everyone else what they've found with each other.

Kristi (who asked to use a pseudonym in this article because she faces immigration issues re-

lated to her sexual orientation) says APLG has done a lot of advertising for this event in both the larger queer community, as well as among Asians and Pacific Islanders, because the organization seeks to foster more interaction between these often self-segregating groups.

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Top left: Ernesto Rios and his mother, Leonilla Rios Bobadilla; top right: Dave Drew; bottom left: Karen Maeda Allman; bottom right: Eric Ishino.

