

THE ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

DISPLAY UNTIL MAY 31

# audrey

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APRIL/MAY 2007

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Think the environment  
is something you can't do  
anything about?  
These young 'uns will  
make you think twice.

STORY Audrey Shiomi

Switzerland's glaciers are melting away, *fast*.

That's what I noticed last year while climbing a section of the Alps 11,000 feet above sea level. The panoramic view of mountain range poking through the clouds was stunning, but there was an obvious flaw to the picture. "It's melting," said my tour guide Rene, a 71-year-old Swiss native, pointing to a parched cirque across the way. "There's hardly any snow anymore," he said. Then he muttered things under his breath about our current American president. Later, I saw a man at the gas pump accusing an SUV owner of aiding terrorism. I realized then just how grave our planet's situation had become: It's putting us at odds with each other.

If there were a better time to think about the planet, it would be now.

*But I can't afford a hybrid, you say.* On the contrary, helping the environment can be as simple as replacing regular light bulbs with fluorescent ones. Buy a darker lampshade to balance out the brightness, advises eco-stylist Danny Seo.

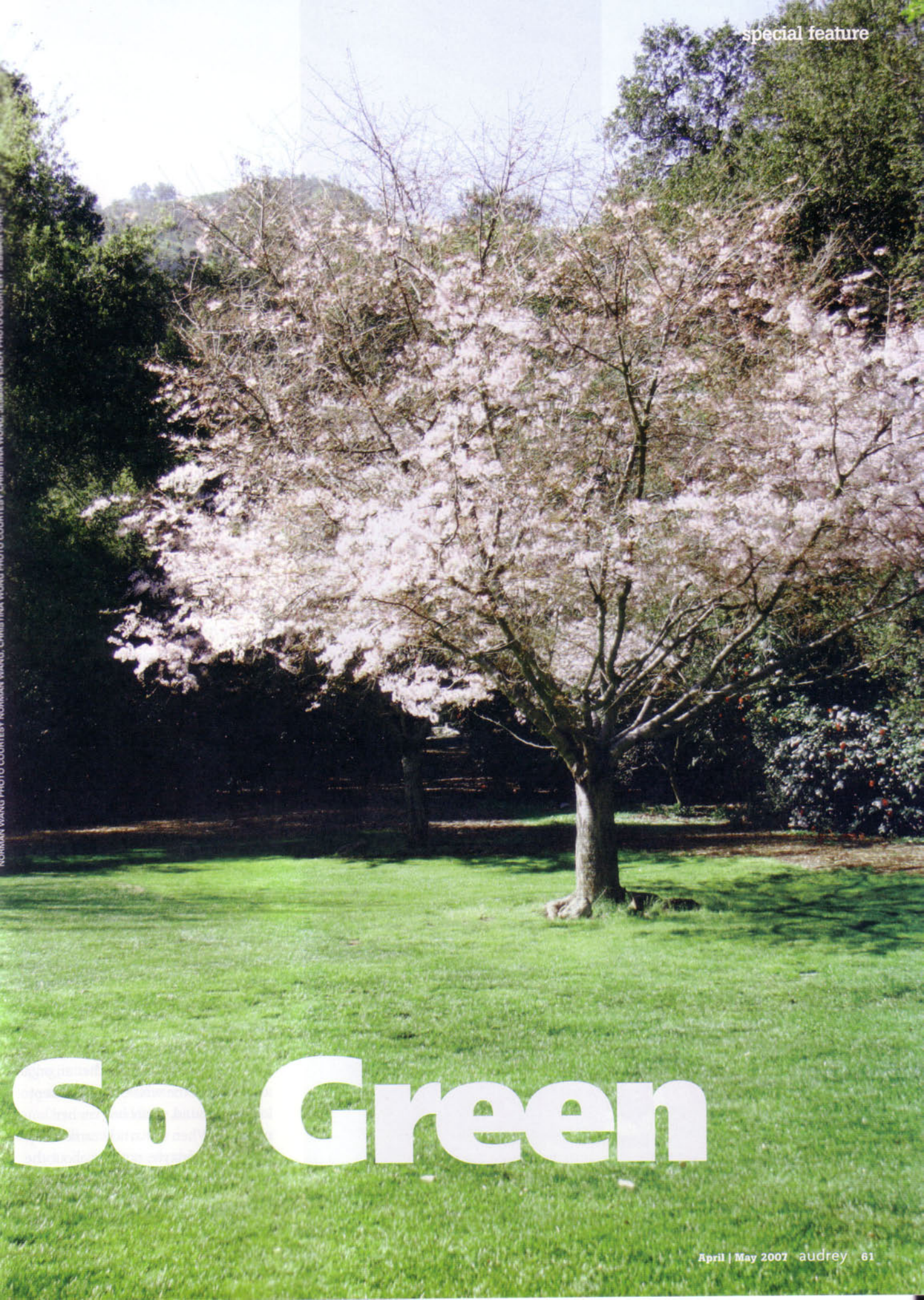
*But I'm too young to do anything.* South Carolina student Joying Brescia was only 8 when she led her Girl Scout troop on a mission to rid her beach of cigarette butts.

*But how can one person really make a difference?* Your creative efforts might catch the media's eye and inspire people you've never met, says Jessian Choy, who established a student environment center four years ago at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Today she works at a nonprofit organization helping young Asian Americans develop leadership and interpersonal skills, not to mention empathy for the environment. And just as her suggestion predicts, Choy's story is written on these pages to serve as inspiration to you, the would-be environmental do-gooder.

So instead of pointing fingers, focus on the positive and read on about how five young Asian Americans, all under 30, decided to take it upon themselves to help make the world a better place.

# So Fresh and





# So Green





**Norman Wang, 28**

**Location: Hawaii**

With a monthly bill of \$1.5 million, the University of Hawaii is the second-largest (the military ranks first) electricity guzzler on Oahu. That was the startling announcement last year, which mobilized a group of students to conduct an experiment in sustainability.

Norman Wang is one of those hoping to make his campus building, Saunders Hall, into a more economical and ecologically sound facility. Recently, the all-volunteer group completed a trash audit on the building, sorting through a week's worth of garbage, a total of 860 pounds. What came up the most? Paper ... lots of it. They also unearthed a sizeable amount of half-used toilet paper rolls which they figured janitors had a habit of replacing out during routine cleanups. Wang plans on compiling the audit findings into a report which will be used to persuade private industries about the economic benefits of recycling.

The group will also place "worm bins" around the building to make com-

post from the food and paper found in the trash. The soil enricher will be used for a garden to be created around Saunders Hall. To tackle the issue of energy consumption, they brought in an independent consultant to conduct an energy audit to figure out such things as the total cost savings of installing solar panels. Of course, any changes to the building must first be discussed and decided by university administration. Though as the catalysts for change, the role played by Wang and the other volunteers is key.

Born and raised in Irvine, Calif., Wang came to Hawaii last fall for his doctorate in molecular biosciences and bioengineering. He made good money working in the pharmaceutical industry, but decided life could be better fulfilled in other areas. At the University of Hawaii, Wang wants to find ways to derive biofuel from algae, a producer of oil. The campus is home to one of the biggest algae collections in the country, offering a treasure trove of resources. "I

see a lot of growth possibilities in alternative energy research," says Wang. "A lot of companies are jumping into this field and I just felt like things needed to change."

Especially for Hawaii, change is necessary to keep the island state from giving in to its own ecological frailty. The tourism-dependent island uses its natural resources to attract visitors, but the more who visit, the fewer resources will remain. "Hawaii needs to be more self-sustaining," says Wang. "You go to Honolulu and you see a modern city with skyscrapers, but what you see here is created by imports. It's not sustainable in the long-term."

Right now, Wang is reading *Collapse*, a book that examines the ways societies throughout time have rendered themselves extinct because of the poor mismanagement of natural resources. Fondly referring to the 50th state as his home, Wang will see to it that Hawaii doesn't succumb to that fate.

## Environmental Bling

After watching a film about global warming, jewelry designer Tina Tang decided to design a necklace that would give back. One hundred percent of the proceeds from her ReLeaf necklace, a delicate sterling silver olive branch with the words "peace," "love" and "recycle," will benefit The American Forest Organization. **Details** \$85, [www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org), [www.tinatang.com](http://www.tinatang.com).

