

unity



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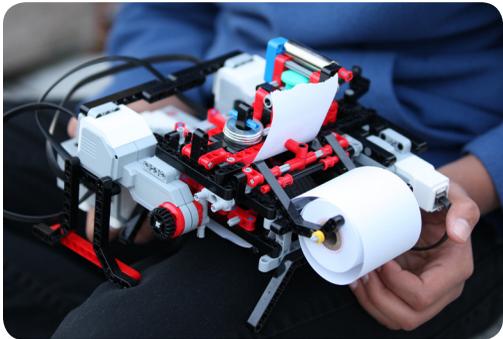


Shubham Banerjee's prototype for a Braille printer was the inspiration for the 2014 Lego Mindstorms EV3 Build 4 Good robotics challenge. Photos courtesy of Braigo Labs

The next time you step on a Lego toy, you might want to refrain from scolding your child. That misplaced doodad could be a steppingstone on a path toward technologic greatness. Such was the case for Shubham Banerjee, an inquisitive California teen who created a printer to help the blind.

It all started in 2014 when 12-year-old Shubham came across a flier soliciting donations to help the blind. That prompted him to ask his parents, "How do blind people read?" Their answer: "Go Google it." While conducting his research, Shubham learned that Braille printers could easily cost \$2,000.

"I thought that was pretty high," he told *Unity* magazine. "I wanted to reduce the cost." He envisioned a printer that cost \$350. A Lego fanatic since the age of 2, Shubham built his prototype of the Braille printer from a Lego Mindstorms EV3 robotics kit. He found the instructions online.



Shubham Banerjee built the prototype for the Braille printer from Lego's Mindstorms EV3 robotics kit.

He presented the printer at a science fair in 2014; afterward, it attracted worldwide media attention that took Shubham by surprise. Soon, his printer was the inspiration for the 2014 Lego Mindstorms EV3 Build 4 Good robotics challenge that was held in Seattle, Washington.

"I was just trying to help people," says the high school senior. "I never thought it would come this far."

Neil Banerjee, Shubham's father, spent \$35,000 to launch a company called Braigo Labs in 2015. Intel then invested an undisclosed sum for a share in the company. Shubham built a more sophisticated 2.0 version of his creation using an off-the-shelf desktop printer and Intel computer chip that can translate electronic text into Braille before printing.



Shubham Banerjee has been a Lego fanatic since he was 2 years old.

As of 2019, the product is still in development.

With Intel's investment in 2015, Shubham became one of the youngest recipients of venture capital.

On Braigo Labs' website (www.braigolabs.com), Shubham is credited with founding the company that's "committed to creating, researching, designing and developing new technology innovations and services. The mission of the company is to bring "humanely optimized" technologies that are innovative, affordable, simple and catering to solving" life's problems.

Born in Hasselt, Belgium, Shubham and his family moved to San Jose, California, when he was 4 years old. He has interned with Reliant Labs and Intel in California. An award-winning varsity football standout, Shubham received the 2018 Presidential Gold Award for Volunteer Service. He is also the recipient of multiple awards for innovation and has been featured in *Popular Mechanics* magazine, and on CNN, NBC, ABC, PBS, NPR and the BBC.

MLB executive poised to make history again



Kim Ng, the former vice president / general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, is Major League Baseball's top female executive.

As a stickball slugger in New York 41 years ago, Kim Ng (her last name is pronounced ANG) had no idea she would eventually become Major League Baseball's highest-ranking woman in the sport. After all, in those days girls were rarely allowed in Little League, and there were no places for women at management levels in the majors.

Fast-forward and peek in Ng's jewelry collection today: You'll be surprised to find a few unusual pieces. She's the proud owner of three World Series rings. Ng scored the bling during her four-year tenure as vice president and assistant general manager for the New York Yankees. She was recruited to that level at the incredibly young age of 29.

That achievement came just three years after she became the youngest person and first woman in baseball to present an arbitration case. She won the case, in 1995, involving pitcher Alex Fernandez. At the time, she was the Chicago White Sox's assistant director of baseball operations. After that came a stint with the American League as director of waivers and records.

In 2008, she joined the Los Angeles Dodgers as vice president and assistant general manager.

"At no point did I think, 'You can't do this,'" she told the Chicago Tribune in 2018. "I had great bosses along the way. Nobody ever said, 'You can't do this.'"

Ng – MLB's highest-ranking Asian-American female executive – ranked 10th in Forbes' 2018 list of the most powerful women in sports, and is part of a small circle of women who have broken into front office roles in MLB. She has been interviewed for general managing openings. The first time was in 2005 with the Dodgers. Ng's also interviewed with the San Francisco Giants, Seattle Mariners, San Diego Padres and Los Angeles Angels. She's mentioned frequently in news articles as potentially becoming baseball's first female general manager.

How does an Asian-American woman sit in the upper echelons of MLB's executive suites? "You have to be really comfortable with yourself and your ability," says Ng. "And if you are comfortable with yourself, not much can shake you. We all stereotype to a certain degree; you just try and educate. If you can change somebody's mind one day, that's huge."

And change minds, she has. Originally noted for her gender and cultural heritage, now she's respected as a compelling and fair negotiator, as well as her encyclopedic knowledge of baseball's rules. She also helped negotiate contracts for Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera.

Once a star infielder on the University of Chicago's softball team, Ng credits her philosophical attitude to having played sports. "I'm realistic. I know I'm out of the ordinary. Playing sports teaches you to have a thick skin, to not worry about what other people think," she says. "You always have to be open to criticism from teammates, and ... you have to learn to channel whatever emotions you're feeling into something positive."

Which she finds easy to do in baseball. "I just love the game," she says. "The way it's structured, players can come out and fix whatever they did wrong the day before. There's the idea of constant renewal, unlike other sports where you may only get the chance once a week. In our sport, you get a new shot – a chance to win – every day."

Present-day artistry rooted in childhood

The artists featured in this month's *Unity* display cultural artwork enhanced by vivid colors and designs.

Fernando Argosino

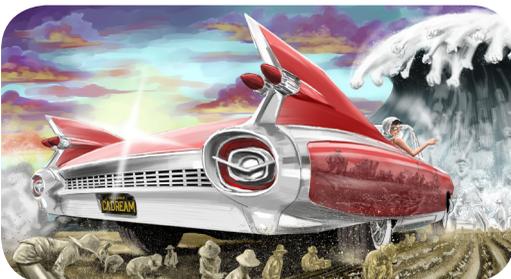
Fernando Argosino was raised around the San Gabriel Valley of Southern California by immigrant Filipino parents. He always had a knack for drawing, as did his uncle and siblings. He began with a fascination with Disney characters and Marvel comics; however, after showing his portfolio to an editor of Marvel's "X-Men," he stopped drawing for a decade because of the editor's devastating critique. Yet, after a company offered Argosino a project, he quit his tenured teaching job and committed to becoming a comic book artist.



"Eye Witness Poverty" by Fernando Argosino

Argosino says his heritage is the basis of most of his artwork. "Eye Witness Poverty" was inspired by a vast landfill of human and industrial waste near metro Manila that is home to thousands of families. A young boy leans against his shanty home as he gazes at the fantasy Disneyland castle on the horizon.

"There is no letter 'c' in the Philippine language," says Argosino. "And words that start with a 'k' represent freedom." "Kalifornia Dream" not only represents his native language but also pays homage to the workers seen in the trenches, whom he says paved the roads and worked the fields that helped solidify the image of Hollywood glamour.



"Kalifornia Dream" by Fernando Argosino

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"Car Show" by Fernando Argosino

Jeepneys are abandoned American WWI jeeps that are ornately decorated and common in the Philippines. "I've come to see jeepneys as works of art," says Argosino. "'Car Show' portrays an embellished jeepney commanding a crowd in the midst of first-class luxury cars in a modern auto show."

The California resident maintains that settling for what you are good at will never replace struggling with what you love. He is presently a freelance artist who works on commercials and films.

Cheolyu Kim

Cheolyu Kim grew up in the small rural village of Gosung in South Korea. As a child, he recalls that he and his village experienced flying objects such as parachutes, balloons and a spy plane falling from the sky. This fueled Kim's fascination with anything airborne including insects, birds, leaves and boxes dropping from planes. "I remember spending hours following thousands of colorful balloons that contained political leaflets from the North," says Kim.



"Journey to Nowhere #28" by Cheolyu Kim

Kim earned a BFA in sculpture from Chung-Ang University in Seoul, South Korea. After arriving in the United States, he earned his MFA in sculpture from Brooklyn College in New York.

Kim notes there are times when his memories and experiences intermingle with his imagination and dreams. "My work arises from the boundaries of what is familiar and what is not," he says. The three pieces featured here resemble traditional shapes of eastern Asia, yet a closer look reveals Kim's own invented



"Journey to Nowhere #58" by Cheolyu Kim

images of unique forms that appear over and over. The background colors are muted reds and grays, and those same colors depict a distinctive universe of abstract imagery.

Kim says "Journey to Nowhere #28" (pen on paper), "Journey to Nowhere #58" and "Journey to Nowhere #59" (the latter two are pen on Birchwood panel) all represent landscapes of the day after his death. "It might be a scene of my afterlife or somewhere far away in deep space, which I call 'dream utopia,'" he explains.



"Journey to Nowhere #59" by Cheolyu Kim

Kim's work has been showcased in solo and group exhibitions in Korea, Connecticut and New York. He lives in New Jersey.

Cyril Maza

Cyril Maza grew up in the Quezon Province in the Philippines. Maza remembers always being fascinated with activities that required imagination and creativity. As a child, he loved drawing, playing the mandolin and solving puzzle games. Maza says he also loved to design and build his own little "cities" out of bottles, boxes, wooden blocks and even books.



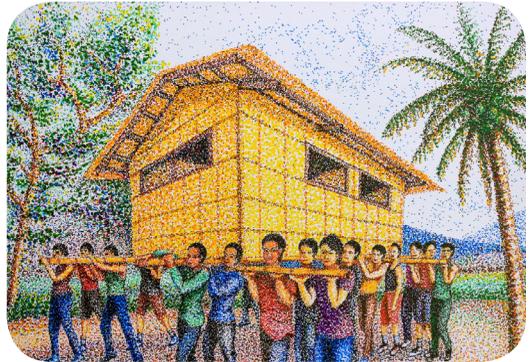
"Balancing Life Through a Straight and Narrow Path" by Cyril Maza

"My passion for building/creating led me to pursue a degree in civil engineering," Maza says. He earned his bachelor of science in civil engineering from the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. While in college, Maza saw the works of some renowned Filipino artists in the National Museum of the Philippines and the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, which inspired him to start painting.

Maza says his work is influenced by the Filipino artists he admires as well as the Filipino culture and his personal childhood experiences. "Balancing Life Through a Straight and Narrow Path," acrylic on canvas, is based on one of those experiences of living in a rural area in the province of Quezon. "Some kids live far away from town and must walk and cross bridges of narrow coconut tree trunks to go to school," Maza says.



"Bayanihan" by Cyril Maza



"Bayanihan 2" by Cyril Maza

"Bayanihan," also acrylic on canvas, refers to a spirit of communal unity to achieve a particular objective. It reflects a common tradition of community members volunteering to literally carry a house on bamboo poles from one location to another.

"Bayanihan 2," colored pens on paper, was created using the pointillism technique (tiny dots applied in patterns to form an image). This piece also depicts the strong Filipino tradition of community.

Maza is a self-taught artist based in Houston, Texas. He started painting in 2008 and has participated in various exhibits and events in the area.

Naga King Chili: Can you stand the heat?

The Naga King Chili is grown in northeast India.



If you can't stand the heat, steer clear of the Bhut Jolokia.

In Nagaland, a tribal homeland in northeast India, Bhut Jolokia is another name for what's more often referred to as Naga King Chili. Now, before you start bragging about how much heat you can handle, consider this:

Naga King Chili has ranged from 500,000 to 1.5 million Scoville heat units. (The Scoville number indicates how much dilution would be needed to render the heat imperceptible.) A chili that scores above 1 million SHU can claim the distinction of being "superhot." By comparison, a jalapeño is around 4,000 SHU. Typical Tabasco sauce ranges from 2,500 units to 5,000 Scoville units.

So you've managed to endure the discomfort associated with other chili peppers, such as an incendiary sensation in the mouth and a runny nose. Well, this champion of all spices is known for bringing mortals to their knees all over the globe. Literally. No longer the official hottest chili pepper on the planet, it still garners plenty of respect among the rabid "chiliheads" of the world.

For generations, the indigenous Naga King Chili has been a beloved part of northeast India's culture. It's consumed as a spice and coveted as a cure for gastrointestinal ailments. In fact, some in India believe it's a ghost chili that "burns away" ills. So maybe this is just what the doctor ordered for your tummy troubles. Or maybe not.

BHUT SALSA

- 1/2 cup water
- 2 dried Bhut Jolokia peppers
- 1 (15-ounce) can whole tomatoes or fresh tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Bring the water and dried ghost peppers to a boil. Let the peppers simmer for 5 minutes after boiling. In a food processor or blender, combine the tomatoes, garlic and vinegar, and then puree. Season with the sea salt.

Yield: 2 1/2 cups

Halo-halo: Dessert 'doesn't get any cooler'



Over the past few years, everybody has been talking about halo-halo. The Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post have both lauded it. Bon Appetit magazine declared that “it doesn’t get any cooler than halo-halo, the Filipino treat with a base of fluffy shaved ice.”

And Anthony Bourdain, lover of all things culturally significant, gave it his unabashed seal of approval on a segment of his cable TV show, “Parts Unknown.

Halo-halo – “mix mix” in Tagalog – is a decidedly emblematic dish, sold on street corners in the Philippines and lately in restaurants across the U.S. as part of the recent emergence of Filipino cuisine. It is a down-home, bring-back-childhood-memories dish, the Southeast Asian equivalent of the American hot fudge sundae or banana split – a smorgasbord of ice cream and crushed ice, gelée and fruit, tapioca and crispy rice that forms a colorful and deeply irresistible dessert.

How many halo-halo versions are there? No one is certain. What we do know is that, in addition to the ice and other liquid ingredients, there are a variety of mix-ins. *So many mix-ins.*

There’s sweetened red beans; sweetened white beans; sweetened coconut strings; gelatins; and fruits such as jackfruit, plantains and lychee. The

elaborate versions usually include a serving of flan (leche flan).

Whether decidedly simple or highly embellished, halo-halo is one angelic treat.

HALO-HALO

Recipe by Maryanne Cabrera

- Sweet red bean (munggo)
- Sweet white beans
- Coconut gel (nata de coco)
- Macapuno (gelatinous coconut string)
- Fresh or canned jackfruit, cut into chunks
- Shaved ice
- 1 tablespoon evaporated milk
- 1 scoop ube ice cream

In a serving glass, layer the sweet red bean, sweet white beans, coconut gel, macapuno and jackfruit. Top with the shaved ice. Drizzle about 1 tablespoon of evaporated milk over the shaved ice. Top with a scoop of ube ice cream. Serve immediately.

Yield: 1

Candid camera focuses on adoption stories



Deann Borshay Liem's mission is to promote cultural understanding.

Samurai warriors believed the sword was only as mighty as its master. If handled correctly, that sword could change the tide of battle and potentially win a war. In the world of film, the most powerful tool is the camera lens.

The images captured through it can open the minds of audience members and transport them to new worlds.

Writer, director and producer Deann Borshay Liem yields this tool in a fashion similar to the sword-wielding samurai warrior. Her mission, however, is to tell the stories of under-represented communities in order to promote cultural understanding and encourage positive social change. To carry out this mission, Liem created Mu Films (www.mufilms.org). This nonprofit production company based in Berkeley, California, distributes independent documentary-style films.

At the age of 8, Liem was adopted by an American family in San Francisco from her native country of South Korea. Liem's adoptive father introduced her to the world of film. "When I was growing up, he was obsessed with making home movies," Liem recalls. "He would spend hours shooting, editing and making creative titles for his movies. Then we would all gather in the living room and watch them together while I ran the projector at a young age."

Liem first got involved in filmmaking through the Center for Asian American Media in San Francisco. CAAM was started in the 1980s specifically to address and combat negative portrayals of Asians in mass media and to produce, distribute and exhibit films by and about Asian-Americans. Liem would later serve as the director of CAAM, when she worked with Congress to support minority representation in public media.

After her time with CAAM, Liem created Mu Films. "The name 'Mu' is the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character that means shaman, artist, warrior or people who connect heaven and Earth through

the tree of life," Liem explains. "So the name, to me, is symbolic for people who are able to bridge very different worlds." Liem has been honored as a Sundance Institute Fellow and is a recipient of the Rockefeller Film/Video Fellowship.

Perhaps the best explanation for Liem's success is her willingness to share the remarkable true story of her own adoption and search for her lost culture. The hero for Mu Films' Emmy-nominated documentary, "First Person Plural," derived from the family videos her adoptive father made when she was a child. "His films portrayed me as a happy, assimilated child, an Asian face in an otherwise white family with no history or connection to my birth country," says Liem. "The film grew out of a desire to 'interrupt' this narrative of happy and ready assimilation and to be in control of the telling of my own history."



Deann Liem's parents adopted her when she was 8 years old.

Another Mu Films documentary, "Geographies of Kinship," takes a deeper look into the world of Korean adoptees and the quest to reconnect with their culture. Since the Korean War (1950-53), South Korea has sent approximately 200,000 Korean children for adoption overseas, with a majority of these children relocated to the U.S. Overseas adoptions have continued in spite of Korea's modernization and industrialization in the post-war years. The documentary will air June 28-30, 2019, at the Korean American Adoptive Adoptee Family Network Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Liem will host the event and lead a discussion after the film airs.

"I think it's important that we ... hear as many stories from adult adoptees as we can, so that policy makers can make informed decisions about the future, and adoptive families and adoptees can form communities and support one another," Liem explains.