

LAVENDER Godzilla

Voices of the GLBTQ+ Asian Pacific Alliance

Summer 2022



Untitled

by Ngoc Nguyen

It's one of those cold drink, lounging in a hammock kinds of summer. Bugs humming, providing me with the white noise necessary to be with my thoughts. The cool kitchen floor and the warm summer sun embracing my tiny body telling me "everything is going to be okay."

As a ray of sun found a place on my arm, turning the hair blonde, I smile to myself, "I think I am turning white."

All my worries evaporated. I continue to play with the tiny tables that came with pizzas the night before.

We had just landed here in Charlotte, NC a few days ago. Our family left in urgency and secrecy for fears of kidnapping and extortion. I didn't understand that leaving that day meant forever. Being seven, I had some ideas of what was happening, though I was more excited about being on an airplane; something I've chased on the ground with my friends. I was excited to eat American foods and most importantly I was excited to have new friends, white friends.

A white church group sponsored our family to America from the refugee camp we were staying in Thailand. There, we slept among hundreds of families in a giant stadium from all different places in Viet Nam. We had daily English classes and social and etiquette lessons. I remember our family laughing and being slightly offended at the suggestion that we should not to pick our nose in public when in America. "Who does this?" we thought, not us.

Then there was a day I remember standing naked and exposed in an open room with my dad and other men, squeezed in, feeling scared and with intense anxiety of what's to come. The physical exam was cold and routine, and I didn't appreciate the pricks of vaccine at the end. No small talk, no privacy, not a even a lollipop.

The white church people rented us a house, stocked our fridge with foods, tried to lift our torn spirits, and on ONE exciting day, they took our family to the local Goodwill for a shopping spree.

"I can get ANYTHING?"

— continued on page 3

Notes from the Editor

by Dino Duazo

Welcome to the latest incarnation of *Lavender Godzilla*! When we first started our GAPA newsletter way back in 1988, our main intent was to share updates about what was happening with our newly formed organization, but it didn't take long for us to include stories and personal narratives that reflected our queer API lives. Back then we weren't thinking about the future potential impact of what we started. However, I was recently interviewed for two separate and unrelated projects about what it was like to be involved. The honor and respect that [Lavender Phoenix](#) and [ONE Archives Foundation](#) expressed for what GAPA created was truly humbling.

Reflecting the energy and excitement of GAPA as a brand new group with brimming potential, back then we thought we were simply chronicling our lives and accomplishments. However, as *Lavender Phoenix* now sees it, through *Lavender Godzilla* "our elders challenged isolation, connected and celebrated each other, and kept each other safe." It's a penetrating perspective that can also apply to all the work that GAPA does today and what it may mean for future generations.

Moving forward, we see *Lavender Godzilla* as continuing our long tradition. It's about sharing our stories, sharing our lives, in all their myriad aspects. It's about showcasing poetry, narratives and imagery that spring from our lived experiences as Queer and Trans Asians and Pacific Islanders. We all have a story. We share and amplify these stories to respond to the social, cultural, sexual and political discourse of our day. To be seen and feel heard. Because our stories matter.

Relaunching *Lavender Godzilla* during Pride season, the theme of this issue is appropriately enough

"Self & Identity." Although we are all individuals with our own personal quirks and differences, as a community we are connected by being QTAPI. We are not just queer or trans or API, but those specific aspects impact our lives in so many different ways. The highly personal works in this issue reflect that common thread, but woven into many different fabrics that ultimately celebrate who we are.

Promoting stories that reflect our lived experiences is a philosophy that *Lavender Godzilla* shares with [GAPA Theatre](#). This issue in particular owes so much to the *Hearts & Minds* cohort that GAPA Theatre sponsored during Spring 2022. As we experienced the significant social, cultural, and political shift of the last few years, it was important for GAPA Theatre that QTAPI voices be included in the social discourse. With *Hearts & Minds* emerging as one of its initiatives, GAPA Theatre helps ensure our stories continue to be told to honor and learn from our history, provide strength and resilience to our community in the present, and lay the groundwork to make our future a better one.

Whether through written word or performance, GAPA hopes you will feel inspired to share your singular perspectives. As Jesse Cortes wrote back in 1988 for the original issue introducing *Lavender Godzilla*, "the newsletter is meant to carry all our voices, from gentle and serene to fierce and fiery. Your responses and contributions are not only welcome, but are vital to it. We need writing and reproducible art of any sort which reflect upon, comment on, chronicle or champion our singular and common concerns" as QTAPIs. *Lavender Godzilla* says, "Fire it up!" Let's take that message to heart.

LAVENDER
Godzilla



P.O. Box 14315
San Francisco, CA 94114

For organizational information
and to sign up for updates, visit:
www.gapa.org

Lavender Godzilla is GAPA's voice and is printed for the benefit of its members and supporters. The appearance of the name, photograph or likeness of any person or organization is not intended in any way to indicate the sexual orientation of the person or organization.

Lavender Godzilla invites submissions of unsolicited manuscripts and materials. Text submissions should be typed and emailed to: news@gapa.org. Written article length can be up to 1000-1500 words.

Publication of submitted material is at the discretion of the Editorial Committee. The Editorial Committee also reserves the right to edit works for length and sizing concerns. All other non-text submissions should be

arranged separately with the Editors. Submission deadline is 30 days before publication. Note: Anonymous works without contact info (email, phone) will not be considered for publication.

Permission to reprint as a courtesy unless otherwise stated. Credit to sources is greatly appreciated. Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and are not presented as the views of *Lavender Godzilla*, its editors, or GAPA.

When writing letters to the Editor or any letters regarding a specific article/column, please cite the source(s). Your name, address and phone number(s) must accompany your letter. You may, however, ask the editor to withhold your name and address from being printed.



UNTITLED by Ngoc Nguyen
continued from front page —

I was excited and so I naturally ran to the toy section when my mom yelled: “Get the jackets, it snows here in America!”

Deflated and sweaty, I walked out with THREE oversized jackets, that I was told I’ll grow into!

As a family we felt indebted to and grateful for their hospitality and generosity, so we attended church on Sunday to hear them speak about God. We were saved and we began to idolize our saviors.

In school, I worried about being in ESL classes because that meant I couldn’t grasp the English language and was failing at assimilation. I was embarrassed to enjoy the foods of my culture because the aromas are seen as unrefined and rotten.

There was also a time when my mom fabricated a story about running into an American soldier at the market. She told me this soldier randomly stopped her and gave her a candy bar to reward me for being good. I was special, I thought. This soldier knew about me, I thought. I ate that story up like that piece of chocolate.

I’m realizing that stories about whiteness permeates throughout my younger formative years. If it’s not from my family, it’s from the tv and radio broadcasted in VN. It’s even more apparent when I came to the States where white culture is the norm. All this taught me that white is dominant, white is better, beautiful, visible... supreme. Anything not white is less than, anything not white is ugly and should be invisible.

Looking back now, I wish someone had told me that there was a higher power at play. No not god, I was already told that. I wish someone had

told me about a system set up to make me feel bad about myself. It’s a system crafted to make me feel like I don’t belong and that I am less than. It will constantly remind me that I am an other.

You will remind me when you ask where I’m from and then reduce me down to my now, tasty foods.

I’m reminded when you asked me why I never changed my name to something more American.

I no longer get upset at my mother for making comments idolizing whiteness because I understand....

I understand....this is your way of expressing your trauma mom:

The trauma from a system that told you your skin is not white enough.

The trauma that white people saved you from war.

The trauma of a war you were a pawn in, where your livelihood was ignored.

The trauma of coming to a country with big promises, and then being treated like a 2nd class citizen.

The trauma of losing everything, and starting from scratch.

My path to self-acceptance doesn’t have an ending. It’ll be a constant battle every time I turn on the tv, walk down the street, and go on living my life. What has ended for me is wanting to be someone else.

Now when asked about my roots and my name, I graciously think back to my free coats and say: ‘Ngoc’ is my American name.

Contributors

Alder Duan Hurley is a nonbinary, mixed-race poet and organizer. They are based in the Bay Area, on Ohlone land. With the Hearts & Minds Artist Cohort, they explored the aspects of storytelling that happen off the page, in the performance of the piece.

Jade Lastimosa is a photographer and working actor in the Bay Area. Studied Acting for more than 8 years and 2 years of experience within the entertainment industry. 4 years of theatrical work at the Jean and Knox Theater, 4 years of Film Acting at the Academy of Art University San Francisco. Instagram.com/jade_lastimosa

Mariselle Moscoso (They/Them/Theirs) resides in Northeast Los Angeles where they live with their partner and adopted Shiba-Chi. They were drawn to the Hearts & Minds workshop to find kinship and learn from fellow QTAPI and mentors in storytelling and performance. To them, storytelling reminds us of our shared fragility & strength.

Ngoc Nguyen is a Bay Area artist spending most of his free time stalking chihuahuas on social media. His long term dream besides being a notable artist is to own a farm full of chihuahuas and other small dogs. Don't talk to him about chihuahuas unless you want to see him turn into a school girl and be shown random chihuahua pictures, not his own. He enjoys being silly, day-drinking, and painting so that he can escape his responsibility of being a dad to his 8 months old son. Ngoc is currently learning to sing, play the piano and becoming a better story teller. Maybe he's making up for lost opportunities as a young child. He's often facetious, childish, and sometimes a bish, just like his chihuahua.

Jethro Patalinghug (they, them) is a filmmaker, video producer, visual artist, and queer immigrant activist. You can watch their films *50 Years of Fabulous* and *My Revolutionary Mother* on Amazon and iTunes. They are also known for their drag persona Virginia Please on TikTok where they highlight representation for queer and trans-BIPOC communities. Jethro was Mr. Gay San Francisco 2016 and Mr. GAPA 2012. They have a B.S. in Digital Filmmaking at the Art Institute of California in San Francisco and is currently finishing an MFA in Studio Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

SNJV is an artist using dance, drag, and drama to showcase humanity. He infuses culture into dance and fashion to create performances for stage and film. They are the co-founder of Parivar-a social collective to support and celebrate queer, trans, gender non-conforming folks connected to the South Asian diaspora. He is also an [educator](#) who lectures about his research on drag, dance, and identity in university and corporate spaces.

Danny Wan is thankful to GAPA for providing him the platform to write, act, sing and dance since 1994. It has truly been the family that has let him be his creative self. It also served as his activist base. When he served on the Oakland City Council, GAPA provided the inspiration for him to author one of the first local ordinances to offer domestic partnership registration, a precursor to the fight for gay marriage. Today, GAPA Theatre allows him to once again explore himself as he is today, rooted in his identity but with changing gradients of self-perception.



G A P A M E N ' S C H O R U S

To join/for scheduled performances:

 Gay-Asian-Pacific-Mens-Chorus

 GAPAchorus



The Rise of Lavender Phoenix

In 2022, our community chose Lavender Phoenix as our new name. Formerly known as **APIENC**, our new name is a commitment to our past and to our future. It is an homage to **Lavender Godzilla** and **Phoenix Rising**, the first newsletters created by-and-for our trans, queer, lesbian, and gay API elders in the 1980s here in the Bay Area. In them, our elders **challenged isolation, connected and celebrated each other, and kept each other safe.**

They offered spaces to build real relationships; they organized potlucks to gather over home-cooked food; and they grieved community members and chosen family lost to the government's neglect at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis. They committed to each other and our community's future, even when it seemed impossible. We are proud to call ourselves Lavender Phoenix because it reminds us of the generations of trans and queer APIs who fought for us to thrive, and the generations we are fighting for too.

Organizing as Lavender Phoenix will mean so much more than just the words we call ourselves. **Choosing Lavender Phoenix means an everyday commitment to remember our history,** and all those who dreamt and fought to make our lives possible. It means that every decision we make should reflect the abundance, interdependence, and safety we want to see in our world. For us, Lavender Phoenix is a name, it is a prayer, and it is a promise.

What Were Your Past Names?

Our organization has gone by many names. When we were founded in 2004, we called ourselves **APACE: the Asian Pacific American Coalition for Equity.** Under this name, we helped secure marriage equality and challenged conservative forces in our own API communities who attacked trans and queer people. Over the next eighteen years, APACE grew into **API Equality—Northern California (APIENC).** We led grassroots projects to heal from the impacts of queerphobia and white supremacy that went beyond any one law. We documented countless experiences

in the [Dragon Fruit Project](#), trained young trans and queer API leaders through our [Summer Organizer Program](#), and so much more.

Why a New Name?

In these years, our work has transformed. We've shifted from responsive advocacy to revolutionary **grassroots organizing.** We've grown from a small team of volunteers to a member-led organization with five full-time staff members. We've emphasized the leadership of young trans people, built powerful networks of grassroots fundraising, and rooted ourselves in abolition and healing justice. We no longer see "equality" as our direction: instead, we are building a future with **justice, liberation, and our evergreen values of abundance, interdependence, and vulnerability as our North Star.**

In 2018, our Core volunteer leaders realized that our name no longer reflected our values, our purpose, and our direction. We immediately embarked on a years-long journey with our friends at Resource Media to choose a new name. We chose Lavender Phoenix after a **two-year process that involved over 200 original ideas and a community-wide vote.**

How Can I Learn More?

To help us honor this new name, **our elders who founded Lavender Godzilla and Phoenix Rising joined us in a video podcast!** You can hear reflections from Doreena, Lori, Vince, Dino, and Gisele in conversation with our Director Yuan and our community organizer Leo on [Youtube](#) and [Instagram.](#)

As Lavender Phoenix, we will continue to fight for true [community safety](#), create [real solutions to our healing needs](#), and grow [generations of trans and queer API leaders](#) guided by strong values. We will need your support. **This is a critical juncture for transgender, API, and all communities. Our actions now will impact generations to come.**

For more information about Lavender Phoenix, visit www.lavenderphoenix.org



Naming Myself

by Alder Duan Hurley

Once, my name was a secret.
I held it close to my heart, like a newborn, as though it were fragile,
the softness of its still-forming skull like the softness of my still-forming identity,
In need of protection from a careless world,
And by careless, I mean the world couldn't care less
About a trans person finding their way out of cis-ness
About a trans person naming themselves as such
About a trans person naming themselves

I went by everyone's names for me but mine:
woman, daughter, model student, reserved, quiet, shy,
Seen but not heard—
But I wasn't even seen.
I could speak my secret
And maybe even then I wouldn't be heard.

Changing a name is not like stripping off a nametag and slapping on a new one.
It's not like trading out the long wig for the bobbed wig
Not like tearing holes in jeans at the knees once covered by khakis
Not like wearing fewer dresses or more heels or fewer florals or more makeup—
Unless each of those changes also brings out a recognizably new self—
And then changing a name is just like that.

I changed my name and I became unrecognizable.
I put on a new name like a wig and that difference hid the sameness of my face.
It's the same me, I wanted to say, confused.

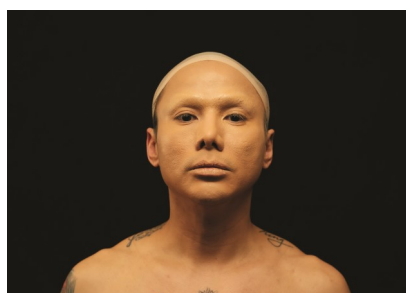
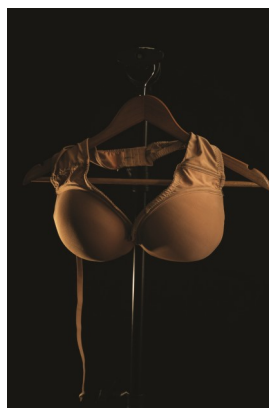
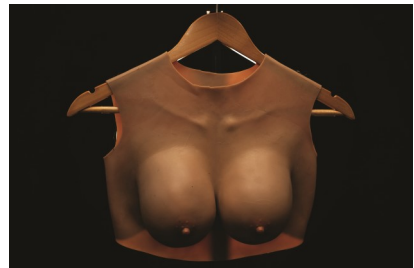
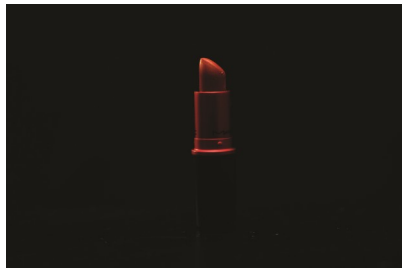
And yet they were right to not recognize me.
I was the self that had been hiding.
I am the self that I've brought out of hiding.
I've named myself.
I can tell you who I am.

Deconstruction of Virginia Please

by Jethro Patalinghug
Photos: Jade Lastimosa



Deconstruction of Virginia Please is a personal exploration into the performative nature of gender by the artist Jethro Patalinghug aka Virginia Please. The piece invites the viewer to examine their own gender presentation and gender identity by reflecting on the materials that Virginia uses to express herself in her complete feminine form.





*Hi my name's Mariselle
AA is what you call it
Decaf's now the nightcap
But this space can be solace
So I thought, but, "Ugh," the drought*

All Anonymous

by Mariselle Moscoso

"What time is it?" I urged my partner.

"We're fine!" she snapped.

I could already tell she was getting irritable. Her heels were clicking pavement at a hurried pace.

"Not my ideal Saturday morning either!" I rolled my eyes. *"Oof, I just felt bad doing that. Rolling my eyes. It's nobody's fault... but the cops. Stupid misunderstanding."*

I didn't fault her abruptness. In fact, I didn't fault her at all.

"No never; I love her so much."

We were here on court order. And I was faithful to a fault. Her heels were tapping ahead of me by a couple feet now, so I picked up my pace with a light jog.

"We spent nearly 6 hours in that holding space. This should be nothing," I reasoned.

In the outside foyer we arrived at a bifurcate.

"Upstairs or downstairs?" paused.

I met eyes with a queer woman on the stairwell. She was perhaps in her late 20s, lean build, a fitted leather jacket and jeans hugged her body. A lit cigarette balanced precariously between her fingers.

"The 8:00 am meeting is downstairs," she punctuated with a knowing smile.

My eyebrows perked up as if to say *"Thanks."*

Entering the room, our senses perked to the smell of freshly brewed, instant coffee.

"Coffee's here folks!" a lithe, scuffed man with fitted shirt and jeans proclaimed. The group let out an ecstatic *"Whoop!"* and some slid out their chairs to grab a cup. He had just arrived himself, but there was a ready assortment of Styrofoam cups, coffee stirrers, sugars and sweeteners.

"Do you want to get some?" I softly asked my partner.

"Nah, we can get some at Verve," she tilted her head towards the end of the room.

We sat at a long table where a group of queer folks were sat, this was the LGBTQ group slot after all.

"Safe space. Feels good."

But then I remember relatively baby queer and this feels oddly disarming since I've lived most of my life masquerading with heteronormativity.

They were reading quietly to themselves, lovingly cradling books, some of which the jackets were tattered, some had visible earmarks on the page they had opened to.

Folks nodded gently and whispered, *"Welcome."*

Their saccharine smiles matched the Splenda, although dissimilarly I didn't find it distasteful. I shared glances with folks with the kindest of eyes but wizened from experience. The experience of a shared struggle of libation over liberation. The meeting commenced and there was a popcorn of introductions. I felt my heart in my throat and my body heat up

The way it does when my anxiety presents itself. When it landed on me, I paused and smiled shyly.

“Hi, my name is Mariselle, and I am an alcoholic.”

A chorus of *“Welcome Mariselle,”* rumbled in the cavernous acoustics of the room.

My stomach let out a low growl and I could feel myself starting to perspire.

“Oof I should have had something to eat before we left the house. But we were already running behind and I wanted to find parking!”

I started talking about my tumultuous 20’s when I drank nearly every day for a decade. How I did not love myself and so solaced in the comforts of liquor and smokes. How my daily routine was a struggle to survive. But I was here to heal and to give myself grace. I was here to be kind to myself. Folks offered conciliatory smiles where the corners of their mouths wrapped downward and the ends of their eyes crinkled into half asterisks. My partner gripped my hand tight underneath the table. We were terrified to be vulnerable among a group, but there was a dichotomous sense of relief and catharsis in the share.

I heard from a queer woman who had relished the simplicity of truly being present enjoying a dinner with her daughter. She discovered her

daughter assumed her traits of being rebellious through creativity; she loved playing rock music and her daughter took to the arts.

“She said ‘Fuck it’ by plucking it,” I mused.

I also admired this woman because she was queer and Asian, like me. However, unlike me imagine Karen O with shock grey bob and The Doors t-shirt. That was her and she owned it.

She was her own person. She likely downplayed the harsh reality of society that told her she was not worth more than how homophobia or xenophobia saw her. But perhaps that would be told in another meeting.

We all stood up in a circle, joined hands, and humbled ourselves and our fallibility, our humanity. As we concluded the meeting there was mood lightening as if we all collectively took a DEEP BREATH and felt our prana--our life force. We shared hugs, affectionate shoulder grabs, moments of laughter. In the brevity there was sadness in knowing we would abscond to our lives. But in this moment, we were joyful to be QUEER and ALIVE.

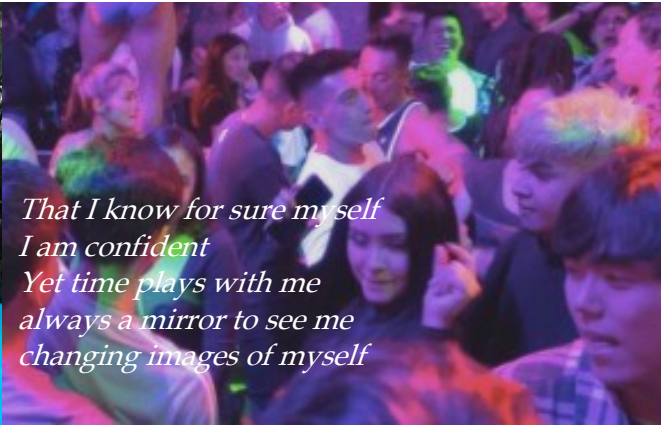


Because everyone has a story to tell

G A P A THEATRE

For workshops and performances:

 GAPAtheatre



*That I know for sure myself
I am confident
Yet time plays with me
always a mirror to see me
changing images of myself*

Vogue

by Danny Wan

Hey, you know what I did Saturday? That night when the cold fog snuck into the nooks and crannies of your chest... I just needed to move, shake it loose. API party night!

As I walked up to the club, the bouncer looked me over and waved me past. I felt so proud that we, APIs, have our own space where we are not the minority that always got carded. Remember the “Asian” clubs that we used to go to where the older white guys would come to cruise young Asian boys. And yea, I was one of those boys who just wanted to dance so bad, but I never quite knew how I fit into the crowd.

Well, NOW this club was finally all API, all US. I walked into the club and up the long narrow stairways—slowly—just so I didn’t look too eager to get to the dance floor, where what I call the “boom boom boom” music was blasting. I wanted to dance, but I miss the 80’s divas who belted their melodies to the DJ’s deep rhythms and beats. Do they even call them DJ’s anymore?

As I was getting happy climbing up that narrow corridor to the music, this group of loud guys started coming down in a line. The first of the boys yelled: “Hey, Daddy.” I stopped and looked around to see who he was yelling this to. I realized that there was no one around but me, and I was like: “Who? Me??” That boy recognized my confusion. “Yeah! YOU Daddy!” pointing at me with his pinkie.

He then turned around to members of his entourage who was watching this little drama. They all

then joined in the chorus, and in unison yelled in various pitches “YEAH, YOU Daddy. Wanna have some fun?” Then they simultaneously burst into laughter as they brushed past me down the stairway, some taking mocking caresses of my face on the way.

Daddy! That’s new. Hmm. I just wanted to dance! But too late, the boys put me in my place as the old guy in the club. Suddenly, just as the Asian club in my past really wasn’t quite for me, this API party was beginning to feel like it wasn’t quite for me neither.

Just as I thought that I lost my mood for dancing and was thinking maybe I should go home and eat ice cream instead, I heard the crowd roar. I ran up the stairs and saw the packed bodies twirling in a frenzy to the prelude intro beat into the next cut.

Then I heard that Diva voice. These kids, these API brothers and sisters who came of age decades after me, at the top of their lungs singing with DA DIVA of my age...

*Come on Vogue (vogue)
Let your body move to the music
(move to the music), hey, hey, hey
Come on, vogue (vogue, vogue)
Let your body go with the flow
(go with the flow),*

Oh yea, that’s it! That rhythm, that melody and that diva. As I saw the young limbs and bodies vogue to that icon of my decade, my era, I shouted to myself.

YOU GO DADDY!



The Never-Ending Reign

GAPA Immortals — Our Runway Royal Family

- 1988 Gypsy Rose Lew
- 1989 Rey Nazareno & Nitara Shrinkapulaya
- 1990 Soni Garde & Lia Tom Kwan
- 1991 Jeff Andres & aNNN Judah
- 1992 Gene Flores & Maria Imelda Marcosa
- 1993 Robert Bernardo & Viktoria la Voovah
- 1994 Joey Pineda & Barbarella
- 1995 Esmeraldo Esposito & Maxxine
- 1996 Cesar Cadabes & E. Long
- 1997 Noel Talens & Cookie Wong
- 1998 Alan Quismorio & Stickee!
- 1999 Mark Da Boto & Holly Peño
- 2000 Ed Tepporn & Chi Chi La Woo
- 2001 Man Ong & Eryka Ameryka
- 2002 Ako Ito & Dawn Avanday
- 2003 Bobalicious & Pussy Catwalk
- 2004 Christian & Trixie
- 2005 Wilson & Monica Spears
- 2006 AstroStud & Cinderella
- 2007 Katu Tubo & Buka Kay!
- 2008 Saketumi & Ethni Cali
- 2009 Eric & Beyonsoy
- 2010 Ben & Doncha
- 2011 Mike Nguyen & Lychee Minelli
- 2012 Jethro & Jezebel Patel
- 2013 Sir Whitney Queers & Khmera Rouge
- 2014 Franz & Brenda Dong
- 2015 Dez Kwok & D'Lady Ito
- 2016 Jeffry Arcam & Juicy Liu
- 2017 Danny Chung, Ehra Amaya & Mimi Osa
- 2018 Christo Roma & Miss Shi Mai
- 2019 SNJV & Mocha Fapalatte

by Mr. GAPA, SNJV

Runway was created in the 1980s as a way to safely bring together a community to celebrate one another. It evolved from a community dance party to one of the most sought after tickets in Bay Area entertainment. Over 30 years of showcasing exceptional talent all boiled down to August 2019, the night two people won Mister and Miss GAPA and decided to keep the title forever.

When I was first asked to be in Runway, my immediate response was “no thank you, I don’t do pageants.” I am not competitive in any way. When I was asked to do Runway again, the following year, my response was the same. The third time I was asked must have been a charm, because I said yes. I put it in my calendar and did not think much about it until rehearsals began that summer. For me, it was a regular Saturday gig in a gorgeous theatre. I showed up rehearsed, punctual, polished, and polite. I thought not about winning but simply about enjoying myself.

I have never coveted a crown, title, or any notoriety for that matter. I have performed my entire life, not for the adulation of the audiences, but for my own satisfaction. Expressing myself creatively is my greatest love in life and I was so excited to bring that to the Runway stage-I kept my focus on that the whole night. Then, they announced the winners. I was shocked honey, I was in tears. I looked over to the new Miss GAPA, Mocha Fapalatte and felt so much stillness. That stillness lasted a moment before I realized the theatre was roaring with applause.

The fanfare was dizzying and I remember my vision being blurry, my mouth was dry, and I was being whisked away to pose in front of the clamoring paparazzi. Mocha certainly made an impression that night with her fashion, fantasy performance, and her divine darkness; an absolute champion of not only Runway, but of life. Her winning look involved a gorgeous leather mask and towering heels; very on brand. The photographers

— continued on page 12

The Never Ending Reign

continued from page 11 —

and producers kept yelling for her to take her mask off. To which she said, (and I am paraphrasing), “HELL NO!” The flashes bulbs intensified and we both basked in that moment. I knew then, that my PIC (Partner In Community) was a force to be reckoned with. Mocha has taught me so much on how to be an advocate for myself, especially during this reign.

I imagined that this reign would run a normal, year long course and began preparing for the following year’s step-down performance in early 2020. Those rehearsals and the rest of the world came to a dramatic halt. We began discussing what Runway 2020 would look like during this time of social transfiguration. This was a time for Runway and GAPA to explore the experience of expressing itself beyond the gender binary. So, rather than crowning new title holders that year, we took a moment to celebrate the [history of Runway](#).

As GAPA began the work of restructuring its mission and Runway titles to be more inclusive, Mocha and I began working with thought partners to ensure we were considering all perspectives to enact this historic change. After many enriching conversa-

tions with the community, we were ready to debut a new Runway experience in 2021. The date was set, deposit paid, and contestants were notified. A surge in Covid cases gave us pause and we decided to postpone for another year.

That night in August 2019, Mocha and I made history. She was the first ever Non-Binary Miss GAPA and I, the first Mister GAPA of South Asian descent. Through this dynamic, vivid, and tedious reign, we have made more history together as the longest title holders in GAPA’s existence. Mocha and I join over three decades of Runway Royalty as Immortals as we fulfill this reign. We are the final two royals of this dynasty. We are watching upon this new generation, beaming blessings to ensure creativity, love, and everlasting prosperity.

Harmonic Convergence is the night that Runway begins anew. We have been waiting for this night where we all come together to crown a new set of leaders who will continue moving us forward. On August 13, that moment will commence.

Thank you for every moment of this reign. I cannot wait to perform for you, to give you my heart and soul.

I am ready for a new era, are you?

