Viterbi, Amazon partner for new Center for Secure and Trusted Machine Learning

The center will fund research projects and fellowships opportunities.

By DIANA FONTE
Staff Writer

Housed in the Viterbi School of Engineering, Amazon’s data research efforts have moved to the University of Southern California to establish the Center of Secure and Trusted Machine Learning. The partnership, announced in January, will look at customer data throughout the United States and develop research projects with the potential to bring about large-scale privacy preserving solutions.

"Today, machine learning is everywhere — speech recognition, self-driving cars, web searches and even human genes research," Provost Charles Zukoski said in an email to the Daily Trojan. "However, this advancement in modern technology creates potential privacy issues and leads to ethical questions on how it can be applied. This one-of-a-kind research lab at USC will serve to make machine learning and AI technologies more secure and trusted by the public for future generations to come."

The center isn’t the first instance of USC-Amazon relations — the Amazon Alexa Fund and Alexa Fellowship recently funded more than 21 startups in the USC Viterbi Startup Garage located at Silicon Beach. However, Viterbi Dean Yannis C. Yortvos said that this new partnership is primarily motivated by a different goal: a common pursuit of groundbreaking real-world privacy solutions.

"This center is going to do the fundamental work that allows you to develop applications that can come out of this … I’m expecting a considerable amount of intellectual property that will be generated, and then, [we will] have people that can take this intellectual property and make it useful," Yortvos said.

The center focuses on enhancing the security measures for data that is collected directly from consumers, bridging the gap between an immense amount of data that major technology companies acquire and the best practices for applying it in the real world, Yortvos said.

The Amazon partner in the establishment of this new center, Prem Natarajan, is a USC alumnus. He previously served as the senior vice dean of engineering at Viterbi and the executive director of the Information Sciences Institute, a 500-person R&D organization in Marina Del Rey. Natarajan is now the vice president of Alexa AI overseeing the Natural Understanding organization of Alexa AI.

Through the center, both faculty and doctoral student researchers will be able to partake in this research, with the shared priority being new privacy-preserving ML solutions for both USC and Amazon.

Students can become involved through research projects funded by the center and through annual fellowships. Research students in their second, third and fourth years studying in an ML adjacent field will be nominated and, if chosen, awarded a one-year “Amazon ML Fellows” fellowship for their data research.

Yortvos said that although ML students primarily come from the electrical engineering and computer science programs, “AI is a technology that permeates pretty much everything.” For this reason, he believes that students from other programs of study, such as industrial systems engineering, aerospace engineering, mechanical engineering or data science will also take interest in the opportunity.

“I think at the end of the day, many of our undergraduates will benefit as well,” Yortvos said. “It’s a more sort of a holistic partnership with the company.”

Avestimehr said that the research opportunities will be accessible to snow faculty and researchers than the Viterbi Information Theory and Machine Learning research lab, where he currently serves as director. While the research lab is reserved for Viterbi faculty, the Center for Secure and Trusted Machine Learning will offer possibilities for faculty and students not involved in Viterbi. The center also plans to roll out annual symposiums and workshops for undergraduate students to partake in.

Amazon also stands to gain a lot from collaboration with USC talent, Avestimehr said. As a technology company whose total share of the E-commerce market currently stands at 45%, Amazon has faced raised concerns with data privacy in the past related to its smart home devices, and both the amount and applicability of consumer data it collects. AI and machine learning expand the further uses for just devices like Amazon Alexa — it is used in product recommendations for Amazon shoppers, Amazon Echo, Amazon Go cashier-less stores and Alexa. Avestimehr clarified that USC’s demonstrated strength in combining security and machine learning was a large draw for Amazon in deciding on a university partnership.

“They get talent, we get impact,” Avestimehr said, referring to the real-world contexts that Amazon will be able to expose researchers to. "Understanding [through] this collaboration, what are the real-world challenges that a giant company like Amazon is facing in this domain [will allow us] to define more meaningful problems, more exciting problems, [and have] a bigger impact than what we can do individually.

Amazon has recently been taking advantage of this known pool of talented researchers who want to be on the cutting edge of data technology. In the past year, it has established two centers in Los Angeles and New York dedicated to this research: The Center for Secure and Trusted Machine Learning in the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, and the Columbia Center of Artificial Intelligence Technology in the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science. The latter partnership was announced in September of last year, followed by the center in metropolitan Los Angeles announced in January of this year.

In terms of research and sourcing projects, Avestimehr said that the center is ready to commercialize work on machine learning applications, marking the start of a multi-year partnership that has the potential to impact billions of people around the world. "It is an exciting, important topic that is in everybody’s mind.”

Avestimehr said, “[I] think a university industry partnership on this topic is a great candidate, because it can have a real world impact.”

The center isn’t the first in the country for its kind. Columbia University recently established the Center for Privacy and Data Innovation Technology in the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science. The latter partnership was announced in September of last year, followed by the center in metropolitan Los Angeles announced in January of this year.

"It is an exciting, important topic that is in everybody’s mind.”

Avestimehr said, “[I] think a university industry partnership on this topic is a great candidate, because it can have a real world impact.”

The center focuses on enhancing the security measures for data that is collected directly from consumers, bridging the gap between an immense amount of data that major technology companies acquire and the best practices for applying it in the real world.

Yortvos said that although ML students primarily come from the electrical engineering and computer science programs, “AI is a technology that permeates pretty much everything.” For this reason, he believes that students from other programs of study, such as industrial systems engineering, aerospace engineering, mechanical engineering or data science will also take interest in the opportunity.

“I think at the end of the day, many of our undergraduates will benefit as well,” Yortvos said. “It’s a more sort of a holistic partnership with the company.”

Avestimehr said that the research opportunities will be accessible to snow faculty and researchers than the Viterbi Information Theory and Machine Learning research lab, where he currently serves as director. While the research lab is reserved for Viterbi faculty, the Center for Secure and Trusted Machine Learning will offer possibilities for faculty and students not involved in Viterbi. The center also plans to roll out annual symposiums and workshops for undergraduate students to partake in.

Amazon also stands to gain a lot from collaboration with USC talent, Avestimehr said. As a technology company whose total share of the E-commerce market currently stands at 45%, Amazon has faced raised concerns with data privacy in the past related to its smart home devices, and both the amount and applicability of consumer data it collects. AI and machine learning expand the further uses for just devices like Amazon Alexa — it is used in product recommendations for Amazon shoppers, Amazon Echo, Amazon Go cashier-less stores and Alexa. Avestimehr clarified that USC’s demonstrated strength in combining security and machine learning was a large draw for Amazon in deciding on a university partnership.

“They get talent, we get impact,” Avestimehr said, referring to the real-world contexts that Amazon will be able to expose researchers to. "Understanding [through] this collaboration, what are the real-world challenges that a giant company like Amazon is facing in this domain [will allow us] to define more meaningful problems, more exciting problems, [and have] a bigger impact than what we can do individually.

Amazon has recently been taking advantage of this known pool of talented researchers who want to be on the cutting edge of data technology. In the past year, it has established two centers in Los Angeles and New York dedicated to this research: The Center for Secure and Trusted Machine Learning in the USC Viterbi

The center isn’t the first in the country for its kind. Columbia University recently established the Center for Privacy and Data Innovation Technology in the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science. The latter partnership was announced in September of last year, followed by the center in metropolitan Los Angeles announced in January of this year.

"It is an exciting, important topic that is in everybody’s mind.”

Avestimehr said, “[I] think a university industry partnership on this topic is a great candidate, because it can have a real world impact.”

The center isn’t the first in the country for its kind. Columbia University recently established the Center for Privacy and Data Innovation Technology in the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science. The latter partnership was announced in September of last year, followed by the center in metropolitan Los Angeles announced in January of this year.

"It is an exciting, important topic that is in everybody’s mind.”

Avestimehr said, “[I] think a university industry partnership on this topic is a great candidate, because it can have a real world impact.”
Nonprofit aids food insecurity and small businesses

Open Meal helps food insecure diners with meals from struggling businesses

By KELLY SADIKUN
Staff Writer

Restaurants were hit hard by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, but for local Asian restaurants, the struggle was two-fold. Not only were they facing the double jeopardy of decreased customers eating out, but many were also facing anti-Asian American xenophobia.

Kevin Su, a senior majoring in business administration, said seeing Asian restaurants closing down because of the coronavirus motivated him to put effort into mitigating the pandemic's effects. This inspired him to join Open Meal, a service that feeds diners struggling with food insecurity from businesses having difficulty staying afloat.

"I grew up in the back of a Chinese restaurant, so this pandemic and all the restaurants closing now hit realy home for me as someone that kind of grew up in the restaurant," said Su, a business development team member at Open Meal.

Open Meal is an entirely online nonprofit organization that allows people in need to purchase meals from partnering small local restaurants using funds provided by donors. As of Feb. 4, Open Meal has received over $20,000 in donations, which has paid for over 3000 meals at 22 participating restaurants in seven major U.S. cities.

Communication and crowdfunding lead Amy Zhou said the idea for Open Meal came at a hackathon in April 2020, when she was trying to find a solution to food insecurity. At the time, Open Meal was focused on assisting Asian restaurants that were facing the threat of shutting down.

"[We're] a team of Asian Americans, and we recognize that a lot of our favorite Asian restaurants were failing. Chinatown was seeing a lot of racist and oppressive violence and attacks," said Zhou, a senior majoring in political science and communications at UC Santa Barbara.

"When realized if we were all like engineers, product marketers, and people as students like we had the opportunity to build something," Open Meal operates by distributing donations, obtained through online event fundraisers and sponsors, to diners who join their platform. Each diner gets $20 a week, and can receive an extra $10 per dependent in their household. Diners use these credits at partnering restaurants, and Open Meal pays the restaurants the money accrued at the end of the week. One of the criteria Su keeps in mind when reaching out to potential business partners is the demographic of the restaurant owners.

"We favor minority-owned restaurants, because they struggle with the most in the current climate," Su said. "Their menu items individually also have to be below $14 because we only give our diners $20 in credit per week to use... Also, they need to be able to support our system, so for example, we don't usually contact franchises, but they already have their own meal ordering system in place, so usually family businesses as well."

The Open Meal team is confident in sustaining the nonprofit organization long-term, because regardless of the pandemic, food security will always be an issue, and there is "no other platform that works the way Open Meal does," according to Zhou.

In the future, Open Meal is considering partnering with delivery services and supermarkets for people in need. For business development team member Bonnie Hui, a USC alumna with a degree in business administration, being able to fund Open Meal is to figure out a way to make the most of the donations Open Meal receives.

"Our requirement is that a meal is under $16, but I usually look for meals that are around $10, because our diners are given $20 in credits so if something's around $10 then they'd be able to afford two meals," Hui said. "I'm working in business development, and I think it would be worth looking into more ways to stretch the dollars in ways where we would still be able to increase restaurant's revenue, but also provide more meals to our diners."

Open Meal has faced the challenge of building trust with non-English-speaking restaurant owners who are wary of Open Meal's legitimacy as a non-profit, as well as securing enough funding to keep the system running. In particular, Zhou said that it's hard to inspire donors to give when they aren't able to have a face-to-face interaction and have an emotional connection with the person they're able to financially support through Open Meal.

"We're currently reworking our mission statement to focus more on the emotional benefits that we are providing to our diners, which is a good shift, because with $20 a week, we're not exactly solving world hunger," Hui said. "But the emotional benefits... of being able to enjoy the luxury of takeout from a community restaurant that is really dear to you is something powerful."

Food insecurity is an issue that is directly addressed by other food supply organizations, but Open Meal provides a service that helps bring both normality to diners' lives which can be a simple luxury during financially strained times.

"You have food banks and soup kitchens, and those are obviously amazing, but being able to order food online again, feeling like a person ordering food online and go picking it up... the way you want it to look like you have your dietary restrictions, having that process just humanizes yourself again," Zhou said. "And a lot of diners have shared how impactful and how mentally relieving that it is because that's something they're able to experience every week."

The experience of having a meal from a mom and pop restaurant you love to one that is often taken for granted, and Open Meal encourages people to participate if they are in need and donate if they can.

"I'm sure a lot of Trojans have a favorite restaurant that they always go to, or they are a kid to restaurant owners... We’d love to support L.A. restaurants since we're focusing a lot of our efforts on L.A. right now," Su said. "If you're also a student finding yourself struggling right now because of [the coronavirus], Open Meal can help take some of that stress off and pay for a few of your meals in a week."

Open Meal is a team of Asian Americans who first noticed how the pandemic hurt their favorite Asian restaurants.

Vincent Lee | Daily Trojan
Zhou said that it's hard to inspire donors to give when they aren't able to have a face-to-face interaction and have an emotional connection with the person they're able to financially support through Open Meal. We're currently reworking our mission statement to focus more on the emotional benefits that we are providing to our diners, which is a good shift, because with $20 a week, we're not exactly solving world hunger," Hui said. "But the emotional benefits... of being able to enjoy the luxury of takeout from a community restaurant that is really dear to you is something powerful."
Food is essential to human life, along with sleep, water and oxygen. To eat or not to eat isn’t the question – rather, what we eat. Enter the diet.

Dieting is a prevalent issue for college students. Nonprofits can uncover racism in death penalty sentencing

A few nearly two decades with a single federal execution, former President Donald Trump oversaw the killing of 13 people on death row in the last six months of his presidency. At the cost of human life, these executions were largely a political move before the election, meant to contrast President Joe Biden’s stance on abolishing the death penalty with Trump’s label as a “law and order” president.

The hard facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system has a moral one, which I believe to want to expand, however, on the way capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.

The facts don’t lie: The criminal justice system unleashes the power of the death penalty disproportionately on Black people. The racism that leads to this targeted use of the death penalty pervades each step of the judicial process. Before a conviction, Black defendants face a trial stacked against them. According to The Death Penalty Information Center, 87% of Black exonerates who’d been sentenced to death faced official misconduct, perjury, or false accusation. In other words, Black defendants are forced to follow the rules of a game, while other players cheat. In this context, any capital punishment represents a legal form of racism. Notice: The death penalty is also abelit and classist, but it’s impossible to thoroughly investigate all these within this limited word count.
Complete the **FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)** at studentaid.gov.

- USC’s Federal School Code: 001328
- Use the FAFSA’s IRS Data Retrieval Tool to report 2019 student and parent income.
- Be sure to check your USC email and respond to any additional requests for information within 10 days. If you do not respond in a timely manner, you may receive reduced financial aid.

**REMININDER:** To be considered for financial aid, you must reapply each year.

To monitor the status of your application, log in to your Financial Aid Summary & Tasks (FAST) page at financialaid.usc.edu/contactfao.
Panthers’ story told in ‘Judas and the Black Messiah’

By ALEXANDRA MILLER

Staff Writer

"Judas and the Black Messiah" tells the story of Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya), the chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party in the months leading up to his murder. Though Kaluuya gives a career-defining performance as Hampton, the story is told through the lens of William O’Neal (LaKeith Stanfield), notorious FBI informant.

After getting arrested for impersonating an FBI agent to steal cars, O’Neal avoids jail time by working for the deceptively friendly FBI agent Roy Mitchell (Jesse Plemons) as an informant. O’Neal is ordered to infiltrate the Black Panthers where he quickly rises to the rank of captain and friend to Hampton.

Kaluuya and Stanfield are perfect complements as the two leading men. Kaluuya’s Hampton speaks with a softness and vulnerability that comes from his paranoid internal conflict, creating a haunting parallel between two men trying to protect themselves through starkly different methods.

It seems with each starring role Kaluuya is burdened as a breakout star. In this latest test-showing performance, Kaluuya displays a range with such conviction and acts with unwavering bravery that it seems like there is nothing he can’t do. But history knows things happen differently.

The film delves deep into Hampton’s life through his relationship with his fiancée Deborah Johnson (Dominique Fishback), showing Hampton’s personal side which makes his untimely fate even sadder. Their willingness to love and bring life into the world is a radical act of revolution in and of itself and actually Fishback let this idea guide her performance.

"We are looking at these revolutionary tools but are only emotional than those seen in many full-length films, I’m trying to look, and to look closely into the details."

Hampton’s quest to gain admission into a “little” university to be re-educated, seen in ways that are more emotional than those seen in many full-length films, I’m trying to look, and to look closely into the details.

When I reflect on how a two-year-old in a dorm room, trying to memorize facts and figures, is an “elite” university to be re-educated, seen in ways that are more emotional than those seen in many full-length films, I’m trying to look, and to look closely into the details.

I spent most of my first year as an undergraduate hunched over a laptop in a dorm room, trying to memorize facts and write essays because my dream was to be at USC. It’s why I’m even more grateful to be a student here, writing this arts & entertainment column for the Daily Trojan, and having the opportunity to attend this school. Even if it’s not the typical USC and Los Angeles experience that I dreamed about, I remind myself daily that it’s a privilege for me to be here. Here I thank USC for taking a chance on me, a student who didn’t make the semi-finalist list for the "Fight On!" in my hope of transferring.

In an interview about the film, Lum said, "I think all of us are like, we’re like, you know, everyone knows what it’s like to dream big and try really hard to get there, and that’s what we love about this story."

I hope that many people watch this documentary in its entirety, but even more so, in the near future, even if one can better articulate what I am beyond my college rejections. That’ll be okay, I think. I won’t stress too much about it. With filmmakers like Dee Rees, I don’t have to try too hard.

Valerie Wu is a sophomore writing about the arts and pop culture in relation to her Chinese American identity. Her column, "Soft Power," runs every other Monday.

Chinese film makers spotlight Asian American struggle

Valerie Wu

SOFT POWER

Full disclosure: I didn’t watch "Try Harder!", director and producer Debbie Lum’s newest documentary about Asian American students at Lowell High School and their quest to gain admission into the nation’s “elite” universities.

Others were talking about it and I wanted to be able to talk about it too, but there were too many (virtual) things going on for me to make the trek to the screenings at the Sundance Film Festival.

I was increasingly stressed with unprocessed and unaccepted trauma and I think I knew. I knew. I knew it had been too difficult for me to watch.

I know it’s silly to write about a documentary without ever just the existence of it is enough. Really, this isn’t even about the film, and not about the idea of it being here, spotlighting Asian American issues, but just watching the trailer. I felt like I was going to burst into tears at any moment. Despite the cheerful background music, it was too much for me. Students were talking about Ivy League schools and essentially, the conflation of acceptance letters with their identities, and it just hit too close to home.

The stories felt especially personal, as someone who just transferred to USC last semester and had spent the past year grappling with many of the same questions these students spoke about in the two-minute trailer.

Watching those snippets of the film brought up so many memories, most of them emotion-al. When teachers in the trailer spoke about how difficult it was to get into college, I remembered crying in a religion class as I thought about a particularly heart-rending college rejection.

I felt as if I was back in my senior year of high school, stressed out about multiple college application portals and watching as each one told me, in some way or another, that I wasn’t "smart enough." It’s OK. I’m not a remembrance of a field of flowers, but still college students. I read a lot in many full-length films, I’m reminded of the significance of representation and empathy. Just the fact that I wanted to cry about the trailer is a testament to the power of stories and more than that, storytelling that accurately Congo the Asian American community and experience.

It isn’t just a documentary about academic pressure, but a narrative that speaks to me as an Asian American student. It’s a narrative that makes many Asian American students feel validated, seen in ways that are difficult to grasp if you’ve never taken the time to look. Lum tells us to look, and to look closely into the details.

In an interview about the film, Lum said, "I think all of us are like, we’re like, you know, everyone knows what it’s like to dream big and try really hard to get there, and that’s what we love about this story."

I hope that many people watch this documentary when it comes out, if not to understand the experiences of many Asian American students, then to at least appreciate the work that independent filmmakers are doing in bringing important stories to the screen. More importantly, we hope we can learn from the experiences of the Asian American community and the narrative of them being a terrorist organization is rooted in white fear.

The themes of the film are not confined to the past. The movie’s timely release comes after a summer of Black Lives Matter protests and a resurgence of conversations about race in America.

"The film holds a mirror up to society," Fishback said. "When I think about the fact that Chairman Fred stood for is that they healed the sick." Kaluuya said at the roundtable. "They fed kids with the breakfast program, they educated kids, they covered legal aid, they organized buses in order for people who had been in prison to get to the places they had to go."
"Malcolm & Marie" is devoid of meaning but not of soul

By SOPHIA UNGARO
Features Editor

As someone who avoids conflicts at all costs, "Malcolm & Marie" is my worst nightmare. Not only did it give me crippling secondhand anxiety, it reminded me of why I hate men: pretentious bullshit.

I know those are strong words, the movie is not complete and after a barrage. The actors, Zendaya and John David Washington, had me captivated sporadically. It was 15-20 minutes long, it could be a screenwriting lesson. If this movie was 45 minutes of argumentative self-reflection, and turned into a babel of egotistical meta, it would have been more bearable. Many directors have a background in screenwriting. I watch all of them wanted to be debased and damaged people in my life, Marie. But none of them wanted to be debased and damaged like you.

Maria and Washington are talented enough to own it. Her resentment festers to the point of madness, it is evident. It could be since I was watching the movie with a critical eye that I took it to be this way. But, I watch all movies with a critical eye due to my background in screenwriting.

Words in the review are kind, but the attack lasted for what seemed like years while Marie lashed out at Malcolm, who plays his character with a white savior trope. Malcolm and Marie just arrived in Los Angeles to promote his movie premiere. The attack was nauseous. Malcolm screams, "Morons like you love being hurt, traumatized and fucking evanescence!" Malcolm said, "It's not normal. It's not healthy, and it permeates every aspect of our relationship... I've dated some damaged people in my life, Marie. But none of them wanted to be debased and degraded like you." Marie smiles, and Malcolm continues to taunt her. The audience witnessed Malcolm's emotional abuse and manipulation as he then leaves her, and the film takes a slight turn.

"There's certain things that I'm not going to get 100% right about what it feels to be a Black creative," Levinson told Indiewire. "[W]hat I can do is write what feels true to the character and have faith in the collaborative process of filmmaking."

As I stated above, the second act is where things go to die, and "Malcolm & Marie" is an excellent example of this screenwriting lesson. If this movie was 15-20 minutes long, it could be a masterpiece, but alas, it was not. During the second part of the movie, the boundaries of just how meta can a film be are meaning insulting self-effacing. It could be since I was watching the movie with a critical eye that I took it to be this way. But, I watch all movies with a critical eye due to my background in screenwriting.

Read the full story at dailytrojan.com.

Music is a large part of the film, but even before the second act, it felt like a crutch for a mood change. Zendaya and Washington are talented enough on their own to play with tension and mood as actors.

As discussion continues about Malcolm’s film, we discover Marie’s past inspired parts of the script. She feels used and pained that now her tragedy is a movie, and she no longer owns it. Her resentment fosters toward him.

Music is a large part of the film. It’s not normal. It’s not healthy, and it permeates every aspect of our relationship. I’ve dated some damaged people in my life, Marie. But none of them wanted to be debased and degraded like you.

Maria smiles, and Malcolm continues to taunt her. The audience witnessed Malcolm’s emotional abuse and manipulation as he then leaves her, and the film takes a slight turn.

"There’s certain things that I’m not going to get 100% right about what it feels to be a Black creative," Levinson told Indiewire. "[W]hat I can do is write what feels true to the character and have faith in the collaborative process of filmmaking."

The attack lasted for what seemed like years while Marie lashed out at Malcolm, who plays his character with a white savior trope. Malcolm and Marie just arrived in Los Angeles to promote his movie premiere. The attack was nauseous. Malcolm screams, "Morons like you love being hurt, traumatized and fucking evanescence!" Malcolm said, "It’s not normal. It’s not healthy, and it permeates every aspect of our relationship... I’ve dated some damaged people in my life, Marie. But none of them wanted to be debased and degraded like you." Marie smiles, and Malcolm continues to taunt her. The audience witnessed Malcolm’s emotional abuse and manipulation as he then leaves her, and the film takes a slight turn.

"There’s certain things that I’m not going to get 100% right about what it feels to be a Black creative," Levinson told Indiewire. "[W]hat I can do is write what feels true to the character and have faith in the collaborative process of filmmaking."

As I stated above, the second act is where things go to die, and "Malcolm & Marie" is an excellent example of this screenwriting lesson. If this movie was 15-20 minutes long, it could be a masterpiece, but alas, it was not. During the second part of the movie, the boundaries of just how meta can a film be are meaning insulting self-effacing. It could be since I was watching the movie with a critical eye that I took it to be this way. But, I watch all movies with a critical eye due to my background in screenwriting.

Read the full story at dailytrojan.com.

**Special scholarships for many majors–include: Business Finance Communications Pre-Law/Law Public Policy Music**

(Applicants identified during application selection & review process)

2021-22 Online Scholarship Application Open DEC 1st!

**DEADLINE:** MARCH 1, 2021 5PM

https://alumni.usc.edu/baa

**Scholarships range from:**

- **$3,000 to $12,000 Undergrad**
- **$1,000 to $12,500 Grad**

**QUESTIONS?**

garyb@usc.edu
There's almost always one thing mainstream films have in common: they are a reflection of cultural values. And in a culture that's heavily influenced by the importance of family loyalty, Taiwanese award-winning melodrama "Little Big Women" is no exception.

The Joseph Chen-Chieh Hsu-directed film revolves around the women of the Lin family in a series of present-day and flashback sequences. As their estranged father (Chen Bo Chang, played by Lung Shao Hua) passes away, the situation begins to unravel not only his cluttered legacy but also a Pandora's box of tightly-sealed family secrets.

The story is primarily focused on the life of Lin Shoying (Shu Fang Chen), a stoic, elderly woman who authoritatively carries us through the world of the Lin family. Her relationships with each character, especially her three daughters and granddaughter, simultaneously breathe nuanced life and heavy reality into the story as she copes with the resentment and loss of her husband. Chen masterfully captures this intricate position, capturing the subtleties of Taiwanese family culture — in all of its secretive scandals, guilt-driven promises and undying resentment and devotion.

However, Chen's performance is not without the support of a strong cast. Golden Horse award-winning actresses Hou Ying-xuan and Taiwanese singer Vivian Hou play Qing and Yu, respectively — two Lin sisters who, despite growing up under similar familial hardship, have forgone opposite paths to cope with their father's absence. Sun Ke-fang plays their youngest sister, Jia Jia: a well-intentioned, naive caretaker for Shoying who's only wanted a relationship with her father. Adding in Buffy Chen, who plays Yu's optimistic daughter Clementine, creates a multi-generational facet to the family dynamic that many East-Asian grandchildren will relate to.

The film opens with the preparation of Shoying's 70th birthday party, with Jia Jia planning it at the family restaurant. However, everything comes to a halt when Jia Jia receives the news that her father is dying in the hospital. After his passing, a scene around his coffin quickly unravels each family member's relationship with him: Jia Jia crying mournfully. Shoying scornfully looking on, Yu leaping into crisis mode about the birthday dinner and Clementine realizing her father. Adding in Buffy Chen, sister, Jia Jia: a well-intentioned, naive caretaker for Shoying who's only wanted a relationship with her father. Adding in Buffy Chen, who plays Yu's optimistic daughter Clementine, creates a multi-generational facet to the family dynamic that many East-Asian grandchildren will relate to.

Another aspect to note is how the film's cinematography artistically navigates the intricate ins and outs of the Lin family's life in Taiwan. From serene garden shots to the animatic neon lights of the city, viewers are placed right into the lives of the Lin women, as we see their day-to-day struggles, coping mechanisms and the lasting impact their father has had in their lives. Even without verbal expression, Hou's filmmaking clearly captures what's important to each character: Shoying's cooking. Jia Jia's friendship with her father's mistress, Qing's careless stumbling over her coast-side rocks. The Lin family relationships also reflect many traditional Taiwanese family dynamics, from the overachiever vs rebellious sibling to the secretive, resentful yet devotional nature of traditional Taiwanese wives to their mistreating husbands.

I feel it's important to recognize that this film was not made under the traditional Western-film mold. Opposed to the high-action conflict-climax-resolution Western story structure, "Little Big Women" was made through the lens of Taiwanese family culture, emphasizing the complex relationships and struggles within the Lin family. And it's for that reason it's beautiful to watch. The family's bickering over generalized assumptions about each other is what gives satisfaction to their ultimate acceptance and bonding. Shoying's long-held grudges and traditional values on saving face are what make her climactic emotional confrontations so rewarding. While one can notice and appreciate all of the cultural subtleties they recognize within their own Taiwanese families, you could also make a comparison of your watching "Little Big Women" to your immigrant grandmother's watching of "Kramer vs. Kramer." Nonetheless, "Little Big Women" effectively executes what it wants to. With the exception of several vague, slightly boring scenes, the relationships are generally gripping and gritty. With the aid of carefully-planned dialogues and masterfully-acted performances, the character arcs unfold in deliberate rhythm, slowly building up until they're well-positioned for satisfying resolutions.

While it wouldn't be my first recommendation for a movie night with my U.S. college friends, "Little Big Women" does something incredibly special, as I'm brought right back to my grandma's living room, watching her favorite Taiwanese soapy dramas that, time and time again, demonstrate the importance of family loyalty.
TWO BEDROOM TOTALLY RENOVATED. Two bedrooms; both 2/30/2021. Pre-Leasing for FALL 2021. Surveillance cameras, gated building, REAL WOOD hardwood flooring, stove, frig, A/C, microwave, dishwasher, laundry, gated parking, DPS yellow jackets stationed in front of building. Access from campus. One week free on one-year lease. 411 W. 73rd Dr. Text us at (213) 999-9997, or call us at (213) 765-3330, e-mail us at LeasingHousingNearUSC.com or LeasingFirstChoiceHousing.com.

APARTMENT
3 Bedrm / 2 Bath
112 N. Nicholson Avenue Monterey Park, CA

Leasing Call Now: (626) 407-6270

ROOMS RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM USC CAMPUSS

All our properties are 5 minutes walking distance to USC campus. Stylish, renovated, laundry, gated parking, DPS yellow jackets stationed in front of building. Across from campus. One week free on one-year lease. 112 W. 73rd Dr. Text us at (213) 999-9997, or call us at (213) 765-3330, e-mail us at LeasingHousingNearUSC.com or LeasingFirstChoiceHousing.com.

ROOMS
3 Bedrm / 2 Bath
112 N. Nicholson Avenue Monterey Park, CA

Leasing Call Now: (626) 407-6270

ROOMS RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM USC CAMPUSS

All our properties are 5 minutes walking distance to USC campus. Stylish, renovated, laundry, gated parking, DPS yellow jackets stationed in front of building. Across from campus. One week free on one-year lease. 112 W. 73rd Dr. Text us at (213) 999-9997, or call us at (213) 765-3330, e-mail us at LeasingHousingNearUSC.com or LeasingFirstChoiceHousing.com.

ROOMS
3 Bedrm / 2 Bath
112 N. Nicholson Avenue Monterey Park, CA

Leasing Call Now: (626) 407-6270

ROOMS RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM USC CAMPUSS

All our properties are 5 minutes walking distance to USC campus. Stylish, renovated, laundry, gated parking, DPS yellow jackets stationed in front of building. Across from campus. One week free on one-year lease. 112 W. 73rd Dr. Text us at (213) 999-9997, or call us at (213) 765-3330, e-mail us at LeasingHousingNearUSC.com or LeasingFirstChoiceHousing.com.
Getting the Most Out of the Virtual Career Fair

Get Ready—This is Your Opportunity!

This is your moment to impress the employer. First impressions are very important. Only a small percentage of students will stand out in the minds of recruiters by the end of the event. Be one of those memorable students! Dress professionally for the video chats, practice how you want to come across on the screen (direct communication with plenty of eye contact is key), and most importantly, be prepared. Research the organizations well in advance of the virtual career fair and be sure to upload your most current resume to the virtual fair platform ahead of time. If you want to fine-tune your resume, take advantage of our 24/7 virtual resume critiques powered by VMock Smart Resume. Make sure you are not distracted at the computer and have your background as simple and professional as possible because the virtual fair platform does not allow for virtual backgrounds on video chats.

Develop a Strategy

Develop a specific strategy for maximizing your time during the event. The list of participating organizations is available in the virtual fair platform before the event. Make a list of the organizations in which you are interested and research them. Visit their websites, learn their latest news, prepare questions you cannot easily find answers to online, and find out what positions they are looking to fill. Your preparation will become evident in your interaction with the organization's representatives. You will be able to engage in relevant conversation and ask intelligent questions. Do not be the student asking, “Can you tell me about your organization?” If you are interested in an interview, prepare and strategize accordingly.

Maximize Your Conversations

You will only have a short amount of time—chats are limited to 10 minutes—with each representative to deliver your elevator pitch, ask questions, and make an impression at the virtual career fair. Ask good questions that will help you decide whether you really would like to work for a particular organization. Do not be afraid or intimidated by the recruiters; they are there to meet and screen potential candidates. One of the biggest advantages of the virtual career fair is that you will not need to vie for someone’s attention. Be proactive and prepare for your moment when it arrives. Remember to be succinct, given the time limit. Practice in advance getting all of your important questions and points you want to express in a short span of time. For text-based conversations, prepare your responses to anticipated questions in advance, then copy and paste in the chats when appropriate. In the virtual environment, timing is key—make sure you make a strong impression, but are also personable.

Next Steps

If you are interested in moving to the next round, which means a more formal interview, ask about the next steps, but do not be too forward. Ask for the recruiter’s contact information or email address. Make sure you know the name of the person you spoke with from each organization. Once you have the recruiters’ information, you can thank them for their time or ask follow-up questions by sending a thank-you email. Remember it is best to send thank-you emails within 24 hours from your initial conversation. If an interview is not scheduled immediately, do not worry; your email might help the employer to decide to invite you back. With a well-written thank-you note, you will set yourself apart from other candidates.

— USC Career Center

Attending a virtual career fair can be both exciting and intimidating—especially considering the initial hurdles one might perceive due to the remote nature of the event. With these helpful tips from the Career Center, you can attend the virtual career fair well prepared and with confidence!
Ethan Anderson dropped 19 points against UCLA.

Sophomore Guard Ethan Anderson dropped 19 points against UCLA.
NOW LEASING FOR FALL 2021 APPLY TODAY!

213.748.4234
USCspots.com

CDI Management, Inc. is not endorsed by or affiliated with the University of Southern California.
Trojans defeat Cougars on the road in Pullman

USC succeeded when it mattered most during the back and forth game.

By LACHELLE SMITH
Women's Basketball Beat Writer

The Trojans now find themselves in a position of being underdog. USC struggled to slow down at the start of the fourth quarter. Shortly thereafter Aaron drained a free throw to give USC a one point lead with approximately two minutes remaining. Rogers extended the lead with two quick shots and a couple of free throw shots from Caldwell. The Trojans now find themselves down by two with 11:48 remaining.

Sophomore guard Shalexxus Aaron gave USC its first points of the second quarter with a deep three-pointer off an assist from sophomore guard Endiya Rogers. The Trojans were still trailing behind with six minutes left in the half when sophomore guard Alissa Pili drained a three-point shot to tie the game at 25-25. USC started finding their rhythm offensively from the perimeter to fight their way back into the game.

Walker. USC responded with four quick points from Rogers in less than a minute to keep momentum going from behind with six minutes remaining. Rogers went into the paint for a layup deep in the fourth quarter to give her team a fighting chance at the lead as she got the score to 69-68. After an exchange of baskets from junior guard Desiree Caldwell and Rogers, the game was tied at 71-71 with 2:35 left in the game left. Shortly thereafter Aaron drained a free throw to give USC a one point lead with approximately two minutes remaining. Rogers extended the lead with two quick shots and a couple of free throw shots from Caldwell. The Trojans pushed the Trojans to victory.

Rogers led the team with 22 points and eight rebounds. Pili had 18 and Aaron contributed with 15 points. Motuga led the Cougars with 25 points and Leger-Walker chipped in with 21.

Head Coach Mark Trakh called the win a complete team effort and was proud of how his team responded to Washington State during the back and forth game. "I'm really proud of the ways the kids executed," Trakh said. "No adjustments defensively, we just played harder. Our three-point game came back and everybody on the roster suited up and executed defensively." Trakh praised the fact that everybody on the roster suited up and executed defensively. "I don't want to single anybody out. The whole team did great - Loved the way the team played," Trakh said. "No adjustments defensively, we just played harder. Our three-point game came back and everybody was huge, loved it.”

USC will stay on the road as they look to continue their streak against Colorado next Friday. Tip-off is at 5 p.m.