



OVER THEIR HEADS

MyMomsAFob.com and MyDadsAFob.com make light of unintended gaffes. We showed our parents. They laughed — a little.

Writer **Lisa Wong Macabasco**

From: [Mom]
To: [Eunice]
Subject: RE: you're not the only one...
Date: Mon, 27 Oct 2008 20:07:17 -0500

Thanks for sharing, but I don't understand all. What is the name of Website mean? My mom is a fob?
Chinese moms are very loving and caring moms, right?

THIS IS THE ENTIRETY of a post on the humor blog MyMomsAFob.com, launched last fall by California college students Serena Wu and Teresa Wu (no relation) and enthusiastically received by most any Asian American endowed with a working Internet connection, a snarky sense of humor and an immigrant mother who proffers unsolicited, grammatically flawed advice on life, dating, current events and protecting oneself on the Internet.

Although the inability of immigrant

Asian parents and their Americanized children and grandchildren to comprehend each other has long been milked for comedic effect (see Cho, Margaret; or Peters, Russell), only the Internet could provide a communal place to roll one's eyes or smirk at fobby moms across America.

And many posts on MyMomsAFob.com and its spin off, MyDadsAFob.com, concern the clash of not only generations and cultures but also new, easy-to-learn technology that has allowed parents unprecedented access into their offsprings lives. Young, wired Asian Americans had only a few promiscuous years of independence on email, chat, text and social networking websites before their parents arrived — poker-faced, in house slippers and your old T-shirts — ready to crash the party. (Full disclosure: Hyphenmagazine.com has a nonmonetary ad exchange arrangement with MyMomsAFob.com.)

But the site raises the question — that eternal query for Asian Americans of all generations — what would Mom think? To find out, Hyphen staffers asked their moms and dads.

Copy Chief Kimberly Lien's dad, a Chinese immigrant from Vietnam, didn't find the site very interesting, but laughed at a post

where one mother used plus signs instead of spaces in her text messages. "At least she knows how to text," he said. "That's very good already!"

The Hong Kong Chinese immigrant mother of Hyphen co-founder and blogger Claire Light expressed similar ambivalence in an email: "OK, what I think about the conversation of all those FOB moms are quite funny first. At least some are. But after a while, it become rather boring. Most of the funny parts are just the misuse of words in the same sound. I don't think that are insulting. But I get the feeling that those conversation have a bit of dumbing down the mothers. Anyway, this is my feeling."

American-born Asian mothers seem less comfortable with some aspects of the site, from the teasing tone to the cavalier use of the word "FOB," which stands for "Fresh Off the Boat" and has long been used to refer, often pejoratively, to unassimilated Asian immigrants. My mother, a third-generation Chinese American, said she thought the site was amusing but found "the 'FOB' part, in [her] mind, a bit offensive. Anyone who's in the Asian community will find it the same."

A third-generation Japanese American mom did laugh at nearly every entry she read with her daughter, Hyphen contributor Emily Leach. However upon hearing that mothers do not always know about these posts, she reconsidered: "It's not so good if they're doing it behind their back in a snarky, we're-cool-and-our-parents-are-not-so-cool attitude. They should at least let their parents know."

The founders swear their intentions are all out of love. "We're not trying to make fun of our moms," they write on the site, "we think they're freakin' adorable, and we want to showcase those precious moments to a community of 2nd-generation Asian American kids who know exactly what it's like to be on the receiving end of that amazing, unconditional, and sometimes misspelled love."

But maybe the younger generation should look at its own diction, as Leach's mother suggests. "They should be more sympathetic because kids also say stupid things as well. Like the term 'that's sick' — what the hell is that?" she said, laughing. "What the hell does that mean? What is wrong with you?"

Spoken like a true mom.

Lisa Wong Macabasco is Hyphen's Features editor.