

AARCC connections

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Highlights From AARCC's Fall Semester

By: Corinne Kodama



Asian American Studies: Enrollment for the introductory spring class has been expanded to 100 students, a new course is offered in Policy Studies, and a faculty search is underway in LAS for an Asian Americanist in the Social Sciences.

Community Outreach: Several service projects were coordinated by AARCC to reach out to Chicagoland Asian American communities (see article above/below).

Programs: The first Cultural Centers Directors Forum had a strong Asian American presence (keynote Kenji Yoshino, panelists Kevin Kumashiro and Sumi Cho). We also held our first major fall student program, Lela Lee, which attracted over 100 people!

Student Support: 13 Mentors and 36 new students participated in the first Asian American Mentor Program, which resulted in new friendships.

Community Service: AARCC coordinated our first community service projects: one on Election Day (see article below) and one with the Pui Tak Service Center in Chinatown, involving a total of 26 students, staff, and faculty.

Next semester we have even bigger plans: A welcome back reception during the 2nd week of classes, hosting a national Asian American graduate students conference, the second annual ASAM Expo, and Asian American Awareness Month featuring a keynote speech by George Takei!

How AARCC Gets Involved

By: Rommel Calderwood



Get out the vote! This was the mantra intoned by ten UIC students on Election Day. As one of the outreach coordinators at the Asian American Resource and Cultural Center, I work with Elvin Chan and Phill Ozaki to design and implement community projects. These projects aim to connect individuals from UIC to Chicagoland Asian American communities through volunteer and career opportunities.

Statistics from APIAVote, a national nonpartisan organization in Washington, D.C., reveal that an astonishing 48 percent of registered AA voters in Illinois did not vote in the 2002 elections, compared to 13 percent in 2000. I realized the potential of the AA citizenry to influence our nation's policies and legislation, which invigorated me to spearhead a service project with the Asian American Institute and the Korean American Resource & Cultural Center. With ten dedicated UIC students, from a wide assortment of organizations and disciplines, we helped AAI and KRCC to carry out their mission and vision of amplifying the minority voice in the legislative process.

On Election Day, we carried out a wide array of tasks that included poll monitoring, exit polling, and translation/interpretation. I volunteered for AAI as a poll monitor at the Chinatown Elderly Apartments. It was a great opportunity to watch the interactions between the election judges and voters. The election judges helped those who were not comfortable with the new voting procedures or were first time voters. Additionally, the poll site had bilingual men and women available who helped interpret the ballot's instructions for the ward's non-English speaking constituents. Although the ward is located in Chicago's Chinatown, I was astonished to see a very diverse voter turnout at my poll site.

Volunteering on Election Day reaffirmed to me that Chicago is truly a cosmopolitan city with men, women, and children from every imaginable part of society. I believe it is necessary to ensure that no group is ever marginalized and no individual's voice is ever silenced. I hope to combine the skills and experience we acquired from Election Day to continue to help Chicago's Asian American communities.

UIC Attends Asian American Conferences!

What is “East of California”?

By: Winnie Chan, Surbhi Malik, and Karen Su

The East of California (EoC) Asian American Studies conference hosted by The Ohio State University and Denison University on Nov. 3-4, 2006, featured both roundtable discussions and research presentations by faculty and graduate students. The EoC is a caucus of the national Association for Asian American Studies and has been instrumental in developing the field of Asian American Studies outside of its west coast origins.

Reflecting the rapidly growing state of the field that is now “east of California,” one roundtable discussed the successes and challenges of building Asian American Studies programs on campuses in the Midwest, South, and East coast. Karen Su (AARCC Director), Winnie Chan (AARCC Grad Asst), and Surbhi Malik (AARCC Advisory Board member) coordinated another roundtable about collaborations between student affairs/cultural center staff and Asian American Studies. Karen Su reflects, “The discussions emphasized what a big difference a single staff or faculty member makes on each campus and how much we all still work in isolation. A few faculty members advised that no one person should take on the task of being a whole program or center. It’s crucial to say no and advocate for more resources institutionally.”



Other panels addressed new directions in the field such as “The Turn to Empire in Filipino/Filipino American Studies” and “Teaching New Orientalisms: South Asian American and Arab American Studies” or highlighted specific research on topics such as Cambodian American memoir, Indian American hotel owners in Ohio, and the educational achievement of immigrant kindergarteners. Winnie Chan was excited to attend her first Asian American Studies conference. But as a graduate student in Psychology, she couldn’t help noticing that the majority of presentations were in the humanities: “It was troubling and disappointing to see the lack of representation of social sciences. In order for Asian American Studies to flourish as an interdisciplinary field, we need the involvement of scholars from diverse disciplines. The current Asian American Studies search in social sciences at UIC reflects the vision to develop a program that is innovative and can definitely make a great contribution to the field of Asian American Studies in the Midwest.”

Surbhi Malik, a graduate student in English, felt that the value of her current involvement with AARCC and Asian American Studies was affirmed: “The EoC conference was relevant to my UIC experience as it emphasized the benefits we can accrue through collaborations and common struggles with campuses in similar situations. From my participation in the roundtable on the bridge between Student Affairs and Asian American Studies, I realized that that connection is crucial for the intellectual growth of students at all levels; therefore we should institute measures to keep this bridge intact even when we get a program.”

NAASCon 2006:

Building Bridges, Connecting Movements

By: Aaditi Dubale

From November 3 to November 5, UIC students attended the 2nd National Asian American Student Conference, hosted by Northwestern University. Workshops were presented under a variety of tracks: Immigration, Race, and Rights; Economic Justice; Gender and Sexuality; Educational Equity; Arts, Technology and Media; Campus and Community Organizing; and APA Issues 101.

The NAASCon 2006 experience was certainly a worthwhile one. The conference kicked off with Vijay Prashad delivering the Keynote Address, speaking of the global economic situation and the importance of sustainable activism.

The workshop-filled Saturday was interspersed with Identity Caucuses for Women; Men; LGBTQ; and Mixed Race & Adoptee. While these cover a number of axes, I would suggest splitting the Mixed Race and Adoptee groups into separate caucuses, respecting their distinct issues.

Co-facilitating the “Asian American Studies Campaigns” workshop with Bettina Johnson and two students from Tufts University was a fascinating experience. Our group reinforced the fact that the movement for Asian American Studies is in fact a national one, with students from various campuses facing different campus climates and resources. I also found the “APAs, HIV, Sex and Denial” workshop to be very informative, providing me with information and statistics that

sparks my interest in APA health issues.

Emi Koyama gave the second Keynote Address, focusing on multi-issue organizing over single-issue politics. The conference wrapped up with fantastic performances from Kris Racer (musician), Sarwat Rumi (spoken word), Cynthia Lin (musician), and the sketch comedy and improv troupe Stir Friday Night!.

Overall, NAASCon provided me with the opportunity to network with fellow API’s from around the country and the increased drive to become more involved with the APIA community.



What's the Rush?

A talk with three presidents of the Asian-interest fraternities/sororities: Alpha Kappa Delta Phi, Chi Sigma Tau, and Delta Phi Omega

By: Joyce Yin



Asian-interest fraternities/sororities are starting to rise in popularity across the country and at UIC. One of the reasons for this may be that, being that it is geared towards Asians and Asian Americans, “this common interest gives the members of the group something more to connect with and brings each one closer together,” says Krunali Parikh, president of the South Asian sorority, Delta Phi Omega.

So how exactly is an Asian American fraternity/sorority different? Well, “in my opinion,” says Lucy, president of alpha Kappa Delta Phi, “I feel that Asian American Greeks emphasize a lot more on building lasting friendships, academics, service, and Asian awareness compared to other frats/sororities. It has a lot to do with someone’s morals and values, and I feel that because of the way many of us were raised in Asian homes, the pressure was always there to do well and to become a well-rounded person.”

For these three presidents, joining a fraternity/sorority has not only helped them network and meet new people, but it has also allowed them to build their leadership skills, be more assertive and outgoing, among a variety of other things. Justin Carreon, president of Chi Sigma Tau, says that it “taught me a lot – like how to handle business and how to deal with work environments. If I didn’t join in college, I probably would not have learned the skills that I have now.”

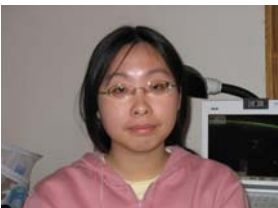
To an outsider, fraternities/sororities seem to be separatist and self-segregating but these Greek Leaders strongly disagreed. Krunali says, “Aren’t all groups of people separate from others? I know that everyone belongs to a group that someone else might not be able to identify with...Members of these groups relate to each other in a certain way, and it’s not separatist or self-segregating; it’s community and togetherness.”

Each of these fraternities/sororities are involved in community service projects. Chi Sigma Tau is putting together a food drive for Thanksgiving, and Spirit Week in January. Alpha Kappa Delta Phi raises money and awareness for Breast Cancer. Delta Phi Omega focuses on awareness for children’s literacy, as well as trying to increase knowledge about the South Asian Community and organize the Diwali Dinner. For all three of these Greek Organizations, a future goal for each of them is to build relationships with Asian American Organizations on campus and to support each other with their respective causes.

For students, getting involved with Asian-interest fraternities/sororities is a different way for them to meet other fellow Asian Americans, educate themselves about Asian American issues, and take part in community service projects.

For more information, visit their respective websites: <http://www.uicakdphi.org>, <http://www.deltaphiomega.org>, and <http://www.chisigmatau.com>.

Person on the Street: What is your favorite Asian holiday?



Annie Chen, Soph.
Accounting

“The Mid-Autumn Festival. The family gets together, eats moon cakes, goes outside, and watches the moon together. We celebrate the importance of being together even if you’re not with each other physically.”



Phirany Lim, Senior
Anthropology

“Tet, which is the Cambodian New Year. I like it because I get to spend time with my family, we make lots of food, and I receive money!”



Pratik Shah, Soph.
Accounting

“Diwali—the festival of lights. It’s the Indian New Year and the lights represent hope. We do a special type of dance called garba to celebrate. And at the end of the garba night, we do prayers for the birth of Krishna.”



Heena Thayani, Soph.
Mathematics

“Eid which happens after Ramadan ends. For Ramadan, you fast for a whole month and afterwards, you get together as a book group celebrate the food that has been given to you.”



Jen Zhang, Soph.
Pre-Pharmacy/Bio.

“Chinese New Year. I like that I get to spend time with my family and go shopping and cook!”

**Asian American Resource
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LEARN ABOUT
AARCC EVENTS
THROUGH OUR
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Join the Asian American Awareness Month Planning Committee!

Each year AARCC coordinates the Asian American Awareness Month committee, which puts together a series of events for the UIC campus in April. We are looking for enthusiastic students, staff, and faculty to help us plan this year's events! Events for this year include a keynote speech by George Takei (Sulu on the original Star Trek)! But we still have much more to plan....

WHY should you get involved?:

- help raise awareness of Asian American issues
- develop leadership and organizational skills
- meet other student leaders
- learn more about Asian American activities on campus

NO EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY!

AAA Month Committee Meeting
Tuesday, Nov. 28th
5:00 p.m.
Taft Hall 215

FREE snacks! Hope to see you there!

For more information, contact Corinne Kodama at ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653.