

## Survivor Winner Yul Kwon at UIC

Yul Kwon won the reality show, *Survivor: Cook Islands*, during 2006's controversial, racially-segregated season. Kwon was the first (and only) Asian American winner of this popular reality show.

On his way to victory, Kwon skillfully led a multi-ethnic team, earned a reputation as one of the show's most strategic and honest players, and smashed stereotypes about Asian American men in the media. In fact, one of the primary reasons he decided to do *Survivor* was just that: to overcome negative stereotypes about Asian Americans and increase Asian American representation on television.

Since winning *Survivor*, Kwon has worked as a host for the Discovery Channel, a special correspondent for CNN, a lecturer at the FBI Academy, and a partner in one of the fastest-growing frozen yogurt franchises in the country. He also co-founded the Asian Political Leadership Fund, a federally-designated 527 fund whose purpose is to promote political leadership from within the Asian American community. Additionally, he is a spokesperson and board member for the Asian American Donor Program (part of the National Marrow Donor Program).



Kwon was born in Flushing, NY, to parents who immigrated from South Korea. He grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area, obtained his B.S. degree in theoretical computer science from Stanford University, and then went to Yale Law School.

Kwon pursued a diverse career straddling law, politics, business, and technology, working as a Circuit Court clerk, legislative aide in Washington D.C. management consultant, and business strategist with Google.

Kwon has been featured in *VIBE Magazine's* annual "Juice" list of people with power, *People Magazine's* Sexiest Man Alive and Hottest Bachelor's issues, and *EXTRA TV's* list of Most Eligible Bachelors. He has also been recognized by a wide range of community and government organizations for his commitment to public service.

In his visit to UIC, Kwon will discuss the challenges facing the Asian American community, including limited representation of Asian Americans in media and politics and the corporate glass ceiling. He will share personal stories of overcoming his own challenges, as well as the importance of staying connected with your cultural identity while adapting behaviors to become successful in "mainstream" America.

He will also talk about his experiences with *Survivor*, from being recruited to be a stereotypical Asian geek to surviving the "race wars" that the producers built into that season's show. Most importantly, he will talk about how he used *Survivor* as a platform to make a statement about the value of diversity and change perceptions of Asian Americans.

Don't miss this engaging event with one of today's rising Asian American leaders:

**Yul Kwon: Asian  
American Empowerment  
Monday, Nov. 3  
4:00 p.m.  
Student Center East #302  
Reception following**

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## Choosing the Right Major for YOU



*How do you know what major is right for you?*

*How do you balance family expectations with your personal interests and talents?*

*How much does your major matter for your future, anyway?*

Selecting a major is an important decision you need to make in college, but also can be confusing, challenging, and stressful.

Join us for an interactive workshop in a non-judgmental environment to discuss your own major and career concerns. Bring your questions!

**Friday, Oct. 24  
1:00 p.m.  
Burnham Hall #114  
(Honors College  
Conference Room)**

Presented by Corinne Kodama, AARCC Associate Director and former Assistant Director in the Office of Career Services.

## South Asian Chai Social

Bring a cup of your favorite beverage to a teatime gathering of those interested in South Asian and diaspora arts, culture, and politics.

Undergrads, grads, and faculty are all welcome to this free-form chat space where we'll talk about our favorite South Asian books, movies, and more. This may become a monthly event -- come to the first meeting to help us decide what we want this to be!

If you're interested in helping to plan April's Kriti Festival of South Asian and diaspora arts and literature, we'd particularly love to see you!

**Monday, Oct. 27, 4-5 p.m.  
2nd Floor Port Cafe  
University Hall**

Contact Professor Maryann Mohanraj at [mohanraj@uic.edu](mailto:mohanraj@uic.edu).



*"In the popular culture, Japanese Americans are generally invisible. If they do appear, they appear either as the victims of the internment during WWII or perhaps as the model minority. My writing has centered on trying to explore a much more complicated picture of both our past and our present. It attempts to show how the historical and political are interwoven with the psychological and personal."*

-David Mura

## David Mura, Asian American Author



David Mura is the award-winning author of *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* along with poetry, nonfiction, plays, and performance art.

His new novel, *Famous Suicides of the Japanese Empire*, is a story set in the Chicago suburbs. The protagonist is a 3rd generation Japanese American who is haunted by the legacy of the WWII Internment camps and his family's past.

Mura will be speaking in UIC at two classes which will be OPEN TO ALL :

**Wed., October 29:**

Asian American literature  
(ENGL/ASAM 123)

**10-11 a.m.,**

**Stevenson Hall 115**

Advanced Fiction Writing  
(ENGL 491)

**1-2 p.m.**

**Stevenson Hall 101**

For more info, contact Professor Mohanraj at [mohanraj@uic.edu](mailto:mohanraj@uic.edu).

# The Asian American Electorate



What are the issues facing Asian Americans in the election? Why should Asian Americans vote? On Oct. 13, Ann Kalayil, co-founder of the South Asian American Research and Policy Institute, and April Lewton, Community Organizer for the Asian American Institute of Chicago, came to UIC to discuss the Asian American Vote.

In particular, they discussed the new *Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois*, compiled by the Asian American Institute with the input of Asian American organizations in Chicago. This platform describes critical concerns affecting Asian Americans in Chicago, including consumer fraud, economic development, hate crimes, health care, housing, immigration, and education. This platform is an important guide and resource for policymakers, media, and community members. **The report is online, visit: “What’s at Stake: An Asian American Issues Platform for Illinois” at <http://www.aaichicago.org/>**

The National Asian American Survey (NAAS), a comprehensive survey of the political views of Asian Americans, reveals that:

- Between 1990 and 2000, the Asian American population has more than doubled in 19 states, growing fastest in key battleground states such as Nevada, New Hampshire, Florida, and Georgia
- Among Asian American citizens, 65 percent can be described as “likely voters.” Japanese American citizens are the most likely to vote (82%), followed by Asian Indian (73%), Koreans (72%), Filipinos (67%), Vietnamese (65 %) and Chinese (60%).
- More than one-third (34%) of likely Asian American voters remain undecided. By comparison, recent surveys of the general population show that undecided voters are roughly 8 percent of the electorate.
- Preferences for the presidential candidates and political parties vary by national origin.
- Language access and ethnic language media are important for the Asian American electorate. One third of Asian American citizens get informed about politics from Asian-language television and newspapers, and about one in five get political information from Asian-language radio and Internet sources. More than one in four (28%) say they would use election materials in non-English languages.

**For more information, visit the National Asian American Survey: <http://www.naasurvey.com/>**

Also, the Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote) is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that encourages and promotes civic participation of Asian Pacific Islander Americans in the electoral and public policy processes at the national, state and local levels. For more information, visit [www.apivote.org](http://www.apivote.org)

## How YOU Can Help With the Election

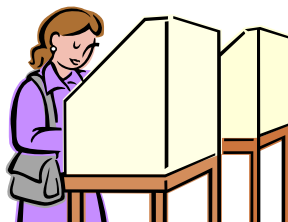
AARCC is helping to coordinate a variety of service events related to the upcoming election—get involved!

Before Election Day, you can help with **Get out the Vote** efforts! This will involve dropping literature at houses in Chinatown and adjacent neighborhoods, helping to give voters polling place information. UIC will be bringing a group to help out Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community on Saturday, November 1 from 11 AM to 3 PM.

**Get Out The Vote in Chinatown  
Saturday, November 1  
11 a.m.-3 p.m.**

**Poll watching** involves being in the poll site, and making sure that everyone has access to ballots and language assistance. In order to poll watch you must be registered to vote in the state of Illinois. Poll watching will take place in the Chinatown or Uptown neighborhoods.

**Tuesday, November 4  
6 a.m.-7 p.m.**



**Exit polling** involves collecting information from voters as they leave the poll site. This data collection is incredibly important, since it will provide demographic and voting information, which can be used to help redraw legislative boundaries after the 2010 census. Exit polling will take place in the Chinatown area or in Uptown. A brief training will be required.

**Tuesday, November 4  
6 a.m.-7 p.m.**

**To get involved in any of these events,  
contact Brandon Lee at  
[blee21@uic.edu](mailto:blee21@uic.edu) or (773)259-5288.**

# OCTOBER 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
					How to Choose the Right Major for You	
26	27 South Asia Chai Social  Pakistani Student Kickoff	28 Korean American Student Assoc. Mtg.	29 David Mura Presentation	30 Asian American Activism Today	31	1  Get Out the Vote in Chinatown

## Schedule of Events

- } Oct 24: How to Choose the Right Major For You. 1:00 p.m., Burnham Hall #114. Contact ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653.
- } Oct. 27: South Asian Chai Social, 4 p.m., Port Café, University Hall. Contact mohanraj@uic.edu.
- } Oct. 27: Pakistani Student Organization Kickoff: 6-11 p.m., Student Center East #302. FREE food, performances with DJ Baadshah and UIC Bhangra.
- } Oct. 28: KASA Mtg., 4:30 in SCE #611. Contact elim4@uic.edu.
- } Oct. 29: David Mura visits to ASAM/ENG 123 (10 a.m. SH 115) and ENG (1 p.m., SH 101). See p. 2. mohanraj@uic.edu.
- } Oct. 30th: Asian American Activism today (see p. 5). 4 p.m., Hull-House. Contact Eric Tang at etang@uic.edu

} Nov. 1: Get Out The Vote in Chinatown, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Contact Brandon Lee at blee21@uic.edu or 773-259-5288.

} Nov. 3: Yul Kwon: Asian American Empowerment. (see p.1). 4 p.m., Student Center East #302. Contact ckodama@uic.edu or 312-413-9653.

} Nov. 4: Poll-watching and Exit Polling with the Asian American Institute of Chicago. Contact Brandon Lee at blee21@uic.edu or 773-259-5288.



} Nov. 12: Money Matters workshop, learn to manage your finances responsibly! 3 p.m., Taft Hall #207. Presented by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Contact Jung Kim at jkim147@uic.edu.

} Nov. 18: KASA Meeting. 4:30 p.m., Student Center East. Monarch Room. Contact Elisa Lim at elim4@uic.edu.

# NOVEMBER 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2	3 Yul Kwon: Asian American Empowerment	4 ELECTION DAY Poll watching and exit polling	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12 Money Matters workshop	13	14	15
16	17	18 Korean Am Student Assoc. Mtg	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving	28	29

# Eric Tang, new Assistant Professor at UIC

## Why did you decide to come to UIC?

UIC offers a rare combination of things that you'll be hard-pressed to find anywhere else. Students range from those who are fresh out of high school to those who have put in years working in the real world, students of all races, nationalities and migratory experiences, students from a range of class backgrounds. I find this diversity to be uncommon for a top research university. At the same time it's an urban based university and my research focuses on race and the city.

## What does your work focus on?

Specifically, I'm interested in telling the race stories that have gone untold. Over the past twenty or so years, a particular racial "common sense" has taken hold of the public sphere: Black, Asians, Latinos -- all are cast into typical, predictable roles within the city. But my research shows how within any given racial group there is a range of heterogeneity. I also uncover examples of "unlikely alliances" across racial groups.

## Could you tell us about the Cambodian American refugee project you're working on?

I'm looking at the lives of Cambodian refugees in the US. I argue that their lives here have not brought them closure from the war. Instead, they have continued to experience the traumas of poverty, community and state violence, and injustice embedded in US immigration law -- including the deportation of Cambodian American youth "back" to Cambodia even though many of them have never even been there, having been born in refugee camps. The lives of Cambodian Americans have been marked by ongoing displacements; hence, the title of my manuscript -- *Unsettled*. The goal of the project is to make a case for unfinished peace, justice.

## Why do you feel community organizing work is important?

Community organizing is an important *praxis*—that is, it's a theory *and* a practice. It forces us to work alongside others to problem solve some of the most critical social issues our communities face. In this sense, it's similar to scholarship. However, through community organizing you are also working out these social issues in relationship to others, and through this process you learn how to better treat others, how to value our social relations, how to see the value of our interdependence. These things are not always valued in academia, I'm sorry to say. Moreover community organizing is, hands down, the most fun you'll have sticking it to "the man."

## Tell us about the October 30<sup>th</sup> Asian American activism event at UIC you're planning:

This event focuses on the Vietnamese Americans of New Orleans in particular, but Asian American activism in general. These Vietnamese Americans were among the first community groups to return to and rebuild New Orleans. They also fought the city's plans to dump toxic Katrina debris in a makeshift landfill located in their neighborhood. Many expected them to quietly go about the business of rebuilding, and few thought they would fight the city's plans. But fight back they did, eventually pressuring the city to shut down the dumpsite. *How* they organized was just as impressive as what they achieved: the Vietnamese Americans were not in this for themselves, they didn't do it alone. Instead they built strong political coalitions with African American leaders and community activists. They didn't play into divide and conquer strategies. This kind of organizing is rare these days -- especially among Asian American communities. I think New Orleans has a lot to teach the rest of us about the future of Asian American activism; who would have thought that the biggest lessons are to be found not in the big cities of the East or West Coasts or the Midwest, but rather in the South?

## Why do you think Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies are important?

All the major issues we're facing these days--war, immigration, the economy, national security -- Asian American Studies touches on all of them. Take immigration for instance. The immigration restrictions and gatekeeping we see today is rooted in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese exclusion period: detention centers, deportations, the monitoring of immigrant groups. Or take war and homeland security: Japanese American history has a lot to say about the consequences of treating American citizens and residents as "enemies within" without justification, based on fear and racism. The question is: are we paying close enough attention to this "ethnic" history? Most of this knowledge is dropped from the traditional curriculum, and it's the job of Asian American studies to remind us of what we don't know, to be that squeaky wheel.

## What courses will you be teaching in Spring?

The only course I'll be running is Diapers 101. I'm having a new baby in February. So I won't be teaching. But I'm more than happy to work with students on any independent studies or related projects.



**"Be sure to attend the Oct 30 event, and you'll learn everything you'll ever need (or want) to know about me. (While scoring some free food!)."**

## Asian American Activism Today: Where have we been? Where are we going?

**Thursday, October 30 at 4 p.m.: Jane Addams Hull-House Museum**

A conversation with James Bui of the National Association of the Vietnamese American Service Agencies (NAVASA) and Tuyet Le, Executive Director of the Asian American Institute of Chicago. For more information, contact Eric Tang at [erictang@uic.edu](mailto:erictang@uic.edu).

# UIC Asian American Resource and Cultural Center

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JOIN OUR E-  
MAIL LIST BY  
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## Take an Asian American Studies Course in Spring 2009!

### **ASAM/ENGL/SOC 125: Introduction to Asian American Studies**

(General Ed: Individual and Society; U.S. Society)

K. Su; M W Lecture 3-3:50; F Discussion 2-2:50 or 3-3:50

### **ASAM/ASST/SOC 228: Sociology of Asia and Asian Americans**

(General Ed: Individual and Society; U.S. Society)

R. Barrett; T Th 12:30-1:45

### **ASAM/ENGL 328: Asian American Literature**

H. Jun; T Th 3:30-4:45

### **ASAM/GWS/SOC 428: Asian and Asian American Women in the Global Economy**

(both undergraduate and graduate students)

A. Guevarra; T 3:30-6:15

### **HON 123: Psychology and Education of Asian Americans**

(for Honors College students only)

C. Kodama; T Th 9:30-10:45

