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Planning Commission and City Council
Pasadena, CA

Dear Pasadena Planning Commission and the City Council:

My name is Richmund, a young adult, and I am currently a resident and co-owner of a property in Lower Hastings Ranch. My family has resided in our humble abode for decades, and we have no plans to sell the property, as we would like to keep the property within the family lineage for generations to come. After reviewing some of the suggested proposals and hearing the feedback of other residents, I firmly believe that a fresh perspective and a younger generation's voice is sorely needed in the community debate, especially considering that these changes that may go into effect soon will primarily affect me and other younger Generation X and Y homeowners in the present and future, over the aging demographic that is having an active and dominant voice in the decisions going forward. I believe that some of the amendments for the future of Lower Hastings Ranch are too stringent for an evolving community, and these changes counter reasonable and logical freedoms that make sense for a 21st Century homeowner and community.

There have been many functional and logical changes to the construction of a home since the post-World War II time period, and the current aging twentieth century Lower Hastings Ranch homes do not reflect some of the practical designs of the turn of the century. Since the time period of the construction of these homes, Lower Hastings Ranch's once highly acclaimed and "big" (for its time) "executive homes" have now been overshadowed by even the average square footage of the American home today — approximately 2600 square feet, according to CNN Money. (Within Hastings Ranch, the average living space is approximately 1802 square feet, according to Find the Home.) The outmoded Lower Hastings homes are not intended for a 21st century lifestyle, and the functional obsolescence of small storage spaces, low ceilings, closed off and tight spaces, narrow hallways, and poor insulation counter the changing needs of 21st century living: open-concept kitchen and great rooms, walk-in closets for increased storage space, high ceilings for ventilation and light, and energy-efficient function and utility. With the rising income, it's no surprise that younger generations have a need for decent size home in a community close to work and schools, and the changing income levels and family sizes, as well as 21st century needs, will give rise to an evolving community and a need to build two story homes since there is a deficiency of lot space, especially here in the San Gabriel

Valley. Economics have also changed the way we use our homes. In the past, a need for large front and back yards were necessary for entertainment; today, with the advent of the large HD TV, computer, and the internet boom, we now turn inward for entertainment. Additionally, large front lawns are not environmentally friendly, especially since it wastes precious water resources in a drought-stricken California. The land could be used instead for additional square footage.

There are many logical reasons and benefits to the construction of two story homes, and I firmly believe that the construction of these homes should still be permitted as it has been before. First, with an increasing population density in Los Angeles, there is an increasing need for younger generations to live closer to work. Coupled with the aging baby boomer population, a popular and rational result for the 21st century is multi-generational living. With the construction of new two-story homes today, many builders have started the construction of multi-generational living suites located in the first floor — suites ideal for the grandparents to live in, while the parents and children live in the rooms upstairs. This setup allows for the emphasis of family unity and keeps the grandparents away from convalescent homes. Moreover, there has been a recent push for greater diversity in today's modern "blended" family. With multiple children coming from different walks of life living under the same roof, there needs to be accommodations for a higher family density through an increase in living square footage. In today's generation, there has been a stronger emphasis on family unity and cooperation, versus the twentieth century's desire to live independently, and as a result, the construction of larger, two-story homes makes common sense from a buyer's standpoint, especially as the value of the lot in the San Gabriel Valley keeps increasing and as land for development run scarce. Since many single family homes have already maximized a single floor square footage, the only logical solution is to build up, and if two-story houses are prohibited in our community, family unity is risked being destroyed as well as a waste of precious land resources that could have accommodated a higher occupancy density.

Another issue currently affecting the "charm" of Lower Hastings Ranch is the issue of cars being parked outside the garage, on the driveways and streets, causing an eyesore to the community as a whole. Why, you may wonder, do we park our cars on the driveways and streets instead of inside our attached garages? The answer: a dearth of square footage inside our home and a consequential lack of storage space. A couple next-door struggles to even live comfortably in a 1300 square foot home, using their garage for storage, as a laundry room, and a home for their pets. They no longer have enough space to expand on a single story basis due to the setback line, and they have maximized expansion in the backyard. As a result, they are forced to park their cars on the street and on the driveway. Luckily, they are just a couple. Imagine a modern, multi-generational blended family — parking would be overflowing on the streets, making the roads even tighter than they already are and taking away any "charm" from the little our community has left. We need more indoor space for storage, and the logical solution is to build up. That way, we will have the space available to park our cars inside our attached garages —

the original intention for its construction — away from clogging the streets and beautifying our community.

The construction of new two-story homes also lends itself to many positive environmental impacts. First, new constructions are more energy efficient per square foot than the aging Hastings homes today, and to be able to accommodate a higher population density per square foot will have a greener environmental footprint on our nation as a whole. Updated heating, air, plumbing, and appliances also lend themselves to less power consumption, susceptibility to leaks, and improved insulation that could make our community more energy efficient. Moreover, newer construction homes can permit the additional weight of solar panels, and the extra surface area produced from a second-story addition can make our community a much more environmentally-friendly place to live. It's clear that we must protect our fragile Earth today, and by prohibiting two-story constructions, we risk ignoring some of the benefits of new home constructions.

Two-story constructions can also benefit the great city of Pasadena too. Not only would the city be able to collect higher-valued property taxes that could lead to the beautification of the city and add funding to the much needed public schools, but Pasadena property values can also benefit. In addition, replacing run-down, unmaintained eyesores with beautiful new two-story constructions would increase the allure of our community, would it not? If two-story constructions were to be prohibited while burgeoning neighboring communities continue to grow and allow this type of construction with little restriction, such as Arcadia and Temple City, we risk lowering Pasadena, and particularly Hastings Ranch, property value relative to these neighboring communities as residents keep their parochial views closed and looking to the past.

New two-story constructions also have some positive privacy impacts that many residents have failed to recognize. First, the construction of new homes permit sound insulation that is currently lacking in the old constructions, an aspect that is increasingly relevant as older homes lack the audible privacy that is a feature of many brand new homes. Additionally, second story constructions can allow for increased privacy that the current old construction homes fail to address. Coming from a personal perspective, there are many solicitors who walk door to door, passing out flyers to promote their business or agenda. However, many walk deep into our private property and into our front porch, often trampling over front yard lawns in the process. The restrooms in our property are located near the front of the home and are susceptible to prying eyes, and we no longer have any room to expand to the back or to the front of the setback line. This issue could be solved by a second story bathroom addition, which would give us our privacy while complying with city regulations.

The prohibition of two story constructions will not only prove to be an antiquated and backward way of thinking, but will be slanted towards residents who already reside in a two-story house. This is because it is especially unfair for those of us who bought these homes in the past with the prospect of building a second story addition in the future to

accommodate a growing family, only to learn that a prohibition would be in effect later on. To quote an article regarding the single family overlay district of Palo Alto:

“Several speakers testified that they bought their homes in recent years in hopes of raising families and expanding homes, plans that would have to be aborted if the single-story overlay district is installed.

Hobert Tze, who recently bought his home on Loma Verde Avenue, said he and his wife were planning to have children and to eventually build an add-on to meet the family's expanding needs. ‘We are very disappointed that we could not plan for this,’ Tze said. ‘It kind of caught us by surprise.’

Zoe Danielson, who lives on Thomas Drive in one of the district's few existing two-story homes, maintained that the change amounts to taking away people's property rights. ‘Stealing other people's property rights is stealing. Stealing is not ethical,’ Danielson said. ‘It's not OK for a group of people to come together and agree that someone else is going to lose their property rights.’

Siamack Sanaie, who lives on Stockton Place, said ... his lot is smaller than many of the parcels in central Royal Manor. The restriction, he said, would be very costly for his family. ‘We are not builders. We are not in the business of flipping houses. ... We came here to raise a family and we bought this place not on the basis of the houses there, but the land and the potential for building,’ he said, noting that his multi-generation family may require a second-story in the future.”(www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2016/02/10/royal-manor-neighbors-clash-over-ban-on-two-story-homes).

Lower Hastings Ranch is a community of many colors, already featuring multiple houses with two-story additions, many of which seem to conform nicely with the neighborhood, as shown by the following:

Exhibit A: 3645 Fairmeade Rd.



Exhibit B: 3830 Shadow Grove Rd.

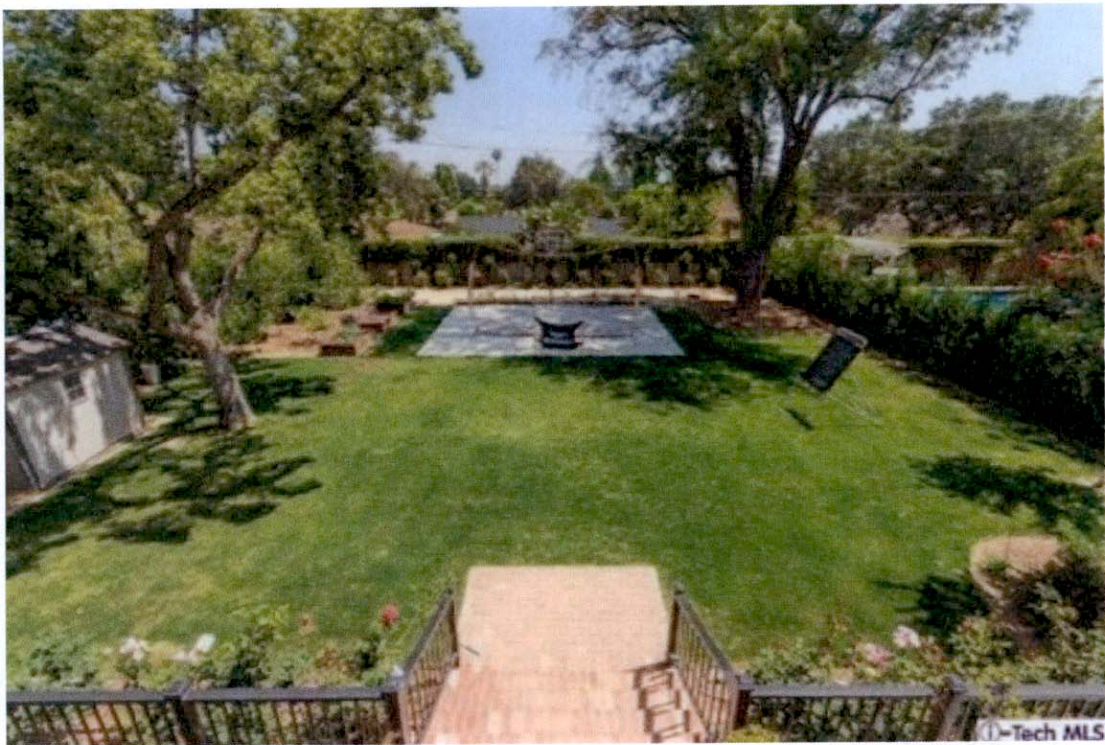


Exhibit C: 735 Rim Rd.





Exhibit F: Picture of Backyard from Deck at 3830 Shadow Grove Rd.



Take a look at the view for yourself. Does it seem like it is aggressively intruding any of the neighbor's privacy? Ironically, how would this deck inhibit other resident's privacy considering that the deck and its view are surrounded by trees? See Exhibit F — note: it

Exhibit D: 685 Cliff Dr.



These examples are just a few of the many two-story constructions already in place here in Lower Hastings Ranch. It is especially unfair that these homes have already been constructed and are being inhabited by members of the Hastings Ranch community. By being “grandfathered” into these existing two-story constructions, it ultimately devalues the property of those living in single-story homes who would like to exercise the old law, and it increases the value of their property because they are now living in exclusive homes in which no other home can follow that style. There are now multiple remodeled homes approved by the City of Pasadena and fully constructed that are not conforming to the new proposals. This is totally unfair to those of us who are planning on future home improvements. There should be a grandfathered clause allowing those who own and reside in the area for many years or decades to exercise the options of the original construction laws during the time of purchase.

It’s not just the possible prohibition of a second story that is unsettling, but many of the proposed prohibited design elements that call into question the fairness of the Lower Hastings Ranch community. For example, at 3830 Shadow Grove Rd, the home features a balcony on the second floor that would not conform with the proposed design standard of being “integrated and recessed into the roofline.” Moreover, it would not conform to the proposed second story setback of “5 feet in from the first story rear wall.” See Exhibit E below for example:

Exhibit E: Backyard Deck at 3830 Shadow Grove Rd.

doesn't affect the neighbor's privacy due to tree blockage and a high brick wall. In the home I currently reside in, my privacy is being impacted by a *single-story* home (and it's not pitched high at all) a street above me. They can see my backyard, plus the inside of my home if the sliding door is open, very very clearly. A 2-story addition to their home would honestly not affect my privacy at this point considering they can already see everything from their vantage point. The 'privacy' issue is a moot point and can be easily solved with the construction of a higher brick wall between properties. These issues affect us even at a single story level, so should their house be *demolished* so I can get my 'privacy' and 'mountain view'? I believe that the laws currently in effect are stringent enough to address the view issue, and that they should not be made more strict for the sake of prohibiting second story constructions.

Why would these residents have the ability to live in these beautiful, spacious two-story homes in the wonderful community of Lower Hastings Ranch while I, a homeowner who has been saving money for years for that second story addition, find myself in a crossfire of prohibited design elements and building standards that were not present at the time the home was purchased? Why were they able to exercise the opportunities of ornate metal fences, clay tile roofs (735 Rim Rd.), and intricate home architectures, building magnificent homes of up to 5089 square feet (3830 Shadow Grove Rd.) while I must limit myself to square footage in the 1000s? What this proposal is doing is devaluing the single story homes, especially those that have not yet been remodeled, while increasing the value and exclusivity of two-story homes with grand architecture. By breeding an inner-circle clique of two-story homes, this proposal is discriminating against existing homeowners of non-remodeled homes and could be regarded as an act of *prejudice*.

If no homes in the Lower Hastings Ranch neighborhood had a second story, then this overlay would be more equitable, as it did in the Palo Alto overlay district. "All 68 properties in the application are one story and all 68 have single-story deed restrictions. All 68 of the homes were built by Eichler in the 1950s and **none** have been torn down or replaced since then" (http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news_features/real_estate/spring2002/2002_03_13.overlay.php). However, there are already multiple second story homes in the neighborhood, and even more homes with some of the proposed banned design elements, so trying to pass this overlay would only make things more inequitable.

Also of interest to note: the homes in Palo Alto were designed by an architect, Eichler, and built by a specific tract, keeping the design, size, and square footage generally the same throughout the neighborhood. Here in Lower Hastings Ranch, there were plans to have just one builder develop the 'luxury' homes with 3 different floorplans; however, the deal ultimately fell through because residents did not like subjecting themselves to these floorplans. As a result, private, individual builders were contracted to design and build individual homes for each homeowner, leading to much variation in the design, size, and square footage of these homes. Therefore, it was always the intention to give homeowners the power and freedom to build the home they desired. Of course, at the time period, two story homes were not necessary, lending itself to the primary construction of single story

homes. I believe that this initial freedoms of Lower Hastings Ranch should be honored — to build 'luxury' homes as dictated by the homeowner. Had all the LHR homes been built by that one builder, we would likely be in a different position today, but since there is generally no equality in the style and character of each home, considering they were build by individual contractors, there should be no reason why attempts should be made to make our community 'unified' when it was and is never unified to begin with. The only reason Palo Alto has the ability to put the overlay on these homes is the fact that the style is clearly unified by the sole architect and builder crafting the homes, and there have not been any home improvements made since. Here in LHR, we reside in such a varied community that already has these second stories, that is just does not make sense to compare ourselves to Palo Alto or even put these restrictions of no second stories when we clearly already have second stories in existence to begin with.

Consequently, the culprit to these remodels are investors who do not plan to invest and be in the future of Lower Hastings. More restrictions should be placed on these investors, not existing homeowners. There should be a distinction, a key differentiator, between homeowners and investors moving forward, and we should not be punished for their insipid acts.

It is understandable that many complaints are coming from older-aged residents. Many of them have been living in the community for decades and have called Hastings Ranch their home. However, times are changing and 2-story homes are a need that younger generations must consider in a time of a housing shortage. These older residents may have slanted and biased opinions that are not necessarily in line with logic and function for the 21st century. First, older residents will favor single story constructions due to many health issues that can prevent them from fully exercising a potential second story addition. Hip and knee issues, as well as arthritis, all prove to be health-related barriers that would deter them from wanting a second story and give rise to a biased point of view. Moreover, many of these older residents aged 70 and above are likely retired; thus, they no longer have the steady income to permit them to even have the cash to build a second story, or the ability to borrow large sums of money for a home improvement. It is understandable that many of them would be against these two-story constructions and expensive design elements that customize the look and style of a modern home today. As a result, it is likely that many of their comments have an ulterior motive attached to them — either health or finance related. Finally, many of these aging residents may very well be moving to convalescent homes or a better place in the future, and we should be setting the foundation for an evolving and advancing generation rather than looking back in the past and appeasing these aging baby boomer residents. If these proposals were to go into effect, it will essentially punish us, the younger generation who ultimately inherit or purchase these homes, as it will make the building process more difficult and cumbersome in the future. It seems as though many of these comments instead are intended towards attacking investors looking to make a fast buck by "flipping homes," and the necessary steps should be taken to limit investors rather than we the younger generation residents. It is important to consider this community issue from an objective viewpoint, rather than a

biased paradigm that fails to truly consider the logical and broader implications of the community overlay.

After listening to the speakers at the March 23 meeting, they collectively had a very biased viewpoint against 2nd stories, there was never an opportunity to hear a clear, strong, honest, and unbiased opinion in contrast. It is of importance to note that the speakers at the meeting were not representative of the Lower Hastings Ranch population as a whole. The Lower Hastings Ranch Association, which represents a specific group of residents with an ulterior motive in mind, has worked hard to get people to respond to the survey in a particular manner, and speak at the March 23 meeting to oppose second story constructions, leading to very impartial and slanted opinions.

We were not aware that the meeting would turned a different direction and suddenly second stories were banned outright and assumed that the meeting was only to make second story constructions more restrictive

The case in point in these one-sided speakers is that they may have some ulterior motives, and what was presented in some of their examples did not represent the actual fact. For example, in one of the photographic evidences presented — specifically 695 Cliff Dr. (see Exhibit G), notice that in the speaker's visual example, she noted that only the home to the right of 695 Cliff Dr. was small in comparison to the 2 story construction.

Exhibit G: 695 Cliff Dr.



Exhibit H: 685 Cliff Dr. in comparison to 695 Cliff Dr. Shot #1



Exhibit I: 685 Cliff Dr. in comparison to 695 Cliff Dr. Shot #2



However, the speaker failed to mention that to the left of this home was another second story construction, and in fact, the home did not tower at all and were consistent in size with 695 Cliff Dr. (See Exhibits H & I) These omissions of details may have led the commission astray, as well as a neglect of images of conforming second story homes (such as 3645 Fairmeade Rd. — see Exhibit A) from the woman who made a PowerPoint of “photographic evidence.” Please consider the entire situation, not just the one-sided ‘evidence’ that the biased speakers pointed out.

Additionally, residents failed to mention a flip side to the “property value” argument. By prohibiting second stories entirely, it could negatively impact our property values because if future prospective residents with the intention of rebuilding find out that there is an ordinance in effect, it could turn off potential buyers and decrease the value of our property. For example, a young couple looking to start a family could shy away from a home in an overlay district because they wouldn't be able to add on to the existing single-story home. Too many restrictions are unappealing to many potential buyers, and it will lower property values. According to Deborah Greenberg of Coldwell Banker's Midtown office in Palo Alto, overlay zones can affect sales and property value in a community. "The value stays lower because of the inability to put on a second story," Greenberg said (http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news_features/real_estate/spring2002/2002_03_13.overlay.php). Such rules diminish our property values by preventing us from building suitable homes for our growing families and by restricting our investment *and* our right to build as we see fit on our property. So think twice before you take pity on that widow next door who might ‘depend on the property value’. Instead of promoting the converse, her property value could very well go down if this overlay goes into effect. (Please note: talk of the ‘widow’ in the March 23 Planning Commission was brought up by the Linda Vista Association President. She does not even reside in Lower Hastings Ranch, and the ‘widow’ of whom she speaks resides in Linda Vista! Please do not take non-Lower Hastings Ranch residents’ opinions into consideration because they are not a part of this community.)

Why should we go through all this trouble of crafting so many restrictions? After all — we are not even a historical district! We should not be subject to these parochial and confined laws. Why can't we make our community like the rest of America? Let the Free Enterprise and our economy dictate how a community develops. Nowhere else in America, besides Palo Alto and historical districts, are there restrictions as stringent as ‘no second stories’ and prohibited design elements. Why not keep the things the way they currently are? Give each individual homeowner the choice if they want their own property to be a single story or 2 story house. Don't take away, or “steal” (in the words of Zoe Danielson), our freedom of making this choice. Plus, economics and the free enterprise dictate that it is quite unlikely that our neighborhood will suddenly boom and produce many second stories. It will happen over time, and slowly, our neighborhood will conform to changing times, as the structure of society was meant to be in the first place.

Ultimately, we live in a democratic & free country that grants us many freedoms and rights as dictated in the United States Constitution. The Free Enterprise allows us to exercise our rights and are stimulated by finances to expand our horizons. Under the American democratic model, we should have the freedom and right to own and use our

private property as guaranteed by the Constitution. By taking away these freedoms, we fall prey to the un-intended consequence of a communistic regime. I believe that we should have the right to build what is reasonable in our own property and that it is a complete insult to our great country and its citizens if we resort to these socialist tactics. My family and I work hard to fulfill the American dream, and it should be *our* decision how we would like to enjoy the comfort of own property, *not* the entire community's decision.

While it is understandable and quite noble that there are attempts to preserve the Lower Hastings Ranch style and charm of the early twentieth century, times are changing and the 21st century needs of the working class need to be fairly considered. As the population of Los Angeles grows, there will be a greater need to support growing families, and a need for larger living spaces. During a time of cheap, expansive, readily-available land, it made sense to build single story buildings. However, times are changing, and these smaller "ranch style" homes were never built with the intention to support multiple generations and blended families, having different implications than there are use today. While the style reflects the time of the post-war middle class, associated with tract housing built in the time period, it also reflects a time of close-mindedness and intolerance. Our great nation has grown so far from this time period — women, African Americans, and many different races have earned the right to vote; our society has graciously accepted different cultures and religions; most recently, gay marriage. Shouldn't the style of our own home that we purchased with our heart & soul reflect this changing America? America is the land built on freedom and tolerance, and it should be our God given rights to let everyone live their American Dream. The ranch style home is slowly evolving to a new developing world of practicality and pragmatism. Growing up in a ranch style home, I am finding some of its design elements out of touch with today's needs, and was hoping that some of the original development standards (such as the second story setback on the sides and front of the home) would have been lifted in favor of a more tolerant and accepting America that is the land of the free and open minded. While I believe that it would be good to make Lower Hastings Ranch a historical community, I vehemently believe that it should not affect our freedoms, as granted in the Constitution, in the process. What is the ultimate goal of putting all these rules and regulations on Lower Hastings Ranch homeowners? Is it to give the local government total control? Reminder: We do not live in a communist regime.

Ultimately, I believe that these amendments are too stringent for a changing America that is growing tolerant of multicultural and multigenerational influences and styles. We should be focusing on lifting the illogical development standards currently in play — not adding additional standards and making the process more rigorous. To honor the Constitution and what the founders of this great nation intended, there should be more tolerance for different ethnicities and religions as symbolized by the acceptance of different home styles to reflect a changing America. It should be the homeowner's decision to move away from the traditional style of the ranch into the modern style of today's melting pot of constructions — not the community's. With the increasing land

value, diminishing supply, and a need for a higher population density, ranch style homes have become an unrealistic and illogical piece of the past. The residents of Lower Hastings Ranch should not be subject to, and be the guinea pigs of, these irrational, unfair constraints. I wish to one-day live my modern American Dream — a dream of color, tolerance, and freedom — and I am hoping that it can one day be reflected in my property design and style that would not be subject to many of the restricted proposals in play today. Please do not penalize and disadvantage those of us who are seeking to reside, expand, or rebuild in the marvelous community that is Hastings Ranch, a community that I have called home since childbirth — instead, please target your efforts to callous investors attempting to make a pretty penny. Please let me live my American Dream and let changing times reflect itself in our democratic system that allows residents and communities to slowly adapt to shifting needs and desires as dictated by the free market. Please let my family live in an awe-inspiring community, Lower Hastings Ranch; a great city, Pasadena; a magnificent state, California; a majestic country, the United States; with democracy and social equality. Please let the residents build their homes in similar fashion as the framers of our great nation, America (the Beautiful) intended it to be — with liberty and justice for All.

Thank you for your time and consideration throughout this process.

Sincerely,

Richmund Tan