



**"FUNNY AND OFFBEAT!
Told with humor and insight."
- LOS ANGELES TIMES**

**"DELIGHTFUL! (A) funny but complex meditation
on identity, ethnicity and cultural expectations."
- VARIETY**

WMM A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE

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SYNOPSIS

When award-winning Korean-American filmmaker Grace Lee was growing up in Missouri, she was the only Grace Lee she knew. But when she later moved to New York and California, everyone she met seemed to know "another Grace Lee." But why did they assume that all Grace Lees were nice, dutiful, piano-playing bookworms? Pursuing the moving target of Asian American female identity, the filmmaker plunges into a clever, highly unscientific investigation into all those Grace Lees who break the mold - from a fiery social activist to a rebel who tried to burn down her high school! With wit and charm, THE GRACE LEE PROJECT puts a hilarious spin on the eternal question "What's in a name?"



FESTIVALS

For the most updated list, visit www.wmm.com.

- New York Asian American International Film Festival - Emerging Director Award
- South by Southwest Film Festival
- Los Angeles Film Festival
- Hawaii International Film Festival
- Film Forum, New York
- St. Louis International Film Festival
- High Falls Film Festival
- True/False Film Festival
- Wisconsin Film Festival
- San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival
- Reel Women International Film Festival
- Pusan Film Festival
- Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival
- Northwest Asian American Film Festival
- Northwest Film Center
- Laemmle Sunset 5 Theatre
- Wexner Center for the Arts
- Gene Siskel Film Center
- Knickerbocker Theater
- Plaza Theatre
- Cornell Cinema, Ithaca, NY

FILMMAKER BIO

Grace Lee is an award-winning writer/director whose short films have screened at festivals all over the world including Berlin, Tribeca, Pusan and Los Angeles. Named one of Filmmaker Magazine's "25 New Faces of Independent Film," Grace received her MFA from UCLA Film School in 2002. Her thesis film, **BARRIER DEVICE**, starring Sandra Oh, won a 2002 Student Academy Award, a Directors Guild of America Student Award, LA Asian/Pacific Film Festival's Golden Reel Award and Urbanworld's Grand Jury Prize, and was broadcast on the Sundance Channel. She also directed **BEST OF THE WURST**, a documentary essay about Berlin today, which has been showcased at festivals worldwide and was funded by the Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg.

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CREDITS

USA, 2005, Color, 68 minutes

Produced and Directed by Grace Lee

Co-Producer and Editor Amy Ferraris

Executive Producer In-Ah Lee

Director of Photography Jerry A. Henry

Written by Grace Lee and Amy Ferraris

Music Composed by Woody Pak

Animations by BARKADA(KO) ART + DESIGN

Title Design and Color Correction Acht Frankfurt

Motion Graphics Artist Vincent Tsu

Production Sound Tom Edgar

Sound Editor Amy Ferraris

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO

Grace Millie Lee	Grace M. Lee	Grace Kyoung Mi Lee
Grace Lee	Grace Jane Lee	Grace Lee-Park
Grace Lee Boggs	Grace Eunjeong Lee	Grace Wonhee Lee
Grace Lee	Grace Sonia Lee	Grace Jina Lee
Grace Wing Chi Lee	Grace Lee	Grace Jee-Hae Lee
Grace Hejin Lee	Grace Lee	Helen Grace Whiteside
Grace Lee	Grace Lee	Grace Tsen Lee
Grace Lee	Grace Midori Lee Danziger	Grace Ming Lee
Grace Lee	Grace Lee	Grace Lee Chorong Yin
Grace Lee	Grace Yun Lee	Grace Lee
Graise Lee	Grace Tae Eun Lee	Graciela Lee
	Grace Jiyun Lee	
	Grace M. Lee	

Publicity Contact:
Abby Peck

Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway Suite 500, New York, NY 10013
212-925-0606 ex. 306
apeck@wmm.com

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

THE GRACE LEE PROJECT is a humorous exploration of what it means to be an Asian woman in America. "Grace Lee" is the quintessential Asian American woman's name, the Asian American "Jane Smith." By looking at the stories of several women named Grace Lee, THE GRACE LEE PROJECT pursues the moving target of Asian American female identity, revealing a surprising complexity and diversity of experiences.

My name is Grace Lee. I am a filmmaker — not to be mistaken with the other filmmaker Grace Lee in Portland, Oregon, who's originally from Chicago. I'm the Grace Lee from Columbia, Missouri, now residing in Los Angeles, with stops in Seoul, New York, and San Francisco in between. When I was growing up in Missouri in the '70s and '80s, I was the only Grace Lee I knew; in fact, I was usually the only Asian girl around. All this changed when I left for New York, and later California, where I would meet people who would insist on telling me about "another Grace Lee" they once knew.



Most of the time these other Grace Lees were only faintly remembered. They were "good girls" who listened to their parents, violin prodigies, 16-year-old Harvard freshmen, devout Christians. The more I heard about these other Grace Lees, the more I became convinced that "Grace Lee" signified an unmemorable, conservative hyper-achiever, confirming already existing stereotypes of Asian Americans. I secretly feared that my name alone lumped me together with people I felt I had nothing in common with, or worse, with people who made me look bad! Was I just as bland and unmemorable as those other Grace Lees? And who was I to judge these complete strangers? After years of hearing about my alter egos, I had to find out if my fears were founded in reality.

In the course of preparing and making the film, I contacted and was contacted by Grace Lees all over the US and from other parts of the world. I met them through personal referrals, word of mouth and via a website I established called <http://www.gracelee.net>. My website included a survey that Grace Lees could fill out, another that "friends of Grace Lees" could complete, and an on-going discussion group. Despite the differences in our ages and experiences and where we came from, it quickly became clear to me that there was a genuine sense of community among those of us interested in discovering our Grace Lee-ness (or lack thereof). During the making of THE GRACE LEE PROJECT, both my best hopes and worst fears were confirmed and there were many surprises along the way. I learned what makes each of the Grace Lees that I met unique and what binds us all together. I hope you enjoy the journey as much as I have.

THE GRACE LEE PROJECT has received support from the National Asian American Telecommunications Association and the Rockefeller Foundation.

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PRESS QUOTES

"FUNNY AND OFFBEAT! Told with humor and insight."

-Carina Chocano, *Los Angeles Times*

"DELIGHTFUL! [A] funny but complex meditation on identity, ethnicity and cultural expectations."

-Dennis Harvey, *Variety*

"WITTY!"

-Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

"Ridiculously Entertaining! "

-Logan Hill, *New York Magazine*

"A funny and insightful exploration into identity issues we all can recognize."

-Elizabeth Weitzman, *Daily News*

"Mischievous! It might herald the Age of Google Cinema."

-Nicolas Rapold, *NY Sun*

"[An] interesting and humorous ride... informative and heartfelt..."

-Eric Campos, *Film Threat*

"A whimsical search for self in a world of maddening sameness."

-Damon Smith, *Time Out NY*

"Packed with skillfully interwoven personal stories, this film will resonate with anyone who's ever Googled their own name, hoping to find a fascinating doppelganger. And let's face it, isn't that just about all of us?"

-Jenny George, *Bust Magazine*

"Clever and touching, THE GRACE LEE PROJECT expands our notions of race and identity."

-Steve Gartland, *L Magazine*

"Smartly counter-programmed opposite the orientalized depictions of Asian femininity, MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA... (The filmmaker) wonders, 'Does any other name scream "generic Asian girl" as much as Grace Lee?'"

-Dennis Lim, *Village Voice*

"...a documentary filled with personality, humor, and... grace."

-Nora Ankrum, *The Austin Chronicle*

"...quirky, funny and interesting... The Grace Lee Project moves with poignant, conversational... grace, focusing on the emotional story rather than the informational one, while always stopping for self-deprecating humor. It's a delicate balance that Lee accomplishes, considering the personal subject matter."

-Todd Inoue, *San Francisco Metroactive*

"...humorous and... graceful exploration of Asian American women's identity."

-Kimberly Chun, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*

WMM A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE



April 15, 2005

The Grace Lee Project

A Lee Lee Films production. Produced by Grace Lee. Executive producer, In-Ah Lee. Co-producer, Amy Ferraris. Directed by Grace Lee. Written by Lee, Amy Ferraris.

By DENNIS HARVEY

Delightful docu "The Grace Lee Project" chronicles the eponymous helmer's quest to discover why so many Asian-American women share her name -- and whether they really embody the boringly "nice" racial stereotype she herself has always loathed. Trivial-sounding hook manages to float a funny but complex meditation on identity, ethnicity and cultural expectations that should be as accessible to teens as adults. Programmers for general as well as Asian-focused fests should take a look; ditto broadcasters and educators.

Without revealing much of her own history, Lee makes it clear she's always been annoyed/intimidated by the existence of so many other G.L.'s. (Prenom is particularly popular in Chinese and Korean-American communities for its associations with both Christianity and all-time WASP goddess Grace Kelly.)

Interviewing various strangers who once knew a Grace Lee, she finds their recollections all too often fit a pattern: The generic Grace is gentle, sweet, a study freak, quiet, liked by all -- and then forgotten by all. In short, a walking cliché of model minority politeness and passivity. Helmer has always felt the pressure to be like these "Super-Asian perfect people." Setting up a Web site to access other G.L.'s, she's deluged by name-alikes worldwide, but particularly in California (there are 314 in Los Angeles alone). Those she tracks down include several of the dreaded all-around good girls, leaving her thrilled to discover one who nearly burned down her high school. (This reformed bad girl, however, declines to be interviewed.)

But other exceptions to the stereotype soon turn up. There's a Los Angeles car dealer with her own TV commercial and a TV news reporter in Hawaii, both likeable extroverts. A 14-year-old Silicon Valley girl is a multi-talented overachiever, but also a baby Goth who hand-crafts voodoo dolls of people who irk her.

Most impressive of all is an 88-year-old Detroit woman who dared an interracial marriage decades ago, becoming a major (and still-active) activist figure in the local African-American community despite her own different ethnicity.

Very cleverly packaged docu utilizes animation, wry graphics and other unexpected diversions to keep things hopping.

Camera (color, video), Jerry A. Henry; editor, Ferraris; music, Woody Pak; animations, Barkada (Ko) Art & Design; sound editor, Ferraris. Reviewed at San Francisco Asian American Film Festival, March 16, 2005. Running time: 68 MIN.

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The New York Times

December 14, 2005

MOVIE REVIEW | 'THE GRACE LEE PROJECT'

By Stephen Holden

Are we imprisoned by our names? In her small, witty autobiographical documentary, "The Grace Lee Project," a Korean-American filmmaker named Grace Lee, born in Columbia, Mo., and living in Los Angeles, explores the personal and social ramifications of a name she finds oppressive. All her life, Ms. Lee says at the beginning of the film, she has felt pressure to live up to the qualities that many of the people randomly interviewed in the documentary associate with a name that conjures the kind of precocious high achiever who enters Harvard at 16.

Smart, nice, quiet, accomplished, polite and pure are some of the other positive traits that people tick off when asked to free-associate about the name. But how positive are they really, when many of those asked to remember Grace Lees from high school can't recall them very clearly? Nice, quiet and polite also imply passivity, Ms. Lee reflects: How can these girls be "so impressive and forgettable at the same time?" She flashes on an image of the Grace Lees of the world as "thousands of interchangeable drones."

Determined to find exceptions to the stereotype, Ms. Lee undertakes a computer search for Grace Lees around the world. Among those she meets are a cruise ship singer in the Philippines, a newscaster in Honolulu and [Bruce Lee's](#) mother. By this time, she has come up with a composite portrait of Grace Lee: an American-born Korean woman who is 25, lives in California, is 5 feet 3 inches tall, has had three and a half years of piano lessons and probably has a master's degree.

"Are there any Grace Lees out there who actually break the mold?" she wonders. An encouraging lead takes her to San Francisco to look into the story of one who tried to burn down her high school. But it turns out that the girl was trying only to destroy embarrassing records of her disappointing academic performance and created only minor property damage. In another promising lead she meets a former lesbian activist in Seoul, who has retreated from politics and now refuses to be photographed lest she bring shame to her family. We also meet a 14-year-old artist in Silicon Valley, who may fit the conventional image, but who takes out her anger at the pressure put on her in her violent, gory art works.

For many, the name Grace is associated with Christian grace. And we meet more than one Asian-American Grace Lee who is a Christian. Another inspiration, one the filmmaker finds troubling, is the actress [Grace Kelly](#).

One iconoclast stands out. Grace Lee Boggs, a proud, salty community activist in Detroit, who embarked on an interracial marriage in the 1940's, and who was 88 when interviewed for the film and still going strong.

Although "The Grace Lee Project" is ostensibly about a name, it's really about cultural assimilation and a stereotype of virtue and subservience that has deep roots on both sides of the Pacific. As oppressive as her name may be, Ms. Lee also knows full well that there are worse fates than being a 16-year-old Harvard freshman.

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Los Angeles Times

June 20, 2005

What's in a name?

BY CARINA CHOCANO

Just got back from Grace Lee's "The Grace Lee Project," a documentary about Asian-American women named Grace Lee, which is as funny and offbeat as it sounds. Growing up in predominantly white Missouri, filmmaker Lee thought her name and ethnicity set her apart from the crowd. After moving to California, she discovered that just about everyone she knew knew another Grace Lee. It's one of the most common Asian-American names around. Once she started asking around, Lee discovered that every one of these other Grace Lees, even the one who tried to set her San Francisco high school on fire, seemed fit a certain stereotype which Lee herself did not, exactly: The nice, studious, dutiful, soft-spoken, accomplished good girl who'd gone through 3.5 years of piano lessons.

Enlisting the help of a private detective, Lee set out to meet as many Grace Lee's as she could, in part to see if she could find a real rebel among them. This she did, in the person of 90-year-old Grace Lee Boggs, affectionately known in her Detroit community as Grace X, for her lifetime of activism in the African-American community. Boggs is the most colorful personality in Lee's documentary, but other Grace Lee's include an Asian-American lesbian activist who relocated to Seoul and spearheaded the gay rights movement there, only to change her mind three years later to avoid upsetting her parents. There's also the single mother Grace Lee, one of the only Grace Lee's in her 40s, who helped get her friend out of an abusive relationship and now shares a household with her and her family. At first it's unclear why she would risk her own safety and her son's-- until she reveals that she herself was abused by her adoptive parents.

Lee's first feature documentary, "The Grace Lee Project" (which screens again Tues., June 21 at 9:30 PM at the Laemmle Sunset 5), is a fascinating portrait of second-generation immigrants, and the stereotypes that dog them, told with humor and insight.

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December 13th, 2005

Name Game

Lee the people: Filmmaker goes looking for her fellow GLs

by Dennis Lim

Smartly counterprogrammed opposite the orientalized depictions of Asian femininity in *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *The Grace Lee Project* is a breezy first-person video essay that goes in search of the average Asian American woman, all the while wondering if there is in fact such a thing. Early in her documentary, filmmaker Grace Lee points out that almost everyone knows a Grace Lee, and what's more, is inclined to describe her the same way: nice, intelligent, quiet, sweet, studious, sort of forgettable. (Oh, and plays the violin.) Even G.L.'s often think of other G.L.'s—and of themselves—in those non-descript terms. Intrigued and disconcerted by the oppressive commonness of her name—and even more so by the perceived attributes that cling to it—Lee sets out to humanize the sociocultural abstraction and statistical mean that is "Grace Lee."

She traces the fascination with "Grace" among Korean and Chinese Americans of her parents' generation to Grace Kelly, the royal embodiment of marrying well. Religion plays a role, too, with a name that's, as one of the interviewees puts it, wrinkling her nose, "so, like, *Christi*any." Indeed Lee, not herself devout, discovers a significant subset of P.K.'s ("pastor's kids") among her fellow G.L.'s, one of whom beamingly notes that the desired qualities of the good Christian dovetail nicely with those of the model minority female.

Lee doesn't dig too deeply into the basis of racial assumptions, which she confirms by quizzing people outside *Miss Saigon* on their views of Asian women (an amusing montage of white men saying "petite"). A more relevant question here is how much these views are internalized or self-fulfilling. On her website, she surveys hundreds of Grace Lees and concludes that the typical G.L. is a five-foot-three, 25-year-old second-generation Korean American living in California, with a master's degree and 3.5 years of piano lessons. She wonders, "Does any other name scream 'generic Asian girl' as much as Grace Lee?" (She does find one similarly alarmed Grace who unfortunately changed her name to Graise.)

Determined to track down rebel exceptions to this "sorority of super Asians," Lee hears of a Grace who attempted to burn down her high school—albeit in a failed bid to destroy her poor grades. She also locates a Korean American woman who moved to Seoul to work for a human rights group and open a lesbian bar—only to later retreat into the closet, to the extent that she appears here under pixelated disguise.

The ostensible thesis—that not all Grace Lees are the same—is easy enough to prove: There's a self-assured Honolulu newscaster, a bubbly San Jose pastor's wife, a Silicon Valley teen who balances piano lessons and voodoo doll-making. The two most remarkable Graces, providing both wild-card complexity and feel-good affirmation, suggest a way beyond identity straitjackets. Forty-something Grace Lee, a hearing-impaired single mother helping to raise a friend's entire abused brood, was adopted from Korea by a white American family that abused her—a woman of seemingly boundless compassion, she has little sentimental attachment to a name assigned to her by the adoption agency. Grace Lee Boggs, an 88-year-old Chinese American activist known in her Detroit community for her work in the black-power movement, suffers less of an identity crisis than her younger counterparts largely because her political awakening predated the Asian American and the women's movements. Everything about this Grace Lee makes you reconsider what is indeed in a name. Her neighbors call her Grace X.

Film Forum pairs the 68-minute *Project* with Max Kestner's *Max by Chance*, a briskly digressive half-hour essay in which the Danish director scales his family tree, through hippie parents, back to the eight great-grandparents of whom he is the only great-grandchild. Interjecting whiplash associations and loopy tangents, applying statistical analysis to family history, it's a home movie auto-portrait that keeps looking outward, an ironic, cosmic redefinition of genealogy as chaos theory.

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December 15–28, 2005

THE NAME GAME Two amazing Graces (including the director) question stereotypes.

By Damon Smith

This quirky, revealing look at a variety of Asian-American women who all share the same name—a common one for children of Korean and Chinese immigrants—is really a whimsical search for self in a world of maddening sameness. As a youth in Missouri, filmmaker Grace Lee thought she was one of a kind. Years later, she's chagrined to meet people who knew a Grace Lee in high school, especially since most describe a sweet, soft-spoken, studious girl who fits the generic ethnic stereotype. Wondering how she wound up "the one loser in a sorority of super-Asians," Lee sets out to find at least one rebel in this clan of "interchangeable drones," visiting a Honolulu broadcast reporter, an 85-year-old former Black Panther in Detroit and a California pastor's wife, among others.

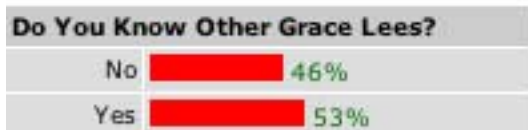
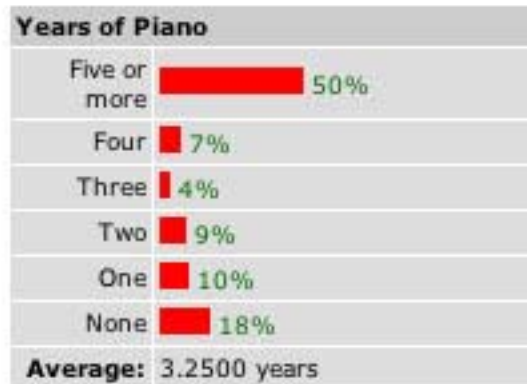
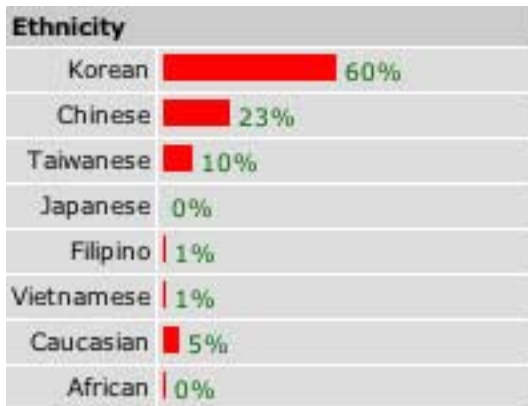
Weaving her wry, self-deprecating observations ("I suck at piano. I've never had cute hair.") around the personal stories of other Grace Lees—the name's popular for its Christian aura and kinship with Grace Kelly Lee— offers insights into notions of identity, ethnic self-regard and the pressures many Asian-American girls feel to excel and conform. Although her interview subjects come from all walks of life and seem to defy the "statistically average Grace Lee," they share optimism about the future. Lee uses humor to trounce society's lingering Orientalist assumptions—but what's most interesting is how her fear of being a forgettable face in a homogeneous stew of Asian femininity ultimately leads her to a renewed sense of cultural belonging.

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DO YOU KNOW GRACE LEE?

242 Grace Lees filled out the Grace Lee Project survey at www.gracelee.net. They came from 23 different countries including the US, South Korea, Canada, Singapore, Scotland and Slovenia. Here are some of the results:



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