

Asian American Resource and Cultural Center

Naisy Dolar: Chicago Politics from an Asian American Perspective

By: David Mei

Naisy Dolar recently made headlines as a candidate for Chicago Alderman.

How did politics become your interest?

I worked for the City of Chicago as a liaison to the Asian American community and while politics was not my initial interest, it was about making sure there was a voice for Asian American community within city government. What I realized in that position that I held for six years is that in order to make a difference, for legislature to take notice, for city government to take notice we have to have a stronger voice. That's one of the reasons I decided to run for office because no one would listen unless we had somebody there at the table. In order to do that we have get somebody elected.

Chicago politics has always been described as "unique," how would you describe it?

Even though Chicago is the third largest city in the nation, those who are involved in Chicago politics is a small group. It is hard to break into that group of people because there is a sense of nepotism, there is a sort of a "help out who you know" mentality.

In the Asian American community, we have very few people who are part of that group, so we need to engage in a new kind of politics which is basically not only knowing people, but to earn our place at the table and that's where we are in history right now.

What are the most pressing issues for Asian Americans in your community? And in Chicago?

My ward is 23% Asian American, a pretty big percentage compared to other wards in Chicago. However, Asian Americans in this neighborhood have the same issues as other Asian Americans throughout Chicago: to make sure that they have leadership sensitive to their concerns, and that they get their fair share in services.

Also, that their representative is someone who understands their cultural issues, engages them, and draws them to get involved in community and political issues. In the history of Chicago, there has never been an Asian American alderman, so what we know is that the perspective of Asian American community as well as the kind of leadership that is unique to an Asian American has not been seen or experienced by our city government.

What are your thoughts on the current presidential race?

I think it's exciting to see the movement that is happening, which is people really paying attention to our candidates during the primaries. On the Democratic side I think it's very exciting to see the kind of candidates that are involved... you have a bi-racial, an African American, at one point a Latino American. It is evident that people are fighting to have the opportunity to engage in democracy.

Who is your Asian American role model?

I have two. One on a personal note my mother, as the first generation to come to this country to set an educational path for her family both in the Philippines and here. This really represents what many Asian American families have experienced. She has a fighting spirit and I learned so much from her strength.

Another role model I had the opportunity most recently to meet is Congressman Mike Honda from California. He gave me an opportunity to get to know him and what it takes to be a good politician and good public servant. He was somebody that reached out to me and helped me build a philosophical framework about doing the right thing when running for office. I really appreciated that.

Has your view on Asian Americans changed?

There is a clear difference now in the way I am involved as an Asian American. The stronger I know my identity and what it means to own the label of being an Asian American, the stronger voice I want at all different tables for the Asian American community.

When I was younger being Asian American was about culture and my family experiences, but now being an Asian American includes taking note of policy decisions and services given or applied to the Asian American community as a whole.

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To hear more from Naisy Dolar, attend her talk:

Asian Americans in Chicago Politics

**Wednesday,
January 30th
4:00 PM**

**Cardinal Room,
Student Center East**

Impact Fellowship: Experiences as an Asian American Intern

By: Brandon Lee



Over the summer of 2007 I was lucky enough to land a spot in the inaugural year of Asian American Institute's Impact Fellows Program. The purpose of the program was to develop, empower and prepare young, enthusiastic Asian Americans for leadership roles both within and outside of the Asian American community.

Participants in the program exemplified the diversity of Asian Pacific Americans. The group spanned multiple generations (some were first generation Americans while others went as far back as four generations), and different ethnic backgrounds (Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Japanese, Indian, Filipino and Korean).

The first part of the internship attempted to raise the group's awareness of both contemporary and historical Asian American issues, such as cultural diversity, immigration rights, voting rights, educational equity, the importance of civic participation, and the struggle for citizenship. In addition to the Asian American history primer, the group also benefited from leadership training, which helped to enhance the group's networking, negotiating, communication and public speaking skills. The latter portion also contained a two-day leadership workshop provided by Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, as well as a career panel consisting of prominent and successful Asian Americans.

The second part of the program involved an internship with a community-based organization or government department. Most of the fellows worked with community based organizations such as the Pui Tak Center, the Indo American Center, Chinese Mutual Aid Association and the Chinese American Service League. Others worked through Asian American Institute itself, and some worked with the Illinois Department of Human Services. I was placed at the Illinois Department of Human Services where I worked in the Bureau of Immigrant and Refugee Services.

The program culminated in a legislative visit at the end of the program. The group went to visit U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky and Luis Gutierrez to lobby for certain aspects of immigration reform such as the DREAM act, which would help the children of illegal immigrants pay for college education, and family reunification, which would make it less difficult for family members of newly naturalized Americans to come to the United States.

The program achieved the goals which it set out to complete, speaking from a personal perspective. After participating in the program, I feel that I am not only more aware of issues currently facing the Asian American community, but I am more willing to advocate for solutions to the problems, and I have become more active in the community with the hopes of one day actually implementing those solutions and changes. Of course, I still need to develop some of my skills, as I have not yet achieved a desired level of preparedness for the world, but the Impact Fellows Program not only put me in the right direction and helped me down that road, it also provided me with lifelong friends that I otherwise would not have met, opportunities that I otherwise would not have had, and an experience that I am not likely to ever forget.

For more information on this and other Asian American Internship opportunities, see below:

Asian American Institute Impact Fellows

The Impact Fellowship Program is an internship program under AAI. The internship seeks to develop young civic-minded leaders interested in working in the Asian Pacific American community. IFP combines training with practical experience through a series of workshops and a community based organization. The goal of IFP is to develop a pipeline of young leaders who will make an impact in the Asian Pacific American community by becoming more aware of social issues and engaged in civic participation. <http://www.aaicicago.org>

Deadline: TBA, April

Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership

CAPAL has enabled promising students with leadership potential to explore public service and how to influence public policy that affect our communities. Its mission is to promote Asian Pacific American interests and success in public sector careers, to provide information and education on policy issues affecting the APA community, and to serve the APA community at large. <http://www.capal.org>

Deadline: TBA

Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies

APAICS was created to promote, support and conduct non-partisan education and informational activities, research and programs designed to effectively enhance and increase the participation of the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) community in the democratic process at the national, state and local levels. APAICS is dedicated to increasing participation of individuals of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage at all levels of the political process, from community service to elected office.

<http://www.apaics.org>
Deadline: January 31st, 2008

Organization of Chinese Americans

OCA's summer internship program in Washington D.C. exposes interns to national issues and policies that affect Asian Americans. Interns will be placed at either the OCA national office, Capitol Hill, or federal agencies and meet with Congressional members and staffers.

<http://ocanational.org>
Deadline: March 15th, 2008

Norman Mineta Internship Immersion Program

The Norman Mineta Program was established by the U.S. Congress to provide internship opportunities within the U.S. Department of Defense and other defense-related agencies for U.S. undergraduate students who are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The goal of the program is to provide eligible students interested in national defense an opportunity to work and gain experience that will qualify them for a future career in this field.

<http://www.twc.edu/students>
Deadline: March 14, 2008

Schedule of Events

FEBRUARY 2008

- Feb 2. UIC Student Leadership Conference.** 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m., Student Center West. This free conference for UIC students is designed to enhance leadership skills, allow for networking of student leaders, and encourage the incorporation of service into leadership. Organized by Student Leadership Development and Volunteer Services, AARCC is a co-sponsor. Contact lead@uic.edu or 312-996-4500.
- Feb 2. VSA TET Cultural Show.** 6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m., Student Center East Illinois Room B. A night of performances by UIC's own Vietnamese Student Association and with some help from other Midwest Vietnamese students. There will be singing, dancing, skits, and fashion. For more info, contact Sandy Mac at dmac2@uic.edu
- Feb. 5. Poll Watching with the Asian American Institute.** Get trained to help insure that all voters are treated fairly. Bilingual volunteers a plus! For more info, contact Aaditi Dubale at 312-413-9569 or adubal2@uic.edu.
- Feb 7. Stand Up for Justice.** 7:00 p.m., Latino Cultural Center Lecture Center B-2. Film based on the true story of 16 year-old Mexican/Irish-American Ralph Lazo who chose to go to the internment camps during World War II with his Japanese American friends. For more info, contact Karen Su at karen@uic.edu
- Feb 14&22. Asian American Mentor Program Info Sessions.** 3:00 p.m. on the 14th and 1:00 p.m. On the 22nd. AARCC 101 Taft Hall. Application and information for the AAMP program will be available. For more info, contact Corinne Kodama at ckodama@uic.edu

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2 *UIC Leadership Conference * VSA TET Cultural Show
3	4	5 Election Day Poll Watching	6	7 <i>Film:</i> "Stand Up for Justice"	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Asian American Mentor Program Info Session	15	16 FIA Battle of the Bamboo
17	18	19	20 Japanese American Redress Movement	21	22 Asian American Mentor Program Info Session	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

- Feb 16. Filipinos in Alliance Battle of the Bamboo.** 6:00 p.m. UIC Forum. Battle of the Bamboo is a Filipino cultural dance competition between different universities from the Chicagoland area. This year there will be 6 competing schools including Loyola, UIUC, and St. Louis University. With last year's attendance exceeding 600 people, this year's show surely will not disappoint. For more info, contact fia.uic@gmail.com
- Feb 20. Japanese American Redress Movement.** 3 p.m. Lecture Center C-1. Midwest Director of the Japanese American Citizens League, William Yoshino will discuss the history of the Japanese American Redress movement. For more info, contact Karen Su at karen@uic.edu

Schedule of Events



- Mar 11. Jane Hyun, Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling.** 4:00 p.m. Illinois Room. Student Center East (TENTATIVE). Jane Hyun, author of "Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling," will discuss the barriers and misperceptions that face Asian Americans in the workplace. Co-sponsored by Office of Career Services and the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Asian Americans. Date is not confirmed, contact Corinne Kodama at ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653 for more info.

- Mar. 15. India Night.** UIC Forum. Indian Students Association's annual cultural show with Indian dances and skits. For more info, contact Arpit Patel at apate29@uic.edu.

- Mar. 28-30. Midwest Asian American Students Union Spring Conference.** Kansas University. The Midwest Asian American Student Union (MAASU) Spring Conference is designed to provide opportunities to discuss and share issues, strategies and programs that support Asian American student organizations. The program will provide students with networking opportunities, insights, and motivation to take back to their respective campuses. For more info, <http://www.oma.ku.edu/maasu/> or www.maasu.org.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Jane Hyun, Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling (tentative)	12	13	14	15 India Night
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 Spring Break Begins.	25	26	27	28 MAASU at Kansas University	29 MAASU
30 MAASU	31					

The Benefits of Being a Peer Mentor for the Asian American Peer Mentor Program

By: Vivian Wu

My experiences as a mentor for the Asian American Mentor Program (for two years!) have been rewarding. I help freshmen and transfer students get better acquainted with the school through workshops, tours of the campus, study-sessions at the library, and other social activities. It's always very gratifying when my mentees come up to me confused about a particular school-related situation and I'm able to smooth out the corners and point them in the right direction. But, even more so, the relationships that I've developed throughout my two years of being involved with this program are particularly noteworthy. It's always nice to have my AAMP family there for me. The fact that most of those involved in the program are brought up with similar cultural values makes it unbelievably easy to connect with these individuals. Indeed, the people I've met, whether it was my mentor partner, mentees, other fellow mentors, or those at the AARCC office, have been simply amazing.



In addition, being a mentor in the AAMP was certainly the foundation of all the other extracurriculars that I became involved in. As a Pre-Pharmacy student, this program definitely jumpstarted my extracurricular life as well as provided me with a vast amount of opportunities. It was through AAMP that I met several people who were involved with the Volunteer Leadership Committee (VLC) at UIC Medical Center, another organization I ultimately joined. Being a part of AAMP also encouraged me to branch out and be involved in other committees that I was interested in, such as the pre-pharmacy club. I also started volunteering as a Pharmacy Technician at the UIC Medical Center. These experiences helped me gain further insight into my future profession and also provided me with first-hand experience. So even though I was responsible for introducing new students to campus life and involvement opportunities, I found some for myself as well!

The Asian American Mentor Program was a major stepping stone for me, undoubtedly bringing me to where I am now. Since being introduced into this family, I've developed my extracurricular life, created some unforgettable friendships, and had many rewarding experiences as a mentor. I highly recommend that you apply for the program because I *know* you'll get something out of the experience.

To learn more about becoming a Peer Mentor, attend an info session:

Thursday, February 14th at 3 p.m.

Friday, February 22nd at 1 p.m. (both at the AARCC, Taft 101)



Or visit the AARCC website at: <http://aarcc.vcaa.uic.edu>

Applications are due Friday, February 29th. Contact Corinne at ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653 for more info.

AARCC Service Day at Apna Ghar

By: Aaditi Dubale

On Saturday, October 27th ten students traveled to the North Side of Chicago to participate in the first AARCC Service Day of the year at Apna Ghar, an agency providing services for victims of domestic violence, especially those of South Asian descent.



The day started with an orientation by Hina Mahmood, the agency's volunteer coordinator, providing us with information about Apna Ghar's history and services. Apna Ghar, "Our Home" in Hindi/Urdu, began as a confidential hotline in 1989 from the efforts of five South Asian women who were victims of domestic violence. It was the first in the nation to address the cultural differences that prevent many South Asian victims from approaching mainstream agencies. Since its inception, Apna Ghar's services have expanded to include interim, transitional and permanent housing programs, economic empowerment programs, legal advocacy, supervised child visitation, and translation services in South Asian languages.

Following the orientation, the volunteers divided into two groups. One helped organize donations at the NeUsed Closet, Apna Ghar's thrift store located at 4820 N Broadway. The other cleaned, organized, and inventoried donations that are distributed to women and children who are transitioning from living in a shelter to living on their own. Both groups felt that the projects made for a worthwhile and productive afternoon.

After the projects, several student volunteers expressed the intention of volunteering regularly at Apna Ghar, be it individually or through a student organization. Interested students may contact me at adubal2@uic.edu for more information.

**Asian American
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A Step Forward for Asian American Studies at UIC

By: Karen Su

Dr. Kevin Kumashiro, Associate Professor in Policy Studies (College of Education), has been appointed Coordinator of Asian American Studies (ASAM) in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. As ASAM Coordinator, Kumashiro will be working with a LAS-appointed ASAM Faculty Advisory Committee to develop next steps for a future program of Asian American Studies at UIC.



One of the first initiatives the ASAM Faculty Advisory Committee will pursue is the proposal of an ASAM minor with a vision for a major. This spring semester, look for ASAM Brown Bag lectures featuring UIC Asian Americanists as well as invited guest speakers to campus. One confirmed speaker is Stacey Lee (Univ. of Wisconsin) who will deliver a lecture tentatively titled, "The Continuing Significance of the Model Minority Stereotype" in Lecture Center A1, on April 22, at 11:00am.

This is a great year for ASAM to move forward at UIC. For the first time in the association's history, the annual conference of the Association for Asian American Studies will be held in Chicago, April 16-19, 2008. This year's theme is: *Where is the "Heart" of Asian America?: Troubling "American" Identity and Exceptionalism in an Age of Globalization and Imperialism*. For more information, see AAAS conference details at: <http://www.aaastudies.org/2008>.