



425 NORTH LOS ANGELES STREET | LOS ANGELES, CA 90012 | TEL: 213 485-8567 | WWW.CAMLA.ORG

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Contact: Linh Duong
(213) 485-8568 / pr@camla.org

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING CULTURAL HISTORY INSPIRES YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT AT THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

**Picture This! My Life, Your Life, Our Lives:
Photographs by Youths from the San Gabriel Valley**
November 16, 2008 – May 31, 2009

Media Preview Day: Wednesday, Nov. 12, 11 a.m. – 12 noon

(LOS ANGELES, Oct. 30, 2008) – The practice of documenting what might be considered commonplace occurrences as a means of preserving cultural history is the inspiration behind **Picture This! My Life, Your Life, Our Lives: Photographs by Youths from the San Gabriel Valley**, a new exhibition at the Chinese American Museum (CAM) on display beginning Nov. 16, 2008 to May 31, 2009. Inspired by the self-styled photographs by New York-based photojournalist Corky Lee and conceived as a companion-exhibition to the *Asian Roots/American Reality: Photographs by Corky Lee* exhibition, *My Life, Your Life, Our Lives* is a series of black and white photographs created by 12 students from San Gabriel High School that boldly challenges the widely-held, age-old concept that preserving history should just be left to the expert hands of historians and museum professionals.

“Most of the images in CAM’s photo-database were taken not by professional photographers but by ordinary, everyday people living in the community,” notes Dr. Pauline Wong, Executive Director of CAM. “As a result, those photos created a visual dialogue for us to study and understand how community life was like back then. This new exhibit exists to inspire today’s youths to become active participants in helping to contribute to that dialogue with their own pictures and stories.”

The debut of *My Life, Your Life, Our Lives* exhibition at CAM marks the final chapter of an exciting program partnership developed earlier this year by CAM in collaboration with Venice Arts, a non-profit organization that brings talented artists together with low-income young people to nurture their creativity

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and talent. Titled *Picture This!*, the youth-based photography program provided hands-on training to 12 students of diverse backgrounds, gender and grade levels from San Gabriel High School on how to capture and compose stories of their community through the art of black and white photography. Of the thousands of images taken by the students, 12 photographs will be featured in the exhibit at CAM.

Generously funded by the Nissan Foundation, The California Council for the Humanities and the Friends of the Chinese American Museum, and guided by photography instructors Joanne Kim and Roxanne Jannette from Venice Arts, the 12-week *Picture This!* program mentored students on how to operate sophisticated camera equipment, techniques on picture-taking, constructive ways to critique each other's work and most importantly, how to integrate self-expression and cultural identity to create a unique snapshot of everyday life in a community where many call home. Digital cameras were used to record landscapes, restaurants, temples, stores, objects, and candid moments involving friends and family. The conclusion of the program in May 2008 culminated with an exhibition of 24 peer-selected photographs that is now on permanent display at the San Gabriel High School library.

Picture This: My Life, Your Life, Our Lives and *Asian Roots/American Reality: Photographs by Corky Lee* will share opening-day spotlight to help kick-off CAM's Fifth Anniversary Celebration. In contrast to the socially and politically-charged photographs of Corky Lee, *My Life, Your Life, Our Lives* represents the local, youth component of the photography-themed exhibits.

MEDIA PREVIEW DAY

CAM is hosting a special *Media Preview Day* on **Wednesday, Nov. 12, 11 a.m. – noon** in anticipation of the exhibition openings of *My Life, Your Life, Our Lives* and *Asian Roots/American: Photographs by Corky Lee*. Media will be treated to a private viewing of the exhibit before it opens to the public and will have access to interview opportunities with Corky Lee, the featured youth artists and CAM representatives. All attending media will receive a complimentary exhibit catalogue (value \$5) as a keepsake. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.

OPENING EVENTS

An invitation-only reception for CAM members, donors, exhibit participants and media will be held on **Saturday, Nov. 15, 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.** to jointly celebrate the new exhibit openings and CAM's Fifth Anniversary. Speeches from photojournalist Corky Lee, CAM representatives, and a cake-cutting ceremony with guests toasting CAM will highlight the evening's program.

ABOUT SAN GABRIEL HIGH SCHOOL

San Gabriel High School works to ensure that all students acquire the academic, vocational, thinking skills and personal qualities essential to becoming responsible, contributing members of our multi-ethnic, democratic society. For more information, visit www.sghsmatadors.org.

ABOUT VENICE ARTS

Venice Arts is an innovative arts center that brings talented artists together with low-income young people to nurture their creativity, imagination, and talent. Their program focuses on those whose access to the arts, as artists or audience, has been limited. For more information, visit www.venice-arts.org.

ABOUT THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

The Chinese American Museum (CAM) is jointly developed and operated by the Friends of the Chinese American Museum (FCAM) and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, a department of the City of Los Angeles. Located within the El Pueblo Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, CAM is housed in the last surviving structure of the City's original Chinatown. CAM's mission is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of America's diverse heritage by researching, preserving, and sharing the history, rich cultural legacy, and continuing contributions of Chinese Americans.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Chinese American Museum is located at 425 North Los Angeles Street in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, across from Union Station. Hours are 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday. Admissions are suggested donations of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and students. Members are admitted free. For more information about the Museum, please visit www.camla.org.

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[High-resolution digital images are available upon request]