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THE YOUNG REPORTER *magazine*

July 2013



**NO
SMOKING
CAMPUS**

**Smoking is without a doubt
banned on all university campuses
throughout Hong Kong, but in
reality rules can be circumvented
through a combination of vigilant
observation and clever manoeuvre**

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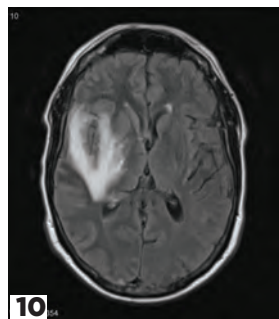
College student smokers take advantage of universities' lax smoking bans



Photo Courtesy of Emily Oskay



THE YOUNG REPORTER magazine



In the previous issue, we explored how Hong Kong's individual visit scheme has drawn an unprecedented wave of visitors from the mainland since 2003 and how it has impacted the city.

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“Thanks for sparing my life”

These days, a strong sense of vulnerability has infected Chinese students, no matter where they are. Back home, a medical student at the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai was poisoned to death in April due to “trivial” grudges. Overseas, two Chinese students at the University of Southern California were fatally shot last year. Lately, one of the three victims who died in the Boston marathon bombings was a postgraduate student from China.

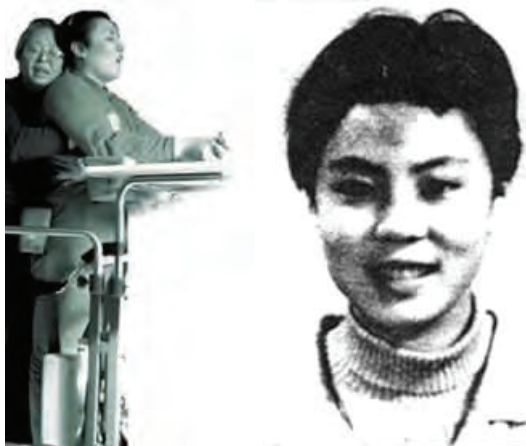
With the lives of several young adults claimed in various incidents, particularly due to escalating campus violence both at home and abroad, many Chinese students in their twenties have responded by sending one another complimenting messages via social networking sites, including thanking their peers for not killing them.

Previously you would not have expected this group of single children, often referred to as the “spoiled generation”, to say even a single word to thank their parents for raising them up. Now as they feel that their peers can not only surpass them academically, but can even take their lives if relationships turn sour, they are prepared to beg for mercy from people around them because any kind of self-protection seems to be insufficient to keep them away from danger.

Campus violence is by no means something new, even in mainland China where people always talk about “harmony” and gun possession is prohibited. In 2004, the year I graduated from primary school, Ma Jiahue, an undergraduate at Yunnan University, smashed four of his classmates with a hammer in my hometown Kunming due to disputes over playing cards. Even though I knew nothing about the news at that time, I could not avoid encountering hundreds of thousands

of arrest warrants posted on the city’s road poles, which were usually covered by ads.

Several months after Ma’s murder trial and execution, I was admitted to the secondary school affiliated to the university. My father, who also graduated from that 80-year-old university, once said to me: “My boy, you might consider studying at my alma mater in six years. It is the top university in our province. Its history is long and



*Photo courtesy of Help Zhun Ling Foundation
Ms Zhu Ling (right), a top student who won many awards in music and swimming competitions, has been rehabilitating with the help of her mother since being poisoned allegedly by a friend in 1994.*

equipment advanced. Moreover, you do not need to travel thousands of miles away and suffer from the bad food and climate there...”

“What? I don’t want to die that early,” I yelled. “But now it is safe! Ma was executed,” said my dad. I countered: “I don’t want to be killed by people like Ma, plus it is shameful to be cited as Ma’s fellow alumnus after my graduation.”

With an unprecedented deployment of 1.7 million police officers nationwide to search the suspect, the case of Ma Jiahue was solved in only four months. However, Ms Zhu Ling, a talented chemistry student at Tsinghua

University who was poisoned by a friend, was not so lucky. For nearly two decades, she has been suffering from severe pain due to thallium poisoning. No one has been held responsible. The suspect is Ms Jasmine Sun Wei, the only person familiar to Ms Zhu at the time. Apparently, she had access to the fatal metallic element and lived in the same dormitory with her. She was accused of putting the toxic chemical to her roommate’s water due to “jealousy.”

In early May, the two-character name “Zhu Ling” was even considered sensitive by China’s internet censors, as several celebrities on China’s micro blogs with more than 30 million followers each voiced concerns over her case and more than 140,000 online users appealed to US president Mr Barack Obama on the White House’s petition website to get justice done to the woman whose nervous system was permanently damaged.

With mounting public pressure, information about the 40-year-old paralysed and diabetic patient has been temporarily unblocked, and state media including Xinhua, People’s Daily and China National Radio have published stories and commentaries to press for a thorough investigation.

What shall I say as a mainlander studying in Hong Kong? Thank God, I am in a city with a remarkably low crime rate. But wait a minute. As a witness to a dormitory bullying case at HKBU where one of my friends was beaten by his roommate, I still feel insecure even though the attacker was expelled. As a Chinese proverb says, one should harbour no intention to harm others but guards against attacks by others. The first half of the advice is virtuous, the latter half is vital as it is about saving one’s live.

The ideas from life

A designer-turned entrepreneur shares her thoughts about developing useful designs from daily observations

The first and only female grand-prize winner of the Hong Kong Young Designer of the Year Award Competition, Ms Florence Wong Ceok-na's greatest success has been turning her love for design into a business.

One year after graduated from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Ms Wong founded her own brand, the Zan's Global Limited with her husband in 1995. The company now exports designer-kitchen utensils, toys, gift and premiums to over 30 countries.

The bold use of colour and cute pattern are often found in her products. Ms Wong said she hopes these joyful characteristics will enlighten everybody's life.

Life is made up of details

Help changing a common life into uniqueness is undoubtedly her mission as a designer and the inspiration can be any detail from daily observations, said Wong.

One example is her newly designed series, "Papapap say yes", demonstrated in the Hong Kong Gift and Premium Fair in April.

The use of moustache as the main pattern in household products not only catches up with the fashion trend since 2010, but also symbolises an agreeable and supportive father in a family, said Ms Wong.

Ms Wong deems observation a linchpin for design. "As almost nothing is new under the sun, we cannot easily come up with a first-hand idea. But through spotting out the exiting problems, we may improve what we already have," she said.

Insight is the key to success

Ms Wong noticed her talent in art since she was a child as her paintings often ranked top in class and competitions.

And she was the only one among her parents' three daughters who inherited her mother's aptitude in making textile.



She knew how to operate a traditional loom when she was just ten years old.

With rich knowledge about clothing and fair academic results, Ms Wong was likely to get admitted to fashion design, a more popular major in the early 90's. But her indomitable personality drove her to learn industrial design, a tough male-dominated profession.

"I have always wanted to try something new, something challenging and something I have never done before," she laughed and explained her extraordinary decision.

Yet Ms Wong said talent alone is not enough to bring a designer success. Her hard working and courage contribute more in her careers, she said.

Her effort is recognisable with various designer awards won over the years, from local prizes like the Hong Kong Smart Gifts Design Awards to the global ones like the honourable mention of the International Design Awards.

The tough time to the designer-

turned entrepreneur came along with the financial tsunami in 2009 when one of her major trading partners, a German company, collapsed. She then worked on to explore new markets and at the same time, improved her existing products to attract clients.

Noting that "insight is the key to success", Ms Wong is heading to develop the mainland market.

Environmental-friendly products

Asked about her favourite design, Ms Wong was keen to show the Almigh'tea bags, a reusable silicone series of five colours.

The tea bags made of non-toxic and heat-resisted material enable users to mix tea safely with different ingredients and create unique flavours.

She hopes to use silicone in more of her design and explore some new environmental-friendly materials and technologies in the coming future.

By Niki Wu

Edited by Kathleen Wong

Society

Organic by deception

A lack of legislation to regulate what can be called organic has laid bare legal loopholes to be exploited

Regarding their organic food certificates as priceless treasure, organic farmers in Hong Kong have been calling on the government to introduce legislation backing the green label, amid fears that such hard-earned recognition could be abused by their non-organic counterparts.

While promoting totally non-organic food as organic constitutes a violation of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, these unconventional farmers say anyone can put the organic label on a food product that has something to do with the seven-letter word.

They have argued that such inauthentic organic food could either be products that are only partially processed organically or those grown in totally conventional manner, so long as they originate from organic seeds.

Mr Shea Sheung-kwong, owner of Chun San Yuen Organic farm, has been pushing for legislation. "The organic label is what I treasure most. Without regulation, people cannot have enough confidence in organic food," said Shea.

Echoing these farmers' concern, a survey conducted three years ago by Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre, a non-profit certification organization endorsed by the government, found that only ten percent of vendors was able to provide certification to prove the vegetables they sold were truly organically grown.

The lack of certification requirements for products to be labeled organic also means that it is easy for unscrupulous

vendors to pass non-organic products off as organic, especially if they belong to two kinds of the same product, as in the case of fresh produce like vegetable.

This sends a confusing message to local consumers as to what the organic label means, and might discourage honest organic farmers who have gone through the trouble of undergoing a certification screening process to prove their produce is fully organic.

Mr Cyber Hung Tak-cheong, senior certification officer at the centre, said relevant laws were vital to promoting organic farming.

The centre, established in December, 2002, defines organic produce as those "grown, handled and processed based on a set of organic agriculture and production standards," with 110 local farms having been accredited so far.

To get an accredited organic label from the centre, farm owners have to present relevant documents and be prepared for ad hoc on-site checks by the centre, which examine the farm's environment and production mode, focusing particularly on seeds, chemical preservatives and fertiliser used.

Besides having to go through a series of screening tests, the cost of applying for certification is another hurdle. According to the Hong Kong Resource Centre's website, depending on the size of the farm in question, the cost can



Photo courtesy of
Hong Kong Organic
Resource Centre

The label issued by Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre can "identify real organic food" authorised to be sold in the city, according to the government's website.

range from \$10,000 to \$40,000.

On top of that, the centre charges \$1,200 per day for an on-the-spot investigation and \$5,000 for a laboratory test.

He said without a government subsidy of \$7,000 for each certification, even fewer farmers would bother to get the certified organic label.

According to a written reply to lawmakers by Secretary for Food and Health Dr Ko Wing-man in February, the overall number of local farms has reduced from 2,600 in 2001 to 2,400 last year.

However, the number of organic farms, defined as those enrolled in the government's Organic Farming Support Service scheme, has nearly doubled to 203 from 106 in the last decade. Currently these

farms produce about 4.5 tonnes of organic vegetables on a daily basis, or about ten percent of the total supply of fresh vegetables grown in Hong Kong.

This rebound, as Mr Hung explained, was the result of support by both the government and farmer organisations, including the Federation of Vegetable Marketing Co-operative Societies, in spite of the costly nature of such unconventional farming.

He added that organic farmers could also apply for the Agricultural Development Fund from another government-supported group, the Vegetable Marketing Organisation, to cover part of the certification fees, namely costs incurred in spot-checking, submission vetting and other administration causes.

In addition to funding, the government also listed in its budget estimates this year that it would provide technical advice on organic cultivation and intensive greenhouse production.

However, Mr Hung does not foresee any specific legislation to back the green label being introduced in the near future.

"As Hong Kong is not an agriculture-based society, and most of our food products are imported from mainland China and other places, lawmakers do not have any sense of urgency to introduce such legislation," he said.

A consultancy study published in February by the Legislative Council acknowledged that legislation can bring the highest level of protection to consumers.

However, the study's researchers concluded that there was no "pressing need" to regulate organic farming in Hong Kong due to "cumbersome" procedures and potential "hindering" of the niche industry.



"The organic label is what I treasure most. Without regulation, people cannot have enough confidence in organic food."

-MR. SHEA SHEUNG KWONG, OWNER OF CHUN SAN YUEN ORGANIC FARM

Tai Po residents buy organic food directly from farmers in this market.



By **Katrina Yau**
Edited by **Song Cheng**



EDUCATION

Ethnic minority children struggle to learn Chinese

Inadequate provisions for teaching Chinese as a second language to South Asian students strip them of access to higher education



Ms Karen Lau, left, has to teach a class of 12 ethnic minority pupils all by herself. Such a shortage of teaching staff reflects the lack of CSL training for local teachers in Hong Kong.

Inside a boisterous classroom, Ms Karen Lau paces the floor frantically as her students clamour for help with their homework in unison.

Working as a Chinese-language teacher at Christian Action SHINE Centre, a support service centre for local ethnic minorities sponsored by the Home Affairs Department, Ms Lau instructs a class of 12 non-Chinese speaking students from South Asia, whose Chinese proficiency levels range from primary one to form two.

Local teachers often have difficulty teaching Chinese to these students because of their insufficient knowledge of South Asian languages. At the same time, non-native students find studying Chinese difficult due to a lack of exposure to the language.

“Before teaching Chinese to

South Asian students, I had to learn their languages first in order to know any linguistic differences and thus be able to help them with their Chinese assignments,” said Ms Lau. This is especially true as some of them may find it difficult to pronounce certain syllables, for example, that do not exist in their languages.

She added that it was important that teachers understood the linguistic background of their students, including various phonological and linguistic systems.

The city’s language education policy, which sets Chinese as both the medium of instruction and a core subject in the primary and secondary curriculums, has long posed a cultural and educational barrier to most ethnic minority children.

According to figures published by the Census and Statistics Department in 2011, ethnic minority children aged 15 or under accounted for 4.9 percent of the non-native population who were full-time students at local educational institutions, while only 1.9 percent of those aged 15 or over were enrolled in higher education.

Dr Gao Fang is a research assistant professor of the Department of Education Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University.

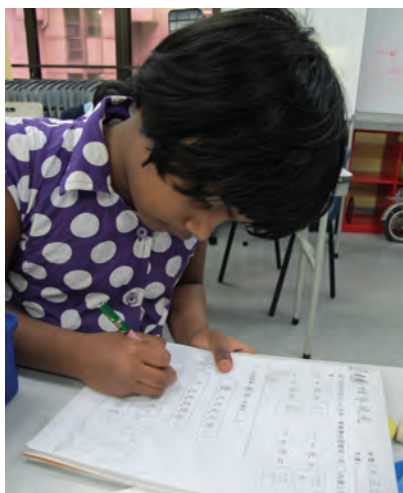
“There is currently no government scheme for teaching Chinese as a second language, and the implementation of previous language policies has catered only to the dominant culture, with South Asians and their languages being given second-class treatment,” he said.

Many European countries have adopted policies to help immigrant children from different linguistic backgrounds cope with their language needs. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, or CEFR was established by the Council of Europe two decades ago, which has and still serves as a guideline on the method of teaching and assessment of all languages in Europe.

In Australia, an English-speaking country with a large ethnic minority population, a programme called “English as a Second Language Companion” has been introduced in the state of Victoria aimed at helping ethnic minority pupils.

Similarly, in Ireland, English is taught as a second language in primary schools to help pupils whose first language is neither English nor Irish integrate into mainstream schools.

In Hong Kong, there are currently 19 primary and nine secondary schools designated for ethnic minorities, with each offering a school-based Chinese-



Due to a lack of access to Chinese language education in mainstream schools, ethnic minority students are forced to seek additional help with their homework from immigrant service centres.

language curriculum to their students.

However, as Dr Gao pointed out, the lack of standardisation and consistency among Chinese language curriculums offered by different designated schools for student assessment remains an issue. This has seen many ethnic minority students fail to meet the Chinese requirement of local universities.

She suggested that a centralised school-based Chinese as a second language (CSL) curriculum, rather than an increase in the allocation of resources to designated schools long advocated by the public, be established by the government to eliminate the discrepancy in the Chinese proficiency of ethnic minority students.

Regarding the lack of a comprehensive CSL scheme, many scholars have attributed it to the insufficient training provided by the government for local teachers in teaching Chinese to ethnic minority students.

Ms Crystal Wong, a Chinese teacher at a designated school, pointed out that although the Education Bureau provided guidance on how to achieve

the learning outcome set for the NCS students, teachers were left to their own devices when it came to preparing teaching materials for their students based on their overall Chinese level.

Currently, only two local universities – University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Polytechnic University – offer master’s programmes in CSL education, and yet most Chinese teachers in the city are graduates of Hong Kong Institute of Education or Chinese University.

Dr Gao concluded that local teachers needed to familiarise themselves more with ethnic minority issues, and be provided with assistance and organisational support in setting classroom tasks and evaluation methods in order to raise the overall academic level of South Asian students.

By **Natalie Leung**
Edited by **Brian Yap**



HEALTH

Father's deadly kiss

The tale of an accidental infant death from herpes should raise alarms for the public as well as the city's government about the severity of herpes

A dotting British father's affectionate kiss on his baby boy proved deadly as he died of multiple organ failure resulting from cold sore infection.

Born prematurely, two-month-old Kaiden McCormick had been put on life-support for six weeks before his parents reluctantly decided to have him taken off the machine upon doctors' advice in early March this year.

However, according to Dr Yeung Chi-keung, a clinical associate professor of the Department of Medicine at Hong Kong University, baby McCormick's death is a "rare" and "tragic" outcome of herpes infection due to a weak immune system.

This implies that cold sore, the most obvious symptom of the herpes simplex type one virus characterised by blisters around the mouth area, is generally not fatal. It should therefore not be confused with type two herpes simplex, which takes the form of a sexually transmitted disease (STD)—genital herpes.

In his argument against the general belief that herpes is uncommon in Hong Kong, Dr Yeung points out that about 90 percent of the population have been infected with the virus, with around 50 percent of them being oblivious to the disease as they tend to mistaken the mild symptoms for bacterial infection or ulcers.

He adds that children are usually first exposed to herpes when they attend kindergarten, mainly through skin contact with eye, nasal or oral mucous discharge of peers carrying the virus.

Despite the prevalence and highly contagious nature of the disease, particularly when it comes to infants and children, the government has made fairly minimal effort to raise public awareness of it when compared to other industrialised countries, such as the United States.

Dr Kwan Yat-wah, associate consultant and sub-specialist in Paediatric Immunology and Infectious Diseases, says public awareness of herpes could be reinforced by providing late primary and early secondary school children with greater access to basic health information, as well as strengthening health education for expectant mothers visiting clinics for prenatal check-up or parents having their babies vaccinated at Maternal and Child Health Centres.

Dr Sally Ferguson, a British gynecologist with 24 years of medical practice in both Hong Kong's public and private medical sectors, proposes that besides bolstering public education in personal hygiene, the city should adopt health education courses provided regularly to students in America.

Having said that, although herpes simplex is a very common and, in most cases, harmless disease, it should be dealt with cautiously.

According to Dr Kwan, extreme cases of herpes may occur when the virus has entered the brain. Complications triggered by the disease can lead to meningitis or memory loss in the long term. If the virus has spread to the mouth and ear nerves, it could cause long-term defects and permanent damage to the child's hearing or speaking abilities.

Another dangerous infection of herpes takes place when the virus interacts with another common skin disease eczema, which may lead to a potentially life-threatening complication known as eczema herpeticum.

Dr Yeung points out that herpes simplex is divided into

two stages – primary and secondary. The former means that the individual has caught the virus for the first time without any immunity from the past, and symptoms present at this stage are most noticeable as pain sores will surface around the mouth, gums and lips and often last for a week or so; children infected with the disease may also develop rashes.

The dermatological specialist adds that the secondary stage appears as a recurrent phase with tiny blisters that erode the skin and form dry scalp.

There is currently no cure for the illness as the virus will become dormant within one's nervous tissues and a relapse could take place when the immune system of the patient is weak.

On cases where the parent has sores around their mouth, Dr Kwan suggests consulting a doctor to be certain that they are not blisters before making any physical contact with children to avoid herpes transmission.

"Presently there are no official epidemiological study on the overall prevalence of herpes infection among the population in Hong Kong," said Kwan.



A baby diagnosed with Eczema Herpeticum suffers from festered skin. Photo courtesy of Dr. Yeung Chi-keung

SOCIETY

Homeless and new immigrants barred from food banks

Strict rules say recent arrivals and needy with no proof of residence cannot benefit from government-funded programmes

Food banks are charitable organizations providing free food for people suffering from hunger. However, only Hong Kong permanent residents with proof of residential addresses are eligible for access to help from five of six food banks in the city.

There are multiple criteria restricting the number of beneficiaries: One must not be a social security recipient, a property owner, or a non-permanent resident and with no proof of residence. This means that new immigrants from mainland China, senior residents living alone in tenement flats as well as the homeless are all excluded.

“Those excluded are the ones who need help the most,” said Mr James Lung Wai-man, founder and manager of Yau Tsim Mong Food Bank.

Established in 2009, Yau Tsim Mong Food Bank is operated by James Lung International Arts and Cultural Exchange Association, a registered charitable organisation in Hong Kong. Unlike all the other food banks in the city, Yau Tsim Mong Food Bank is privately-owned and self-financed.

The food bank was first sponsored by a private organisation called “Food Sharing Programme”. However, the sponsorship stopped in August 2012 because the sponsor faced financial problems.

Mr. James Lung Wai-man, founder and manager of Yau Tsim Mong Food Bank said that his organisation was lucky to have received assistance from many kind and generous donors shortly afterwards, and added that donation can be in the form of money or food.

“We don’t receive any subsidies from the Social Welfare Department and that we only rely on donations from public or private organizations,” said Lung.

Mr Chan, a 47-year-old homeless man who wishes not to reveal his full name, said “I have tried to seek help from a food bank in Wong Tai Sin but was turned down because I’m not a permanent resident.”

Chan has since regularly sought help from Yau Tsim Mong Food Bank, which, unlike the city’s public food banks, welcomed him.

When asked what he has done to prevent people from taking advantage of his food bank’s resources, Lung said

that the relationship between his organisation and people it serves is based on trust.

Although Yau Tsim Mong Food Bank has always been financially independent, Mr Lung is disappointed by the government’s policy regarding food assistance.

He pointed out that the Social Welfare Department only subsidises applicants who meet their guidelines, which

prevent them from serving those who are excluded. He also believes that it would be environmentally friendly to recycle edible food and then distribute it to the needy.

“If the food is totally edible, why should it be sent to landfills?” he said.

Ms. Agnes Chan, service co-ordinator of the government-funded People’s Food Bank, said they wanted to help the ones who are in real need but at the same time they must follow guidelines set by the Social Welfare Department.

“We think our services could be extended to benefit more people in need, but still we must make sure those help seekers are really in dire need. Actually we serve an average of 300 to 400 people every month and we use up all resources, including government funds and donations,” said Chan, adding the government should allocate more resources to food banks so that they could serve more people.

Serving every Monday, Wednesday



Generous donations from various companies.

*Mr James Lung Wai-man,
founder and manager of Yau
Tsim Mong Food Bank*



and Friday, Lung’s food bank helps 200 to 300 people every week by providing lunch and take-away dinner.

He has noticed a sharp rise in the demand for food assistance recently, probably as a result of an increase in food prices.

He urges the government to allocate more resources to facilitate the operation of food banks, as well as setting food banks as there remains a lot of people who are in dire need throughout Hong Kong.”



HEALTH

Think twice about white rice?

Harvard study shows eating rice may increase the risk of diabetes

There's nothing like a bowl of white rice that could help recover energy after a day's hard work, especially for Asians.

While the very idea of eating rice is healthy, a new study by the Harvard School of Public Health suggests that eating white rice could increase your risk of diabetes.

The study shows that each additional daily serving of white rice may increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes by ten percent. Those who ate the largest amount of white rice had a 27 percent higher risk of diabetes than those who ate the least.

Asian people, particularly for Chinese and Japanese, were found to be most prone to the disease because of generally higher white rice consumption.

In Hong Kong, one out of every ten

adults currently suffers from diabetes.

"The reason why white rice may impact the risk of diabetes isn't clear, but it may have to do with the food's high score on the glycemic index (GI) — a measurement of how food affects blood sugar levels," said Ms Doris Lau, Accredited Practising Dietitian of the Hong Kong Dietitians Association.

"High GI ranking food has previously been associated with increased risk of diabetes," said Ms Lau.

While white rice has a mean GI of 64, whole wheat has a GI of 41, the study shows.

White rice is a refined grain which has undergone a series of mechanized processes such as hulling and milling. Refined wheat creates fluffy flour that makes light, airy breads and pastries.

But there's a nutritional price to be paid for refined grains.

The refining of grains detaches the most nutritionally dense parts of the grain - the bran and the germ. Without them, more than half of the grain's B vitamins, 90 percent of E vitamins, and virtually all of the fiber are stripped away, said Harvard researchers.

That is why white rice is not the only red flag for a diabetes-prone diet, refined grains are.

Thankfully, there are unrefined grains, which have retained their bounty of nutritional goodness that are otherwise known as whole grains. In terms of dietary fiber, whole grains are on a par with fruits and vegetables. Whole grain foods include brown rice and whole-wheat bread.

"Whole grains release their energy slowly as they are broken down in the digestive tube. This way, the body can regulate blood sugar levels more

While **white rice** has a mean glycemic index of **64**, **whole wheat** has a GI of **41**



steadily,” said Dr Lee Ka-fai, Vice-chairman of Diabetes Hongkong, a registered charity organization treating local diabetic patients.

Fiber mixes with other contents in the stomach, and allows nutrients to be absorbed slowly and more steadily over time.

“People should try to make a switch from eating refined carbs like white rice and white bread to eating more whole grains. This way, you consume more nutrients and fiber overall,” Dr Qi Sun, author of the Harvard study said.

The Harvard study has prompted the United States Department of Agriculture to put forward the key consumer message: make at least half of your grains whole grains.

The Healthy Eating Plate, a blueprint for planning healthy meals created by nutrition experts at the Harvard School of Public Health has

also responded to the grain “revelation”. The new Eating Plate recommends reserving a quarter of a person’s daily food intake for not just any grains, but whole grains, while limiting the consumption of refined grains.

Though radical changes have been made to improve the American diet, the same cannot be said for Hong Kong.

A local counterpart of the Healthy Eating Plate is the Food Guide Pyramid designed by the Health Department of Hong Kong. Despite the growing number of research suggesting the health benefits of whole grains over refined, the food pyramid is not explicit in the type of grain it recommends for daily consumption.

In other words, local nutrition experts are warning that white rice is not the only culprit in diabetes risk.

“White rice has long been a part of Asian diets in which diabetes risk

has been comparatively lower than the west,” said Ms Lau.

Rather, a general decrease in physical activity, blown-up portion sizes paired with an increasingly western diet of fast food is piling on the weight and culminating a hodgepodge of diet-related diseases including diabetes in Asia.

Ms Lau explained, “It is white rice plus aspects of modern living — including less physical activity — that conspire to elevate the incidence of Type 2 diabetes.”

For thousands of years, white rice has been a staple food playing an indispensable role on the dinner table. This transition can only hope to render Asian population more susceptible to the imperfections of their beloved grain.

But for now, at least, it seems that Hong Kong will not swear off white rice just yet.

By **Cheng Tsau Jin**
Edited by **Jessica Lee**



Photo Courtesy

LIFESTYLE

Embrace craziness

Do crazy activities only bring laughter and fun to participants, or do they also help them release stress in a highly competitive city like Hong Kong?

Mr Tom Grundy started the “Pillow Fight Day” simply by posting an open event on Facebook and sending invitations to 100 friends. However, the number of respondents who showed their interest in the activity soared unexpectedly from hundreds to thousands in just a few days.

As a teacher and activist from England, Mr Grundy was the first to introduce the activity to Hong Kong in 2011. Since then it has become an annual event.

Dressed in hilarious costumes or pajamas, pillow-wielding participants wait for the starting signal before

engaging in a one-hour pillow fight.

“This event is apolitical and non-commercial without any hidden agenda,” said Mr Grundy. He hopes to provide a platform for the community to come together as one entity.

“Hong Kong is a stressful city and helping people release their stress is one of our aims in organising this event,” he added.

According to Mr Grundy, not only does the event offer its participants a chance to escape from their hectic lives and relax together momentarily, but it also helps them achieve happiness through continuous, unrestrained

screaming and pillow fighting.

Mr Ferrari So Man-him, a secondary school student who joined the first Pillow Fight Day in 2011, said that Hong Kong people were taking things too seriously and that they were fueling the city with pressure.

“This event provides a platform for us to release our stress,” he said.

“I really enjoy the rare crazy actions in the heart of this city and greeting new friends.”

That said, this type of event is not for everyone.

Miss Stephanie Ng Hoi-yan, a university freshman who has also



Photo Courtesy of Susan Morgan Cooper

“Wearing costumes and getting together in a small enclosed area create an atmosphere that is likely to bring instant friendship.”

DR VICKY TAM, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AT HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



Photo Courtesy of The Color Run

participated in the event, holds a different opinion about it.

“With those sweaty people pushing me around, it was generating pressure to me physically,” said Miss Ng.

Even so, the popularity of stress-releasing events is growing. For example, “The Color Run,” which started in the United States in early 2012 is coming to Hong Kong in the fourth quarter of this year.

Runners will dress in white and get plastered by colour powder in the 5-kilometre run in order to promote healthiness, happiness, individuality and giving back to the community. Fees from participants will be donated to the charity partner of the Color Run organization.

“Wearing costumes and getting together in a small enclosed area create an atmosphere that is likely to bring instant friendship. It may eventually gain popularity and be as big as Halloween,” said Dr Vicky Tam, professor of psychology at Hong Kong Baptist University.

“This would be an avenue for people to express themselves in a different way, especially appealing to those who really look for opportunities to do something outside of the box, to try something different,” she added.

Dr Tam said the event could help

participants release pressure but the effects might not be long-lasting as it only lasted for around an hour once a year.

She also noted that not all kinds of craziness are welcomed in this city. “This event is a cultural encounter and embarrassment may be caused to those who do not fit into this norm,” she said.

Dr Tam feels it has to do with the cultural norm. “Hong Kong is a comparatively conservative place and people tend to think of the advantages and disadvantages of each action rationally,” she adds.

For example, the No Pant Subway Day, a prank that started in New York with participants boarding a subway train on a winter day wearing winter coats but without pants, still has low public acceptance in Hong Kong.



Mr Tom Grundy is hit by participants with pillows on Pillow Fight Day

Photo Courtesy of Grace Ho

By Carain Yeung
Edited by Joy Huo



(From left to right) Janzen Tsang, Lucas Chuy, Sam Lo
Photo Courtesy of Heroz

MUSIC

Breaking the mould of pop music

Boys group Heroz tries to break a new path with songs about life rather than love triangles

Indie-pop collective Heroz is not yet a known entity in Hong Kong, but the energetic young men who make up this up-and-coming band don't mind gaining public support slowly.

With their debut hit 'Oranges on an Apple Tree', Heroz has successfully aroused public attention with a fresh fusion of encouraging lyrics and independent-pop styles.

"Our pop music culture is overwhelmed with love songs. That's why we would like to introduce a different kind of music to the local

audience," said leader Lucas Chuy, accompanied by fellow members Sam Lo and Janzen Tsang.

The music industry has always been flooded with love songs telling break-ups or love-triangles of doubtful quality, but Heroz aims to turn a new page with their refreshing genre of music.

The band's debut hit has been positively received, probably because of the lyrics' message about life.

"Unwilling to be ordinary, though falling into dire straits, appraisal will still

be mine" is a line of lyrics featured in the song, which is about telling people to "live a life of your own".

"I believe that if there is a will, there is always a way out," said Lucas.

It is one of Heroz's goals to start as a band to put social responsibilities on their shoulders by spreading positive messages, but not another tragic love story.

The team wants to bring a positive message to youngsters that they should go for their dreams without worrying about how the others would comment

on them.

A line in the chorus perhaps best demonstrates the message: “Outrageous as I may be, like a hawker dressing as a prince; but against all conventions, I prove to you I am who I want to be’.

When talking about their style of music, Lucas said that they had integrated foreign music elements into their music.

To put it more precisely, Heroz are incorporating the British energetic style together with Japanese-pop style that often creates a catchy melody into their songs.

These innovative minds come along with boldness to make a difference. This boy band is named Hero because the image of a hero matches with their music concept and attitude of life.

“Hero is also our attitude of life. We keep moving on even when we face challenges,” said Sam.

They want to share their music with all of the people around, hoping them to become immortal throughout ages.

Despite their passion and

diligence, becoming a singer is after all a challenging path to walk on. Overcoming one’s personal hindrance is no doubt an uphill battle for Heroz.

Janzen was heavily criticized by netizens when he joined a singing contest in 2010. “People said I was too thin and had poor singing skills. All I could do is to do my best and be confident with myself.” Since then he worked out extensively and gained 40 pounds.

Public’s bitter criticism does not seem to have devastated this blooming boys group. On the contrary, they modestly accept sarcasm and tackle these malicious opinions with optimism.

Hard work pays off. Last Christmas, they were invited to perform at a government dinner party in Macau. While they worried that their choice of songs might not be suitable with such a formal occasion, the reaction of audience turned out to be surprisingly enthusiastic.

Filling the room with laughter during the interview, they become

earnest when they talk about their interpretation of singers’ responsibility.

In performing in their best condition, they do exercises at gym to train up a fine physique and increase their vital capacity for singing.

Besides, they learn to be more polite and more diplomatic. Lucas said, “We are aware that adolescents may treat idols as role models, so now we are more cautious about what we say and do.”

Innovative, modest and blithe may not be the most common perception of a boy band, but it certainly is the best description of the exclusive boys group.

The uprising band is now seizing every opportunity to perform on stage and promote their music online through Facebook and Youtube channel. “At this stage, we are aiming at the best new artist award. We hope that our music would be widely loved and that we can contribute to the Hong Kong pop music industry.

“I believe that if there is a will, there is always a way out.”

-MR LUCAS CHUY, THE LEADER OF BOYS GROUP HEROZ

*Illustration of their
at song ‘Oranges on
an apple tree’.*



By Joyce Wong
Edited by Mak Lawrence Li

PUFFING ON CAMPUS

College student smokers undeterred by lax and inconsistent regulations



Smoking is without a doubt banned on all university campuses throughout Hong Kong, but in reality rules can sometimes be circumvented with a combination of vigilant observation and clever manoeuvre.

Campus washrooms, among other potential smoking sites, have long been targeted by many college students as places to go to for a cigarette break.

Daniel Xu, an undergraduate at Hong Kong Baptist University, said that although the small sprinklers connected with pipes in a typical campus washroom were not part of the fire alarm system, they would spray water when a fire had been detected.

Daniel added that there are two other devices that smokers need to watch out for: a small ring-shaped heat detector on the wall and a smoke detector that will turn on the fire alarm control panel and activate notification

appliances such as the strobe light and beeping horn once it detects any puffs of smoke in the air.

"If you smoke in the dorm, you have to cover the smoke detecting device up with something like a towel or pieces of paper," said Xu, noting that smoke detectors are installed in most university buildings.

But he is not always that cautious. Once he was caught smoking in a washroom located in the common study areas of the dormitory and he got 12 hall marks deducted.

In fact, there are only a few students being caught smoking on campus each year, which amounts to around three and that figure is similar to the situation in Poly. But actually this figure has much to do with the attitude of the administrations towards this issue and how they monitor the students.

Inconsistency in regulatory stand-

ards set and fire alarm systems installed by different local universities have rendered smoking bans obsolete.

Although indoor smoking is banned on most public premises under the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance, college student smokers sometimes do so at school campus simply out of convenience.

A number of students from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, City University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Shue Yan University have said that dorms are the best possible indoor places to smoke considering there are few visitors.

Despite knowing that smoking is prohibited on campus, they tend to do so indoors when it is too cold or rainy outside, as they find it "pretty unreasonable" to go downstairs just for a cigarette, but will take a cigarette break outside when the weather is fine.



“So even if the university is well aware of the fact that smoking exists in student residence halls, barring any preemptive or more aggressive measures, the school can do nothing but wait.”

- MR LEO HUNG, RESIDENT COORDINATOR OF Y.P. CAI HALL AT BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Regarding smoking in dorms, student smokers from the three aforesaid universities may be less likely to get caught because of the absence of separate smoking detectors in every room. Only a few of them can be found along the hallways where there are more visitors.

When asked about ways of monitoring smokers in halls, Mr. Leo Hung Chun-ying – resident coordinator of Cai Hall as well as a graduate of Baptist University – said there are three methods to fulfill this purpose. The first one is regular room checks carried out by hall tutors on every floor. The second is placed upon janitors who clean the bathrooms every Thursday. And the third one comes from the complaints given by fellow hall students.

But these methods seem hardly effective. According to the school policy of Baptist University, you have to be

caught smoking on the spot in order to be convicted.

“Even if the university is well aware of the fact that such conduct exists in student residence halls, barring out any preemptive or more aggressive measures, the school can do nothing but wait,” said Hung.

Mr. Villa Zhao said she often throws the butts into the bathroom bin. But that leaves her vulnerable for being discovered because the janitors clean the bathrooms every now and then. But it seems that those janitors never spill, so she takes the advantage of that.

Besides, she also flushes the butts. But since they are too light to flush, it normally takes her more than once to successfully flush them down and that, which is a huge waste of water. So she usually just leaves the butts in the toilet

Of course the obvious reason for being discreet is that, the behavior is

strictly forbidden by the government and the universities, explains hall rules and regulations.

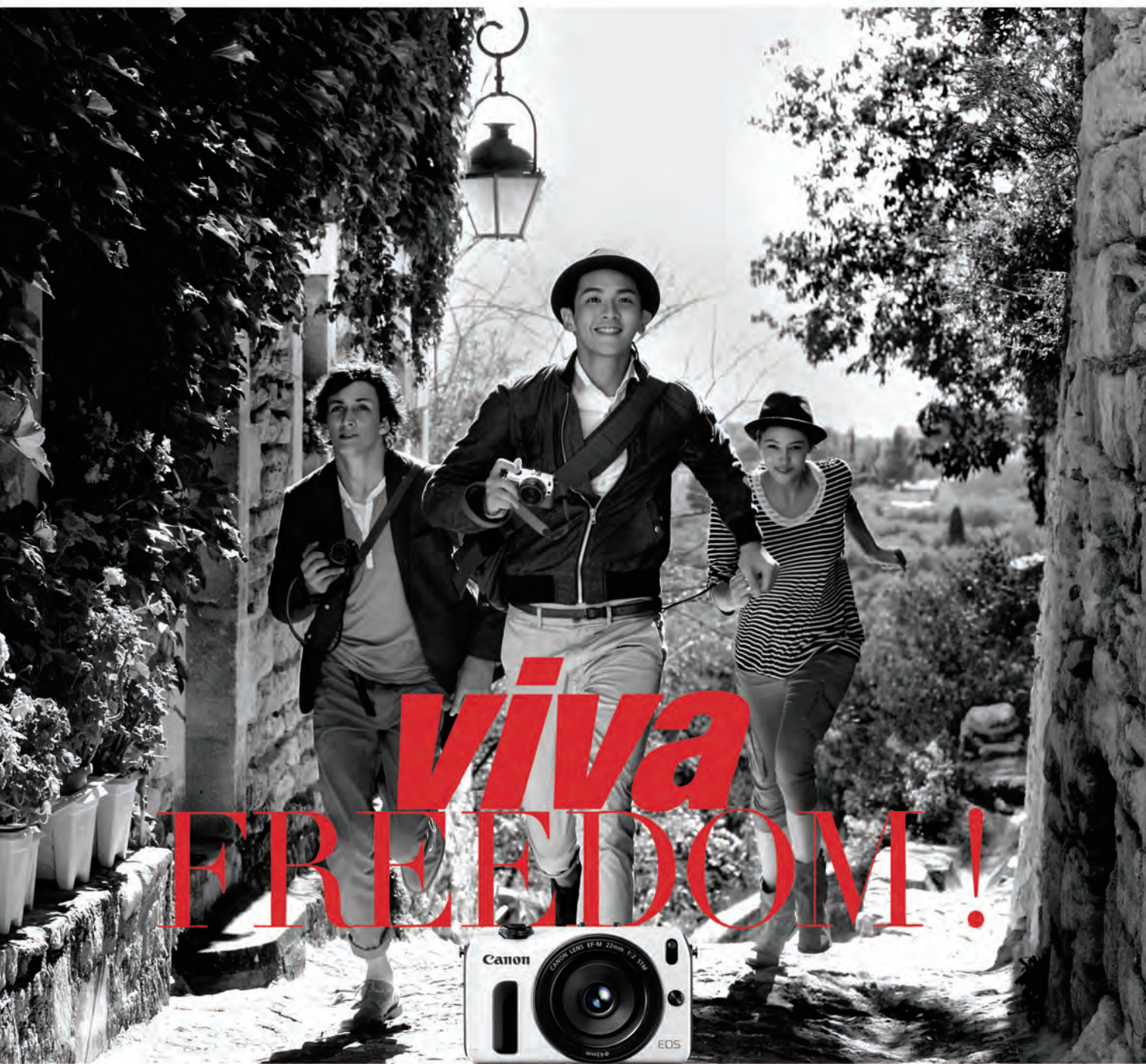
He said the main punishment is the deduction of hall admission marks, a system used to determine whether one is eligible for next year residence in the dormitory. Smoking will normally result in a deduction of 7 to 14 points, given that every resident has 16 points in total. If you reach a negative figure during your residence period, you will be expelled from the hall immediately.

Relevant studies have been done targeting Harvard University, Princeton University and some European colleges. However, Hong Kong has so far no detailed studies on smoking problem on university campuses.



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