

## HIP HOP BRUHA PODCAST

### ALWAYS BE MY MAYBE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Featuring Alice Wong,  
Trinh Le, Joy Ng

IntroSong: [00:00:17](#) [inaudible]

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:01:39](#) Whats up, and welcome to hip hop Bruha ? Hip Hop Bruha is an online platform and podcasts that seeks to provide a critical analysis on everything from hip hop pop culture to all things political through an intersectional Feminism Lens. And I'm one of the Bruha hosts. My name is DJ Kuttin Kandi, Dj, turntablist, extraordinaire, hip hop feminist poet, community organizer, activist, published author and editor, lecturer, public speaker, global hip hop, cultural ambassador and known to be a people's hip hop's scholar. But enough about me. On today's episode we will be having a round table discussion on the film, "Always be my, maybe." "Always be my maybe" is a 2019 American romantic comedy film or should I say rom com, which is featured and written by Ali Wong, Randall Park and directed by the Nahnatchka Khan which was released on May 29th. So today I've invited a few of my friends, Alice Wong, Trinh Le, Joy Ng to join us on today's show to talk about this wonderful film as the each have offered really brilliant critical perspectives on this movie via blogs, articles and other social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook as they also lovingly embrace the film and what it has to offer our Asian American communities and beyond.

They're here today to talk with us about the poignant significant parts of this film and the impact it has on us as Asian Americans and across other communities of color as well as to work through the tensions of this film. As we think about the ways we can call in each other on how we can deepen and expand her work of inclusivity, diversity, visibility with not just our pop culture or entertainment world, but how we can dig in and examine ourselves and our organizing and cultural organizing work. So let me introduce you to some of our guests here before they start chiming in further to who they are. I've invited my friend Joy Ng aka Joyskii on social media pronouns. She, her hers joy is a San Francisco born and raised the Asian American community service worker, event's organizer and writer joy. Majored in Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University where she developed her research on hip hop and each in American resistance, identity and impact drawing from the roots of radical 1960s bay area social movements for research examines

hip hop is a vehicle for social justice in carved out spaces from classrooms to rap shows.

Joy's goal is to contribute to the body of research and literature on the topic of Asian American hip hop and shares her work online in the format of short essays and blog. For this specific episode on "always be my, maybe" her most important thought is to leave with the audience - to not run from complexities, to be open minded, to learn about intersectionality in more ways than just our own intersections. Also with us is Alice Wong pronouns: she, her, hers. Another good friend of mine, Alice is an Asian American disabled activists, media maker and consultant based in San Francisco. She is the founder and director of the disability visibility project (DVP) an online community dedicated to eating, sharing and amplifying disability in media and cultural. You can find her on Twitter @SFDIREWOLF. The one thing she wants to leave is that no one community is a monolith and there are universities within each one, so great to have hours.

She's on board with us as well. We also have another good friend of mine from here in San Diego, Trinh Le, pronouns: she/her/hers. Trinh, is a Vietnamese American community organizer with me right here in San Diego in our very own organization Asian Solidarity Collective, but she's also the leadership development director for the Center on Policy Initiatives and is also part of Viet Vote. Trinh, recently wrote a powerful social media posts of the reasons why she loved "always be my maybe" but also offered some critiques on the film, which is another reason why I'm bringing Trinh to our conversation. Now let's welcome all of our guests for being here today. I am so honored to have them here with me. No idea. Each one of them are amazing people who I look up to tremendously. I had the honor of working with some of them, significant work that they have been doing and I'm honored. They've always brought me on to their work and I learned from them every single time. I am so excited because I know they're going to bring some great perspectives to us and the work that we need to expand on and where we can lean into our discomforts. Let's have them introduce themselves further and so we can learn a little bit more about who they are. Uh, welcome everyone. Thank you for coming on and being in our show today. Please one of you jump right in and let's get talking. Hip Hop Bruha!

Alice Wong:

[00:07:25](#)

Glad to be here on this podcast. and just to say, I'm one of those Asian Americans who grew up in the Midwest, who was craving community and culture. So I moved out to San Francisco about 20 years ago, which is a big part of the movie. So happy to be here, happy to talk about this film.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:07:52](#) Thank you Alice for joining us.

Trinh Le: [00:07:55](#) Hi, this is, Trinh, I'm so honored to be invited to be on this. This is actually my first podcast, so thank you Kandi and really honored, um, to be, uh, speaking alongside Alice and Joy as well. Um, a little bit about me. I actually went to college, um, at UCLA, which is where Ali Wong and Randall Park went. So there were legends there and a major in Asian American studies. Um, had had grown up in this a part of my childhood in the south. So I lived in Tennessee and I've also lived in Mississippi, uh, as a part of my adult life. Um, so I've kind of moved around a lot but then in San Diego for, um, nine years now. Um, and that's how I met Kandi.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:08:48](#) Thank you Trinh

Joy Ng: [00:08:56](#) My name is joy. I'm an Asian American writer. I live in San Francisco, also born and raised here. Um, I did a lot of my writing focused on the intersection of Asian American identity and resistance and hip hop as a social, as a vehicle for social justice. So I'm really happy to be here to help with the discussion and dissecting the movie.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:09:14](#) Well, thank you so much. Thanks for everyone for joining us today. So I guess we can kick it off with basically, you know, just this basic question of what do we like about this film? Why do we think this film is important to us or not? And to specifically for those of us in our Asian American communities as well as how this impacts other communities of color and beyond. Um, and how this film has an impact on each of us. And why you think this is important? Each of you have offered some really great critiques in some of your blog posts or some of the articles you've written or on what you've shared on social media, whether it's Facebook or Twitter. So I'll leave it open for anyone to jump in right away.

Alice Wong: [00:10:03](#) I can start off with what I really liked about it. You know, first of all - Keanu, Keanu, Keanu. I think that part just really was like the highlight for me personally,. You know, there's very over the top - Clearly he's in on the joke about who he is. So I was laughing a lot about that. And also just as somebody who lives in the mission and all the commentary about gentrification to uh, you know, hipsters. I, I was like, you know, laughing a lot because it's totally true. I think Marcus's dad comments about a laundromat turned into some sort of hipsters sandwich place or something like that. I was like, there are like 12 places I can think of in the mission in my neighborhood that would fit that. So they really kind of, we're a pretty accurate about the changes at this city and you know, and acknowledging it.

- DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:11:13](#) Yes. You brought up some so many good points there. Um, I also noticed that, you know, you go really in thoroughly into Joy when you broke down about the gentrification, which Alice mentions. Um, something specific that you said Joy, um, in your blog was, um, and I'm going to quote it, "Always be my maybe flawlessly weaves in an Asian American experience that's relatable to a specific inside audience and still leaves room for other viewers to catch on. Sometimes being Asian American means having moments when you're neither Asian enough or American enough or lumped together with other Asians, aka congratulations. Now you're Chinese, like when they're eating dim sum and remark that they can't speak Cantonese, but Marcus hilariously recites a greeting and shoddy Cantonese to impress the servers. These moments that poke fun at Asian American experiences are what makes the film so special." Um, would you like to unpack this a little bit more for us and then dive into some of the things you also talk about in terms of gentrification?
- Joy Ng: [00:12:17](#) Yeah, sure. Um, you know, when I was watching these moments, eh, it kind of brought me to, um, Asian Americans in mass media at San Francisco state when we were learning how to unpack Asian-American tropes and stereotypes and media and all these things. And what I really loved about the way Ali Wong spoke about the movie was, you know, when you populate the film with Asian Americans and Asian characters, they are not the token Asian anymore. They're not the, you know, the nerd or the martial arts or the comic relief. They get to be the quirky one and they get to be the weird one. They get to be the leads. Um, and so those intimate moments when they're at home with their family in the kitchen, whether it's through food or, or other things like those small moments, um, really made a big deal because it wasn't like you're in on the joke, you're not the butt of the joke but you're in on it because at some point as an Asian American, um, you've had moments like that and it felt good to not be laughed at. But to be in on it.
- Alice Wong: [00:13:26](#) You know, I saw on social media, some Asian Americans were saying "oh this is great representation and great diversity of different types of what it means to be Asian American. But I saw some people say, that there's no way that Marcus's mom would tell Sasha to call her by her first name. And I think that I am so glad that they included that that because I bet you there are moms that are like that. Not all Asian American moms are the same. And I feel like that's really refreshing that Marcus's mom was the cool mom. She was really opening and welcoming. That's part of the pushing these tropes and expectations. And not all Asian moms are "tiger moms." And definitely Marcus's mom was not like that. And I really liked that.

- DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:14:29](#) Yeah, there was those little hints. It was so beautiful how those tiny things like that. Um, and even instyle.com broke down these, um, different areas of "12 Asian stereotypes that always be my, maybe completely shuts down." So if folks get a chance to read some of them on how this like really, you know, sheds that and dismantles all of every single one of these stereotypes that "Asian men are not sexy" or that "Asian women are submissive" or, or what you mentioned in terms of "Tiger moms" that they're not all parents are overly demanding and harsh, you know, so a lot of that is broken down really well. Is there anything else that sticks out for you? Um, I think Trinh you had really some really great points on your blog, on your Facebook post is there's some you want to share.
- Trinh Le: [00:15:22](#) Yeah, well it's interesting that Alex brought up the Um, his mom said, "oh, call me Judy." Right. And I, I was shocked. I was surprised about that. Like, oh, like that's not, um, what I would expect. But again, like, you know, there are probably some Asian moms that do prefer that. And there was another scene where, um, where Sasha parents actually hug her, uh, when they visit her in New York and I didn't catch it the first time I saw by i caught it the second time I'm like, Whoa, like my, my parents never hugged me and I'm Vietnamese American. But again, like trying to change that narrative. Like there could be other families or other ways to express love and, and, and that's okay.
- Alice Wong: [00:16:08](#) I was really touched by just Marcus and his dad. I did that relationship was beautifully portrayed as just like the real affection they have for each other in a way that Marcus's dad is goofy. and the way he danced. It was so cute and I think that was just so lovely to see.
- DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:16:30](#) Yeah, you bring up some really good points because my relationship with my parents being Filipinx American, you know, changed over the years. Like I really love what you mentioned. Um, Trinh in terms of, um, even sharing some of your experience with your parents and then seeing their story unfold where she talks about how her parents used to be and then all of a sudden it's shifting and transitioning. Right? So it's, I, I, there's a familiarity with that, with how I even experienced my own family and how it constantly shifts, um, and doesn't stick to this one narrow way of this is how my relationship, when my family is the whole journey of my life, when there's consistently always changing my relationship with them. So I think you bringing it up is really poignant and important. Um, did anyone else want to chime in on that?
- Joy Ng: [00:17:26](#) Um, I'll jump in. Um, so yeah, I really, I, yeah, I was thinking of, I was watching this movie and I thought about

my own parents who were not very like physically affectionate and like, they didn't really say I love you, like verbally, they wouldn't verbally express it or, um, you know, or like hug their children which I think was pretty normal growing up in a Chinese household. Um, but I think as we got older and we all kind of like live separately, um, I'm seeing a change in my own parents and grandparents who are now more open to, you know, embracing their grandkids and like being more physically affectionate, which is nice, you know? But I think, um, yeah, sometimes the family dynamics change and then also prompts some change in the way you express yourself. So, yeah. And, um, I think for me personally, it was definitely refreshing to see a different kind of representation for Asian parents in this film because they're usually represented in a way where they have a thick accent or they can't navigate the world on their own. And so they're super dependent on their children who speak English. And those kinds of tropes are kind of overdone and really stereotypical because there are generations of Asian Americans and Asians who's lived in, um, in, in San Francisco and all over the US for multiple generations. So we're not all necessarily immigrants. Um, but you know, that's the humor of sliding and, and overcoming those tropes was I think, done really well, um, through the characters of the parents in the movie.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:19:09](#) So with that, we're going to take a short, quick break, make sure you tune in and listen to these songs and we'll be right back with our guests to finish the discussion on "Always be my maybe."

Ruby Ibarra: [00:19:21](#) inaudible [song]

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:20:26](#) and you were just listening to Ruby Ibarra's newest track inspired by the new film, which we're talking about over here at our podcast show today on Hip Hop Bruha. We're talking about "Always Be My Maybe" starring the amazing Randall Park. And of course Ali Wong. You can get this song, it's on all the digital platforms including iTunes and Spotify through Beat Rock music it's produced by Oj the producer. So make sure you support the one and only Ruby Ibarra, who we all love here over at Hip Hop Bruha. So now let's get back to our guests and what we're talking about the film "always be my maybe." So since we're on the topic of music and hip hop, I figured I direct this question particularly towards you joy, especially in your article you really talked about the backdrop of the bay area, the ode to San Francisco with having Ameoba Records there and DJ Qbert. And of course as a Dj, I'm going to notice those things, right? But since you're an Asian American writer, blogger and you specifically talk about Asian Americans and hip hop and then you bring in the soundtracks that was played at the elements of all of



that throughout the movie. I figured I'd see what else you have to add to the conversation with bringing this together in the film and what that meant for you.

Joy Ng:

[00:22:02](#)

Um, yeah, definitely. So I, having been born and raised in San Francisco and now, you know, um, that where the context of San Francisco right now is such that we're always talking about the housing crisis and I think living in San Francisco and trying not to get pushed out and makes us hold on to the city that much more. Um, and so in any context when people are wanting to represent San Francisco a certain way, um, I think this film really hit the mark on representing San Francisco in an intimate way and not just as a hub for tech or a tourist site. Um, and so it was through, you know, capturing lesser no streets and the Richmond district, farmer's market at the UN plaza, like you said, rocking Ameoba's gear and especially through the music, they played a lot of bay area classics like souls of mischief, 93 till Infinity. Um, and then yeah, like it's just, it just felt like, um, your, the film was where you were and it met you where you were and um, yeah, and especially with like the Too Short song, um, I, the theater, I got to see it in the theater and everybody was going crazy. Um, so it really felt like it wasn't, San Francisco wasn't just the backdrop, it wasn't just the background, but having people like Dan the automator and um, DJ Q, Bert in the background, you know, as extras. Like how can these legends as extras was so hilarious, but they're also, um, contextually they're also cultural icons. Um, and so that really added to the texture of the culture of the bay area as well. And not just a stoic, um, uh, back backdrop for a film.

Alice Wong:

[00:23:54](#)

Yeah. Just to add what Joy said, I think it was really scene where they showed the four star or they pass by the four star cinema, which is this tiny little Asian American theater on street and like that, just to be just straight like you know, these really subtle but really don't want to pockets of San Francisco that do usually features in films and sets of San Francisco, you know, you always see, the golden gate bridge or the ferry building, but they really featured neighborhoods that I think would really just like we're real people live, which is really nice.

DJ Kuttin Kandi:

[00:24:50](#)

Yeah, no, that was beautiful. Also. What about food? I mean, I just loved that there was food. I know Trinh, you really laid out on your post about food and in specifically when you said in your post, which said, "the food, the spam and rice, the dim sum, the Kimchi stew. I loved how central food is in the movie because it accurately portrays how central food is in our Asian American lives. As a Vietnamese American growing up, my parents never said I love you. Instead, they would always ask, are you hungry or have you eaten yet? It took me years, decades

before I figured out that it's their way of saying, 'I love you.' Food is love, food is family, food is home. And I appreciate the film normalizing Asian food as a part of American culture, not something foreign." Um, did you want to expand on this and some of your thoughts and how that made you feel and et, etc?

Trinh Le: [00:25:44](#)

Yeah, I mean it was, it was just so nice to see Asian and Asian American food front and center in a film. Um, like to see spam in a movie, you know, like you're like, that's something that I love eating as an Asian American, but never see in a film before. Right. Um, and the second time I watched it, I saw, um, that there was also Zhao, which is Vietnamese porridge that she made for herself when she was eating at home alone in San Francisco before she went to, um, the, the rock show. Right. And just like those moments where she's making food or how food was presented was just so beautiful to me.

Alice Wong: [00:26:29](#)

I think it also sparked like this ongoing conversation about "authenticity" especially when Marcus know, "Asian food doesn't belong in a shot glass, you know, it belongs in a big ass bowl!" you know, i just thought it was really funny because there are these tensions right at that, you know, Sasha is clearly successful because you know, she's really kind of innovative, you know, Vietnamese or this idea of truth denominational, which I just laughed a lot about because like did, there aren't a lot of restaurants like that who are trying to have like, you know, break you do grab but still very much, grounded in who they are. So I think that also shows the rage at the diversity like Asian food or Asian American food is really all about, it should be both. Doesn't have to be either or.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:27:36](#)

Yes. Beautifully said. I recently met Soleil Ho, I don't know if you're all familiar with Solei, but I met her on the podcast, the show that "They call us Bruce" with Phil Yu and Jeff Yang and um, she talks about food elevation, uh, and mentioning this authenticity. Um, if you're not familiar with Soleil, she is now the new restaurant critic for the San Francisco Chronicle. But she had a co hosting of a podcast show called The Racist Sandwich. But I really feel like she's bringing a different element into restaurant critique and talking about food as a women of color, as someone who is Asian American and really bringing in a important perspective to the public in terms of the world of food, Specifically in the bay area. But I bringing it back to the food. I think Trinh, you also mentioned something really important in terms of, um, around food in the restaurant business, which I think is an important critique around, um, uh, the specific line you're in talking about "for Asian food to be authentic, it has to be cheap." Did you want to talk about that a little bit?



Trinh Le: [00:28:50](#) Yeah. So, um, when Marcus said that Asian food shouldn't be elevated or like he doesn't like the term elevate Asian food. Right. And part of me, wanted, wanted him to expand on that more because I think when people think of elevated, think it's expensive, that Asian food should be expensive. Um, but I questioned that because why is it that people are willing to pay, you know, 20 bucks for Pasta but not for Pho right? When the, uh, when the Labor is, is very similar, even like more intensive to make Pho, right? And so just not pigeon holding Asian food, um, that in order for it to be authentic, it has to be cheap. Um, I don't think that's fair and I think we should be more open and think about that a little bit more. Right? Um, that's different than, um, when, um, when people, Columbus Asian food, right? Like what if it's a white guy, you know, making and selling Pho for like 20 bucks. That of, that's a very different story. But when there are Asian Americans who are trying to experiment, explore, innovate, um, Asian food, like, I think that's great. Yes.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:30:05](#) Thank you for bringing that up because it, I think that's something so late talks about as well when I heard her on the podcast show. But since I'm not a foodie journalist per say, I think we really need to unpack, like you said, Trinh, on what elevated is or what elevating is. I do want to refer back to how Soleil defines elevating or elevated, um, in an interview with 'Foodie Underground, she states, "for example, when we talk about quote unquote elevating a cuisine or dish, we're often talking about how chef is disassociating it from the low brow, which is a very class and often really racialized label and making it worthy of consumers with discerning taste." So I do think that when talking about elevating, we need to really distinguish what that really means and unpack that, especially for those of us who aren't familiar with the term. I certainly don't as, I'm not a foodie journalists, but like you, I do question like why can't our food dishes like a Pho or a Lumpia cost just as equally to a pasta dish at a fancy restaurant? These are questions definitely worth exploring or demanding rather on terms of equity, especially equity as we think about our service workers and how they're getting paid equity, how in terms of wages, all of these things are really valuable things that we need to unpack more as we try to dissect and deconstruct or understand what elevating food is. And as we explore authenticity. Now we're going to take another break and we'll be right back after we listened to these tunes and we'll continue our conversation with them.

Dakota Jones: [00:32:02](#) [inaudible] Song: Have Mercy by Dakota Jones

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:33:12](#) And we're back at Hip Hop Bruha. I'm your host DJ Kuttin Kandi. And today we're talking about "always be my maybe" a round table discussion with a few good friends

of mine, Trinh Le, Alice Wong and Joy Ng. So now I really want to dig deep into more of harder critical questions to allow us room to grow. So even as much as we love, love, love, love this film, there's still so much to unpack and make room for us to have further understanding, uh, further understanding for us to grow as organizers, as writers, as artists, as filmmakers, as entertainers. Like where can we grow? What are we not seeing? What are we not understanding, what we have yet to explore so that we can make move and stretch within our own learning edges? Right? So Alice brought up some important parts of this film that I noticed right away.

Alice Wong: [00:34:24](#)

Um, and you had posted on Twitter, I think an important point where "Blerh. Sasha, spotting too many disabled parking placards and pointing at an ambulatory person, getting out of a car." quote, "look at that coming out of their cars, all abled bodied." unquote, um, uh, closed quote. hashtag always be my maybe. And then following up with "lots of people may observe and think this very thing, not all disabilities are visible and suspicion of disabled people faking it for a special perks hurt folks who need access. It's about access and our rights to it" Hashtag suck it ableism Hashtag "always be my maybe." And I think you do such important work within disability justice work. I'm talking as well about access and specifically your work around, um, access is love. Yeah. So my question is really what can we do? I mean, yes, there is a responsibility for those who have no disability.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:35:25](#)

People who weren't disabled to do the work, to be less ignorant. Um, and not to have these microaggressions or really inherent ableist attitudes, but, and the work shouldn't fall on those of us who have disabilities. However, we're still stuck with this question. What is the work that needs to be done? What are the ways that people who are in all kinds of fields and of course in the conversation of filmmaking and writers and artists, what are the work that they can do to be more aware, to take responsibility so that they can be inclusive and at the very least or at the most just really not be ableist. That's the question that still lingers here in this conversation and beyond.

Alice Wong: [00:36:18](#)

Well thanks for that. And again, this is part of the larger conversation about diversity in pop-culture, diversity in media, all these broader conversations about, how do we bring it to more people and very often still when we think of diversity we don't think about disability and yet disabled people are part of every single community. I feel like that's always often the really sad thing that's left out so clearly about Asian Americans there are disabled folks, whether they identify or not. And I feel like there's so much to love about "always be maybe." But that part

when I saw it, yeah, that just felt like really like, it's so funny in every other way. But that part was like, it didn't really add to their comedy with the vibe and it felt like it was punching down diversity, you know, talked about other things and used to be the really rare kind of wrong note and I didn't know what that brought to the, to the film as a whole.

Alice Wong:

[00:37:42](#)

And I do that there was a very small, you know, [inaudible] some people might even think of it as a throwaway line, but for a lot of folks like myself, when I saw that, it was really not okay. And you know, I just felt like almost a little bit like worried about tweeting about it, but I did it anyway because you could still support a film and critique it but doing it out of love. Right. And I felt that was really important because dude, this is a thing that happens to a lot of disabled people and these are attitudes that are so pervasive and people think about, they talked a lot more about racism, sexism, misogyny, white supremacy but a lot of folks still do not have any idea what ableism is. And that scene, although "minor" is a huge example of ableism, everyday ableism whether it's microaggressions, or just these attitudes that just permeates within our society.

And I do want to add one other thing while it's fantastic that so many Bay Area musicians were featured, one of my friends told me that at the very beginning of the film, one of the songs featured uses the N word, which is a used for little people. Uh, so the, the very first song of "always be my maybe" and she turned on the captions and she saw the N word twice. And again i you don't like, yeah, you, it's like you think about people are so thoughtful in their choices in terms of the music, the wardrobe, the settings there's an area that, you know, should be considered because slurs like the N word are not okay anymore. Just like the r word and my friend, listen, we started having this conversation on Twitter. She's a little person. She was really distressed by it.

So like, you know, we've got to think about ways we would be more inclusive. They're clearly diverse in our representation. You know, lets not forget those who are like the most marginalized and those who really still don't have, you know, who aren't in these positions in entertainments to make these decisions. Where are the disabled people in Hollywood? In the writers rooms, as producers, in front of and behind the camera, right? this is why i feel like social media, you know, social media has been very useful to like point these things out. Not to troll them out, not to shame people. But to really point out that these things and say, this is why it's not okay. This is why it's harmful and this is why hopefully, non-disabled folks just pause and think about why is this

funny or is this funny? What are ways that we could be funny without harming people?

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:41:29](#)

Thank you. Really powerful Alice, and thank you for also bringing up the song because I didn't catch that and I watched the film four times. So I think that's important, especially for specifically as for as Asian Americans when we write film, we should be really thoughtful of every little way that we can. And then if we can't get the critical thinking on our own, we should definitely call in folks in our community to offer their feedback. And I'm not sure if Ali and the director and some of the cast had other community folks come in to critique the film prior to it being released. But I feel like those are some of the ways they can get some feedback from folks to offer a different lens if they're not seeing it through that perspective. Right. Um, when you were doing a lot of this critiques for what, um, were you getting any, um, what was the response with people on your Twitter on, on some of this? I noticed that some of, you know, like Soleil did respond to that as well as, you know, Jenny Yang and, and Jeff Yang, like, oh, thanks for bringing that to my attention. Um, where there other, uh, maybe even negative feedback from other folks? Um, on some of your critiques on this.

Alice Wong: [00:42:43](#)

So I was totally ready for that. Because again, its not like I don't want to uplift, and support and celebrates this. film because its a fantastic film. There were some other Asian Americans who said that, oh, you know, I didn't interpret that scene as an ableist scene, you know again, they were thinking, oh, this is just a way like, you know, just a cultural thing. Well, in a lot of ways the cultural days, embedded in, our biases, right. So like I didn't want to argue with that person, but they did not interpret it that way. And I think they weren't defensive about it, but you know, again they weren't really opened to my perspective. They just said that, oh, I didn't interpret it that way. I interpret it as, you know, a cultural thing. So uh like okay, I didnt want to create this huge tweeter beef with this person.

Alice Wong: [00:43:51](#)

But, uh, you know, I do think that overall, I was really trying surprised and really appreciated that people were really like, Oh wow, I never thought about that. Oh, oh yeah. You know? Oh okay. So folks were really cool about it and I think just, you know, I don't have the music, you know, I think I love Hip Hop. I they did with it Hip Hop, theres a lot of conversation on who gets to say what. And I think with, you know, words like that are slurs, you know, we have to be very thoughtful about like, it's not being PC to object just something like this you know. Within our groups, within disabled folks we can reclaim things that are slurs. But when non-disabled folx use

those slurs in their work and do it, without any kind of thought or intention. I think that's where, you know, that's why it's problematic. So I just wanted to share that.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:45:00](#)

Thank you for that Alice for sharing all of that with us. It is something for those who don't have disabilities to really take the responsibility to check themselves and find out the ways that they can do the work to show up for people with disabilities as well as for those particularly who right bill who make film, who are behind the scenes doing this kind of work and how they can do better at being more inclusive. I'd like to see folks with disabilities take lead roles, be front and center. So these are the things that people need to think about. Another thing that's the stuck out for me was the batching the body shaming, the fat phobic comments throughout the continuous mentions of wearing spanx throughout the film. And it made me really, really uncomfortable. And a lot of folks have shared with me that in the past, and I don't really know Ali Wong's work like that, but a lot of folks mentioned to me how she had in the past shared a lot about when she had given birth, um, and her addressing the body shaming that was happening to her.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:46:24](#)

Well, it could have been and I'd like to assume it could have been her intention to kind of address that via uh, some parody type of comedy. But for me it was really hit or miss because sometimes with things like that when you make jokes like that it can come across really hit or miss. And I found myself getting really frustrated and by the time I watched it four times I was really upset and hurt and it triggered a lot of things in the past for me. So it didn't come across no matter how well intentioned it was. Sometimes well intention people or willing intentioned work. It just, it just can be super harmful and hurtful and it's just not right. So we need to do better if we are trying to do that kind of work in that particular way through comedy. Is there anything else that stuck out for you?

Alice Wong: [00:47:21](#)

Yes, charity really aspect that's related to ableism, you know, there was that other member of the band Hello Peril where there were jokes about how, you know how he lost a ton of weight and all this weird stuff about his weight loss that very much you know, fat phobic. And if it's like, why was this funny? This is that at the very end of the scene where they're at the restaurant, he said, I'm so hungry. I'm like, that's not funny for a lot of, a lot of people, especially with food its such a symbol of love and affection in this film and then to have this, you know, again I don't want to call these throwaway lines because they all collectively add it to the narrative. Right. You know that throwaway line about that parking, placards that, you know, that throwaway line about being hungry.

I mean these sounds like really minor things and I'm sure like, you know, that may be some listeners of this podcast and be like, oh you're just so picky, don't be so overly sensitive and you know, these are little things that we should all think about. You know, I don't think there are just so many ways of kind of being funny that you don't have to do that. You know, why do you people think that's funny and I think that's another really important question that we should ask artists like why is this funny. This idea of being hungry of losing 50 pounds and why is that cruel?

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:49:32](#) you bring up a really important point - very much ask that question, why is that funny? Um, and I think that should be a Hashtag. Hashtag why is this funny? And it kind of forces people to really think about it in a way. Like why is this funny? Um, did anyone have any other critiques that we might have missed that I might've missed to the film or just want to offer to anything that we're bringing up?

Joy Ng: [00:50:25](#) Yeah, definitely. Um, I love the way that Alice presents these issues and I think when, you know, we're at a time where, you know, Asian American representation in the media is in demand right now. We had, you know, such a the year with Crazy Rich Asians and then, you know, there's Fresh off the Boat and then there's this film and there's a multitude of other Asian American actors who are, um, in many other TV shows. So I think this adds to the conversation of Asian American representation, especially when we're asking questions around race, gender, class. I think we need to definitely start including, um, the conversation around ableism and challenging ourselves to deconstruct those ideas. Because just like the way we learn how to tackle racism and other things, I think there is a specific language that needs to be learned in order to deconstruct these things and to kind of uncondition ourselves from what has been normalized and what has been conditioned for us. So I really appreciated, um, Alice's take on this and critiquing with love and not to, um, you know, take away from the celebration of a fantastic film, but really to add on to, um, the critique of, um, constructive criticism on, you know, what else can we do and what can we do better? You know, so I think out of time when we're, we're pushing the envelope in every way we can under the umbrella of Asian American, I think this should definitely be a bigger conversation.

Trinh Le: [00:51:34](#) I'd also like to add to, um, and I want to thank Alice for the courage for calling in the film. I learned so much from that thread, um, and watching it a second time, like definitely it, it.. even the first time I didn't think those parts were funny, but now I understood why. Right. Um, based on what I read from the third and from conversations with people and I recall like, this is why I



didn't like comedy growing up was because people were always making fun of a marginalized group, whether it be race, you know, like there were racist jokes, sexist, homophobic jokes, right? You, I remember even going to like Asian American comedy clubs and they would still make fun of people within their group. Right? I mean, it's great that we're at a place where this film doesn't use sexist, racist and homophobic jokes, but it's really unfortunate that they're still ableism, there's still fat shaming.

Trinh Le: [00:52:32](#) there's still all these other isms. Right. And I think to me that just a sign to me that I need to educate myself more. We need to do more education and engage the Asian American community around these issues. Um, I don't think the writers intentionally do that. I think it was just ignorance. Right? And I think, um, for me, I just, I need to talk about these issues more. I need to engage with folks on these issues more, um, with my family, with, you know, people like my friends, you know, like people I'm around. Um, and, and speaking up more. So thank you for for giving me the tools and the courage to speak up on these issues.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:53:15](#) Oh, thank you. And, oh my gosh, you just like labeled what I was in fear of with comedy, I always hated going because I would always be afraid of being called out, the one called out - the fat girl in the room that they call out their joke when they point out if I walk into the show late - oh, don't say something about the fat girl being late or the fat girl sitting down in the front row. So every time, that was one of the things that I feared about going to comedy shows. but you really bring up, um, just the point of what we can do in our own communities and in terms of education, speaking to other families, educating ourselves on where we fall ignorant on and what we can do to address these things specifically because, um, even though we've sort of films like this didn't talk about racism, they still included the n word in the backdrop, right? But even as the film addresses classism and it's subtle, comical ways, even poking fun at the celebrity worshiping, there's still these hints of classism, microaggressions. Exactly what you mentioned Trinh and saying, uh, Asian food can only be authentic if it's cheap, you know. So what are these other ways that we can address this or what can we do to do better and be better?

Alice Wong: [00:54:44](#) I think just be open to this idea of critique. And the idea that, you know, to be open to learning. I think that's to be really huge thing. There have been times I've been really vocal about things. And people just don't believe me. You know, they just don't like believe that what I'm saying of my experience as a lived person with disabilities

and other things is that I'm not even believed. So the fact that there are people that do believe what you're saying and are open to hearing it and are open to like, you know, just, uh, doing the work - I think is really important, especially in the entertainment because let's face it, we all have our implicit biases. We all have work to do and I think especially in the Asian American community, you know, there's so many other issues other than race.

Alice Wong:

[00:55:46](#)

There's like, you know, there's colonialism there's anti-blackness, uh, you know, slowly people are becoming more open talking about the stigma and shame around mental health. But that's a really long way to go. I think things are a little bit better. But you know, again, you know, there's so much more and we'll be talking the Asian American community with such a diverse, we're not monolithic but we're also just not always centered on race, ethnicity and culture. There are so many other intersecting issues that really impact all of us. I can't remember if I mentioned toxic masculinity but that could be another episode right but those are some areas that all of us within the Asian American community, should really think about it and should really acknowledge as this work that needs to be done.

DJ Kuttin Kandi:

[00:56:44](#)

Thank you for bringing up those other topics that we could bring up in future shows as well. Um, how about you, Joy? Anything that you might want to mention or talk about in terms of, um, ways that we can move forward in ways that we can address some of these issues?

Joy Ng:

[00:57:02](#)

Umm yeah like you mentioned before, like there's, you know, music and arts and I think those are also great spaces to have these conversations and educate each other. And I think, you know, I'm like what we were saying previously, just continuing the conversation, um, and, and continue pushing, um, within the scope of intersection intersections in our identities. You know, even as Asian Americans being seen as a minority group that this joke kind of found a way to ostracize yet another group. Um, and I think we need to be able to catch those moments when it happens. And so I think, um, this film is a good learning moment for all of us to learn what ableism is, to check our language and our everyday lives and to see how we can further the conversation. And perhaps if for people who are social media heavy to start educating themselves from other advocates, say like Alice who I started following on Twitter and started learning so much from, uh, from her tweets and repost. So yeah, just getting to know other people's stories and humanizing each other, um, and learning ways to deconstruct the things that should be changed.

Trinh Le: [00:58:15](#) But yeah, I just wanted to, the telling our story I think is so important. Um, and I think this film made it because Ali Wong wrote it right. She told her story and if we can have so many more folks within the Asian American community and outside the Asian American community, right. Um, tell their stories, write their stories, you know, and, and um, and showcase their art, whether it be their film, comedy, whatever like, I think there's so many stories left untold and if they're told, we would understand each other better right. So uplifting those stories as well.

Alice Wong: [00:58:57](#) Yeah, and hopefully this raise a great critical response in terms of just the media coverage. [inaudible] you know, positive reviews [inaudible] feel like this year or like the last few years, this hopefully does open up these gatekeepers. You shouldn't have these hurdles that [inaudible] you know, all kinds of marginalized artists. So you know, I did it at a broader view of this is going to be hopefully part of this larger movement to really, you know, make the case that there's just so many stories. It's just the tip of the iceberg in terms of just Asian or Asian American representation. There's so many facets to our community that's still really unexplored. That's exciting.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [00:59:59](#) Alice, again, you bring up such important points of other intersections that we need to dig into like colonialism, anti black racism, toxic masculinity, imperialism, capitalism, all of it, all the things we need to dig into. And I believe the way we really dig into that work is by working with folks on the ground, working from the ground up, centering and listening to those who are doing the work in our communities. Something that Linda Sarsour particularly says that those who are closest to the pain are closest to the solution. So to me, the way we really get to that is by doing the work. So I think when we really actively are engaged in our communities and we're actively actively involved, um, I think those are the spaces we learn from. And, and then we pull in, in really understanding how this affects the representation and doesn't have it and how these kinds of films has an impact on perpetuating some of these ideas that lead to the overall white supremacy we're trying to shut down.

.. You know what I mean? So I think those are some of the things as well to be added into - How can we push back on these kinds of things, uh, as well as how can we really educate ourselves is really being involved in our own community. So we are about to wrap things up. We are coming to an end here at Hip Hop Bruha so I leave it all to you to see how you want to share any last words or thoughts or anything we have to look forward to in the work that you each do. Anything you'd like to close off with our audience here?

Alice Wong: [01:01:49](#) Well, I really enjoyed this conversation and I really appreciate all of you and to be part of this. I just want to acknowledge that. Just share that gratitude to be in this space with all you bad asses. And if folx want to check out my work disability visibility project.com. And I'm on Twitter and I tweet a lot at @SFDIREWOLF. So thank you.

Trinh Le: [01:02:28](#) This is Trinh. Um, also want to think, uh, everyone especially Kandi for inviting us for this conversation. Um, really loved chatting with all of you. Um, and yeah, I mean I'm, I'm getting a new job, um, but I'm, I'm continuing to organize in San Diego. So if anyone in in San Diego want to continue to have these conversations. Just hit me up. Yeah. Unfortunately I'm not on Twitter. I'm not as active, although now I feel like I really should be active on Twitter again, but I am on Facebook, if you want to look me up.

Joy Ng: [01:03:04](#) Oh, thank you Kandi for inviting me to this round table discussion. Um, I really enjoyed the film and I really also enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective on um, this film as well and learning how in other ways we can push for better representation and bring people in to the conversation as well. So I really appreciate meeting everyone today and sharing this space. Um, I'm, I do short essays and blogs on hip hop and Asian America and you can find my work at [joynsf.wordpress.com](http://joynsf.wordpress.com).

DJ Kuttin Kandu

And now some final thoughts before we head on out of here. It came to my attention not too long after the interview we had with our guests that there was a part in the film that displayed some anti-black racism in the fact where Marcus's father had stated that, "Diana Ross is cheaper than a Beyonce" kind of uhh impersonator joke. And what this does is that it pits two Black women against each other and puts them on some sort of what my friend calls it a devaluation scale where it really pits two Black women against each other and pokes fun at them in some degrading way where they think its funny and its really not that funny at all. I mean thats Anti-Blackness as its core. That's anti-black racism and its actually really disappointing. And we need to do better than that. And I hope we do. And I hope this episode really calls to our attention the things that we need to work on and the things that we should to examine about ourselves. Because yes we definitely do need to, you know embrace a lot of what representation and visibility means for many of us because it's important at the same time uh when we do hav more visibility there is responsibility. And I know it's a learning process, for all of us really. But I hope that this episode offered a way for us to examine ourselves to be critical, a way for us to call in these conversations so we can do better.

DJ Kuttin Kandi: [01:03:38](#) Well that's about it. We're at the end of our show, a big thank you to each of our guests, Trinh Le, Alice Wong and Joy Ng for joining us today on a round table discussion of "always be my baby." Make sure y'all tune in each and every week on every episode as we discuss Bruha Politics on Hip Hop, Pop Culture and Feminism. This is Hip Hop Bruha and I'm DJ Kuttin Kandi. And I'll see you next time. Peace

Dobby: [01:04:07](#) [Inaudible] Song Peregrine by Dobby