

AARCCONNECTIONS

Linda Võ, Organizing Asian America: Coalitional Politics and Oppositional Practices

What are the advantages and disadvantages for Asian Americans of mobilizing as a collective group?

As single ethnic groups, we may lack crucial resources, such as numbers, finances, knowledge, and networks. Working together enables us to be more effective in making sure we have adequate representation and equal opportunities. It's difficult for us to form coalitions because we are such a diverse group, and we have varying interests and needs. There is not one formula for all communities to organize. When necessary, we must be willing to make compromises and share power if we are to be effective.

*What motivated you to write your book *Mobilizing an Asian American Community*?*

Oftentimes Asian Americans are perceived as being apathetic and passive. I knew this was not the case and I wanted to document the efforts of one community to build coalitions, despite some major obstacles. I examine the ways Asian Americans overcame ethnic, generational, gender, language, and class differences and worked together to form coalitions. My objective was to understand the challenges Asian Americans face trying to agree on common goals, find sufficient resources, create leaders, and define strategies. Ideally, I would like my book to acknowledge the contributions of Asian American leaders and organizations and to energize new generations to give back to the community.

Was there an event in your life that encouraged you to do what you are currently doing?

I was a teaching assistant for an Asian American Women course taught by a visiting professor during my first year of graduate school. For the first time, I learned about Asian American history, particularly the level of racial discrimination that was legislated in this country and it made me see the world in a profoundly new way. I realized how my education failed to teach me about "American" history and I resolved to change this for future generations.

What do you think is the most pressing issue facing Asian American communities today?

Asian American communities face many pressing issues, but in order to resolve them, we must be prepared to build cross-racial coalitions. We need to have an open mind and move beyond our fears and racial misperceptions of one another. We cannot afford to be selfish and to think only about what is good for our ethnic group, but we have to consider what is important for the greater good. For example, if Vietnamese Americans truly had a greater understanding of how Asian Americans, African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans have fought to improve the lives for people of color, especially during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, I think this would encourage them to



participate in building coalitions with other communities of color for racial equality. When the majority of Vietnamese Americans came after 1975, we benefited from these historical struggles. This doesn't deny that on a personal level some refugees faced intense animosity from other racial groups, but if we dwell on this, we only perpetuate the racial tensions and divisions.

Why is it important to have Asian American studies?

Teaching Asian American studies is core to any "American" studies curriculum, and should be integral to any institution that expects to be a first-class university educating students for the complex, global society in which we live.

How has your view of Asian Americans changed?

Learning about Asian American history made me appreciate being Vietnamese American and understand who I was as an American of Asian ancestry. I am a strong advocate of an inclusive, multicultural curriculum, but not the superficial stuff where we learn about things

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"I realized how my education failed to teach me about 'American' history and I resolved to change this for future generations"

like ethnic foods. Just because a non-Vietnamese eats "pho" doesn't mean they understand the Vietnamese American experience or that they accept us as "Americans." I want people to understand foreign intervention in Southeast Asia, why and how Vietnamese came to the U.S., why we created ethnic communities, the challenges refugees and immigrants encounter, and the challenges that 1.5 and second generations face as well.

By: David Mei

To hear more from Linda Võ, attend her talk:

Organizing Asian America
Wed., November 14th
12:00 PM
Institute for the Humanities (Lower Level Stevenson Hall)

INTRODUCING UIC'S PAKISTANI LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH (PLAY)

By Melissa Gaba

Interview With Hina Choudhary, President and founder of PLAY

When was your organization founded?

The organization was founded recently in 2006.

What are the goals/mission/purpose of your organization?

PLAY is an organization started at UIC to target the following ideas:

- Broaden cultural awareness and clear any negative misconceptions about Pakistan and Islam in general.
- Organize fundraising events to help victims of poverty and natural disasters in Pakistan and other nations.
- Promote unity between students of different nationalities.

What do you like the most about your organization?

It is NOT restricted to students of Pakistani decent. It is open to all cultures and backgrounds.

If you could describe your organization in 5 words or less, what would you say?

PAKISTANI LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH.

What kind of events/activities does your organization participate in or would like to participate in?

Thus far, we have participated in Taste of UIC, held an Eid Bazaar, fashion shows, clothing drives, benefit concerts among other fundraisers in the Chicago land area. We hope to work with organizations in other schools and conduct a fundraising event on a much larger scale.

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In what ways would you like to see your organization grow this school year?

We would like PLAY to be become well-known throughout campus as well as the Chicago community.

In 10 years, where would you like to see your organization?

We would like to see chapters formed in other universities as well.

Do you have any events coming up in November or December?

Our next event will take place in the spring.

How can interested students join or get more information?

Students can email me at hchoud1@uic.edu for more info.

Any final comments?

Don't Stop...Just PLAY!

For more information on PLAY, contact Hina Choudary at hchoud1@uic.edu.



JOIN ASIAN AMERICAN AWARENESS MONTH !

AARCC sponsors and coordinates a variety of activities in April for Asian American Awareness Month, and the planning committee is starting now! SO--we need YOU to help us put together the best AAA month ever!

Why you should get involved:

- Meet other Asian American students
- Develop leadership and organizational skills
- Learn about Asian American issues
- Have the opportunity to meet prominent speakers and performers

No previous experience is necessary! Our first meeting will be:

Friday, Nov. 16 at 1:00 p.m. Taft Hall 101 (AARCC Office)

If you can't attend this meeting but still want to be involved, contact Corinne at 312-413-9653 or ckodama@uic.edu.



2007 Asian American Awareness Month Committee members with actor George Takei

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- **Nov. 2-3: Midwest Asian American Students Union Conference.** Denison University, Ohio. www.maasu.org
- **Nov. 3: Asian American Students in Alliance/ Vietnamese Students Association Imperial Ball.** 6:30-10 p.m., Downtown Marriott Courtyard.
- **Nov. 9: What I Want To Be When I Grow Up .** 1:00 p.m. SSB #3050 (Office of Career Services). Asian Americans often feel pressure to choose certain majors and careers--but which one is really right for you? For more info, contact ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653
- **Nov. 9: South Asian Medical Students Association Garba/Raas Dandiya.** 7:00 p.m. Student Center West Illini Rooms A, B, and C. A wonderful cultural experience on Diwali. Dance the night away, learn three different styles of dance, and practice your moves to heart-pounding music. For more info, contact [Sourmya Jayasankar venkites@uic.edu](mailto:SourmyaJayasankarvenkites@uic.edu) or [Ankit Nanavaty ananav1@uic.edu](mailto:AnkitNanavatyananav1@uic.edu)
- **Nov. 11: AARCC Theater Outing: Trial by Water.** 7:00 p.m. EP Theater 1820 S. Halsted St. A play based on the experiences of Vietnamese refugees after the Vietnam war. *Trial by Water* depicts the journey of two brothers and the challenges they face. Purchase tickets at AARCC for \$5. For more info, adubal2@uic.edu or 312-413-9569.
- **Nov. 14: Linda Vò: Organizing Asian America: Coalitional Politics and Oppositional Practices.** Noon, Institute of the Humanities (lower level Stevenson Hall). For more info, karensu@uic.edu or 312-413-7696. See page 1 for more info.

November 2007

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
					MAASU	*AASIA/ VSA Imperial Ball *MAASU
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					*What I Want To Be When I Grow Up * Garba/Raas Dandiya	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Theater Out- ing: Trial by Water			Linda Vò: Organizing Asian Amer- ica		Asian Ameri- can Aware- ness Month Meeting	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	
	AACC's Asian Ameri- can Film Series			AARCC Book Club		

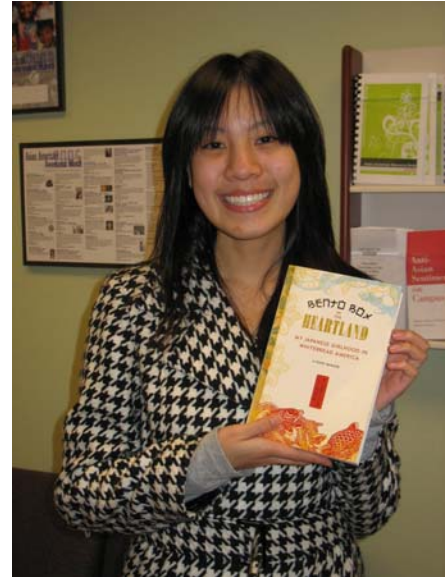
- **Nov. 16: Asian American Awareness Month Committee First Meeting.** 1:00 p.m. Taft Hall 101 AARCC Office. For more info, ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653.
- **Nov. 26: AACC's Asian American Film Series.** Location and movie TBA. For more info, adubal2@uic.edu
- **Nov. 29: AARCC Book Club.** 4:00 p.m., Taft Hall. For more info, karensu@uic.edu or 312-413-7696. See page 4 for more info.

Reading, Writing, and Eating ... the AARCC Book Club reads *Bento Box*

Are you a book lover looking for a delectable way to become involved with AARCC? Read *Bento Box in the Heartland: My Japanese Girlhood in Whitebread America, A Food Memoir*. Author Linda Furiya has been writing about food and ethnicity since 1992 and currently teaches cooking too. Her memoir about growing up the only Asian in an Indiana farming community explores her struggles with cultural identity and how her sense of self is shaped by her parents' love for quality Japanese food which they prepared with obsessive care during her girlhood. Each chapter ends with a family recipe that keeps you turning the page for more. One reader on Amazon writes that *Bento Box* "combines family and food in a way that's lyrical but never sentimental. Wherever you grew up, and whatever your mother put in your lunchbox, this is a treat to savor."

AARCC Advisory Board member Jessica Sheng, a senior majoring in Biological Sciences and Economics, initiated the Book Club to connect with others who would enjoy reading books with an Asian American focus and talking about them in a low-stress setting. Winner of the first book club raffle, Liz Thomson from the Rainbow Resource Center says, "Since I commute about 2 hours a day on the lovely CTA, being part of the AARCC Book Club will definitely make my commute more enjoyable. I'm excited to read for leisure. So, if you see a short, Asian gal on the Red Line reading *Bento Box*, that's me!"

Join Liz, Jessica, and other Book Club readers on Thursday, Nov. 29th, 4pm at AARCC to share food for thought on *Bento Box*! All students, staff, and faculty are welcome. Cook a recipe from the book to share or bring other snacks to potluck! Everyone who comes has a chance to win a FREE copy of the January book club selection: *Dim Sum of All Things* -- notice a theme?



Jessica Sheng-Excited to read *Bento Box*

PERSON ON THE STREET: WHAT WERE YOU FOR HALLOWEEN?

By Melissa Gaba



**Michael Lazaro,
Freshman**

I was Quailman because I liked the cartoon 'Doug' on Nickelodeon. Plus the costume was easy to make out of stuff I had in my dorm.



**Sandy Mac,
Sophomore**

I am a Bumble Bee because Bumble Bees go to flowers and get honey and I am sweet.



**Majella Ciruelas,
Senior**

I was a Boy Scout because I like to scout boys... Just kidding!



**Charles Chou,
Senior**

My friend got this costume from Tokyo last summer. I'm a crazy samurai!



**Aaditi Dubale,
Senior**

I made this out of bed foam and poster board four Halloweens ago; it's still good!

VOICE BOX: AM I ASIAN ENOUGH FOR YOU?

By: Christopher Lardizabal

Christopher Lardizabal is a freshman majoring in Business Administration.

Throughout my life, I felt like an outsider. My parents raised me as a kid should be raised. I spent my childhood happy, never caring about how people would see me. That idea flew out of my head once I hit high school. Everything changed for the worse. Cliques, clubs, groups, and gangs were hitting my eyes for the first time. And I felt like an outcast everywhere I went, especially with the kids like me. I didn't feel Asian enough to hang out with them. I didn't speak the language or know much about the customs. I was juggling that with being a normal "American" kid.

I am of Filipino descent and I am a first generation American in my family. I didn't know I was Filipino until I was about ten. We went over what nationality we were during school and I asked my parents what I was. Filipino they said. I just agreed and said I was Filipino. I was the only Filipino in my school until 6th grade. This Filipino girl made fun of me because I didn't speak the language or know about any of the customs. I would tell her that it's not my fault. But she would say that I wasn't a true Filipino. I felt as if she was right. I didn't feel like a true Filipino. Later on that year, my dad started to play home videos on the weekends when he was bored. I learned that I went to the Philippines when I was younger, and that made me believe I was a true Filipino. I had pride for myself and my culture. But then I entered high school.

High school was an awkward time for me. My life was changing, and my ethnicity was always being questioned. For example, I didn't look like your typical Filipino. I was always mistaken for another ethnicity. Some would say Indian while others would go for Latino. I was once mistaken for being African-American and that got me a bit angry. My looks may have been one of the factors why I didn't get along with other Filipinos growing up. I didn't look like your typical Filipino and I knew that from the start. I felt a bit depressed knowing I never made friends with any other Filipinos, but I made other friends. I became the "token Asian" with most of my friends, but I always heard that question in the back of my head, "Are you Asian enough?"

As I graduated high school and entered college, I felt that I should be a bit more open to people. I felt I was ready to meet new people. I was wrong. I felt as if I was in high school again, always being seen as an oddity in my ethnic group. I still feel conscious about myself, but I'm over the fact that I will or will not make friends that are of the same nationality as me.

The question always pops up in my head whenever I enter a room filled with people. Am I Asian enough right now? Aren't there instant signs that say, "I'm Asian."? Should I have a percentage sign on me at all times? I feel as if my ethnicity is always in question wherever I go. Does the Asian community do this as well? With this in mind, do we promote racism to an extreme? Is there a superiority ladder with Asians? And who's on top? Will I ever amount to being near the top? Am I Asian enough?

Voice box is a new segment added to AARCCConnections. The goal of Voice Box is for any student, staff, and faculty to extend their thoughts about how they view the Asian American community or maybe even a little self-evaluation of ourselves that we might not thought about before, or just anything relevant to Asian Americans. Please submit your writing to:

aarcc@uic.edu



Deadlines:

February Issue: January 25, 2008

April Issue: March 7, 2008

Note: Opinions expressed in the Voice Box do not necessarily represent the views of AARCC.

**Asian American
Resource and
Cultural Center**

101 Taft Hall (MC 203)
826 S. Halsted
Chicago, IL 60607-7029

Phone: 312-413-9569
E-mail: aarcc@uic.edu
aarcc.vcaa.uic.edu

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AARCC@UIC.EDU

REGISTER FOR ASAM COURSES THIS SPRING!

Asian American Studies courses offered Spring 2008:

- **ASAM/ENGL/SOC 125**
Introduction to Asian American Studies K. Su
Lectures: MW 3:00-3:50 Discussion F 2:00 or 3:00
- **ASAM/ENGL 441**
Topics in Asian American Literature and Culture M. Chiang
Lectures: TR 9:30-10:45
- **ASAM/ASST/SOC 228**
Sociology of Asia and Asian Americans A. Guevarra
Lectures: TR 2:00-3:15
- **HON 201**
Asian Americans and Leadership C. Kodama
Lectures: T 2:00-3:15