

Interviewer: Jasmin M. Ortiz

Artist: Anne Marie Chua Lee, Co-Founder of RedStar Costumes and Clothing

Phone interview Chicago, IL/Vernon Hills, IL

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JO: Going off the three subjects that I pulled from the interview, the first being Asian American Business Woman, how is your company fairing with your partner?

AM: Umm my partner is actually you know... I read this article when your partner with somebody in business, one person should be the marketing and the other person should be creating the product. And we're umm you know, whatever it is you do [whether it be] two different people or three different people need to be involved doing something different. And when I read this article, I was a little jarred because I then realized that Renee and I do the same thing. We both make the products and we both think of ideas on how to advertise. We're just not one person doing something different from [one] another. I felt like wanted to rethink the plan and rethink a way, we are doing two different things. And um with that, there's gonna be big changes having to do with two different things versus us doing two of the same things.

JO: How was the beginning process for gaining clients and advertisement in the company?

AM: Well it wasn't very difficult I was kinda surprised. We put out a free ad at cosplay.com and immediately got a flow of people contacting us from that free ad. People still contact us from there. As far as going to convention to convention to promote and get the word out, just now recently its starting to pay off by going to the conventions. Cuz people are e-mailing directly to us not just contacting us through an ad. Though honestly, those are our two biggest places where we advertise is through conventions and cosplay.com. Though it is also word of mouth, we have friends who talk to friends who come to us. Its [a] bit more definitely internet presence and convention presence that gives us clients and more customers.

JO: Do you think being an Asian American has affect you more or has being a women affect you more in the company?

AM: I think that actually of course when you deal with anima fans. It's a good 50/50. There are men, women and kids. They all enjoy anime and not really [a] dominating gender. There use to be but now that's not the case. We both deal with gamers and anime fans. Yes they do go hand in hand but gamers are actually majority male. When you're as female and you're trying to sell the gamers, it's not very hard. It's actually an advantage because you're considered a "minority", as a female gamer so you get more customers that way. I think in the anime business though. Most commissioners are I say all garments commissioners are female. Props commissioners tend to be male. So Its not really an disadvantage. It's kinda expected. And um as far as Asian American, it's also can be an advantage. I mentioned this previously interview and the lecture, if your Asian they suddenly some reason they think your more legit. And you know thats

questionable but you know um, as far as business goes. If there [clients] going to...you never know why they [clients] are going to choose you, but if in their head, they choose you because of that you don't know but I have a feeling that it would you know influence some people. If this person's Asian then they have more connections to whatever. It doesn't make any sense to me but you know. As far as being an Asian American and a woman, in this business, if anything it could be advantageous. If your taking about getting a business loan or you know something along the lines of that, something past clients, then it also can work to my advantage. Especially now, we are in a liberal administration right now, so um things are suppose to be going equal way. Things like equal employment and all that, and so if they see if you're a woman and you're a minority- OH Asian American women thats a minority and so they think okay, we want more diversity in your business so they will be apt to giving you how much you need for your business.[ I do feel that it is important for successful businesses as whole be should be diverse and represent the different populations who live here. and I am very happy to contribute to this diversity. However, I believe this diversity is low, and getting that special treatment I mentioned earlier is their way to try and fix this problem. In the end, it *does* help the business.]

JO: So you feel this as being an advantage instead of an issue or problem?

AM: It does help. Kinda in a way where I want to turn a blind eye to it. Like no, I don't want you to be helping me because I'm Asian and a woman. I want you to help me because I'm talented you know. I want people to recognize me for what I do and not what I am.

JO: Pan Asian Unity was a concept that you said your father had stated in relating to Asian Cinema or the fandom. I understood this as it brings Asian American generation together through this sort of relation that can occur. Does this make any sense?

AM: Yea it does. As far as bring the generation together, I don't know about that but as far as a younger generation being brought together. If I think about the group of people I hang around with, I think maybe half or a good half are Asian American. Its kinda funny. We don't even discuss being Asian American. Maybe we'll be more apt to getting you know dim sum you know or going over a friend's house and having adobo. Where are can share our culture via food or something like that. We're not gonna sit down and be like, oh did you hear um you know what was the latest thing. I was just on angry asianman .com and they were talking about how uh on the VH1 reality show. Thatpeppa of Salt and Peppa was dating this Asian American man. We're not going to sit around and discuss that or anything that we would find on that blog [angryasianman.com]. You know, um and I think that's a bad thing because they aren't willing to discuss it. Ironically, I think its because they don't want to talk about anything that is with conflict. Which is actually a big part of uh at least in Asian culture or living with an Asian family, they really like harmony. So you know with my friends even though we're all different um Korean American, Chinese American, Japanese American um we're not going to talk about it. But we all enjoy Asian cinema and games and anime and manga, we'll talk about that. Something to be proud of. Oh let me show you this things where my parents come from, so

that's the I feel that's safe though. Like food you know pop culture media that safe for us to gather on or talk about you know. It gets uncomfortable with them. You know, I'm willing to talk about I want to talk about I love to talk about that stuff. But I think when your in a big group like that you want to talk about unity and harmony and so um I do believe that's try though. That kinda of thing will bring people together you not going to think about the difficulties within the different cultures.

JO: You had stated in a previous interview that it was important for people to label you as an Asian American for a presence or recognition wise. Is that correct?

AM: Well, I think that I think I mentioned from the previous interview the being coming from an Asian background, it really influences the work that I do. Its really fusion inspired and growing up in here, growing up in the U.S. All those Saturday morning cartons that you see in the U.S. that had influence on me too. As for you know the toys I grew up with, western toys barbies and my little pony, that had an influence on me. Um I feel like if because my partner is Caucasian, I can get away a little bit more with somebody being like your stuff's not Asian enough. I don't think anybody would say that to me. But um you know I think that as um uh I'm sorry I'm blacking out. I think that um as far as the presence of our company and what we represent, we're trying to appeal to the fans and the fans are of every cultural background and you know they have something in common. They all like one thing. That comes from the same place, and in that, a lot of other different things. Its not just asian pop media though I mentioned in my lecture that if your going to be a fan of anime and games, there's a good chance your going to be a fan of harry potter and dr. who. And so focusing on just you know um pop subculture type of things, I don't think that I would be I don't see anyone saying its not Asian enough. And yea that's about it. Do you want me to elaborate on that.

JO: Do you do your own art separate from the Company?

AM: Yea actually, I was a graphic design major. I wasn't going to be just an art major what are you going to do with that degree. So um I choose to go into graphic design. I do like to draw and um any of the business cards, print work or the website is done by me. Um I kinda feel that its my last ounce of holding on. Being able to draw two dimensional things. Um and the branding itself for redstar, we have these mascots that are simple little stars that have expressions. That to me, that's fun to do. Coming up with these little characters and then um you know turning those characters into 3D. There are plushies, t-shirts, you know that's my own art coming out in the company merchandise product.

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