

RIPPLES

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

2009 Asian Pacific American Inter-Generational Veterans Forum



From left to right: Jake Comer, David Ching, Alvin Wing, Matt Seto, Amy Au, and Richard Sann
(Photo credit: Frances K. Chow)

“We often at times hear very little or even learn about Asian Pacific Americans serving in the military. Their sacrifices and efforts have made tremendous contributions throughout American history.”

by Matt Seto

On April 28, 2009, UMass Boston’s Asian American Studies Program hosted the 2009 Asian Pacific American Inter-Generational Veterans Forum on campus. The forum was held at the Wheatley Building 4th Floor Room 0148 from 12:00-3:00pm. Special invited guests were the Boston Chinatown American Legion Post 328 along with student veterans of UMass Boston. The Boston Chinatown American Legion Post 328 discussed its 60-year history within Boston’s Chinatown and their community work in the neighborhood. John P. “Jake” Comer, a former American Legion National Commander, talked about the American Legion. Post Commander, Alvin Wing, spoke about past, present, and future activities, and Post Adjutant, David Ching, provided the history of the post. Other members of the post who came to the forum from WWII, Korea, and

Vietnam-era generations were Gim Fong, Chuck Soo Hoo, Perry Wong, Vinnie Wong, and Warren Yee. UMass Boston student veterans present on the panel included Matthew M. Seto, Amy C.Y. Au, Richard Sann, and Vu Tran. A packed room full of professors, faculty members, staff, and students were present to listen to and learn from the stories and experiences of Asian Pacific American veterans across generations of the old and new.

The 2009 Asian Pacific American Inter-Generational Veterans Forum was a first for UMass Boston’s Asian American Studies Program. The event occurred just in time as an introduction to Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May. This month celebrates and honors the many contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. According to the 2007 U.S. Census, there are currently 277,751 veterans of Asian descent and 26,878 veterans of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander descent. U.S. history records have found that Asian Americans have been serving in the U.S. military since the Civil War. The most researched of the Civil War Asian American veterans were Joseph Pierce and Edward Day Cohota from Massachusetts. Since then, there have been many more cases of heroic actions made by men and women of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. The famous 442nd Infantry Regiment, who fought in Europe during World War II, became

To recognize and acknowledge those who served

the most decorated unit within U.S. military history. Many Japanese Americans served as translators and worked in the Military Intelligence Service while their families were interned in relocation camps. There are records of Chinese American and Japanese American women serving within the Army Nurse Corps, Women's Army Corps, and even as Women in the Air Force service pilots. There are also many records of Filipino men and women fighting for the U.S. during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. This continuous service still exists today, and now almost every Asian ethnic group is represented in all branches of the United States Armed Forces.

As an Asian American veteran myself, I created this event to recognize and acknowledge those who have served proudly and honorably for their country. We often at times hear very little and even learn about Asian Pacific Americans serving in the military. Their sacrifices and efforts have made tremendous contributions throughout American history. Many Asian Pacific American veterans have faced great amounts of prejudice and discrimination. Despite experiencing adversity and obstacles, they were still able to serve and fight locally and beyond.

Our forum gave a space and a place to gather these veterans of different generations, to come together in one setting, to talk about and discuss their experiences within the military and their experiences now as veterans. Many topics came out of the panel discussion. Examples of racism and prejudice were present. War was talked about, and the issue of identity surfaced. Gim Fong, a World War II veteran, talked

about the prejudices during his time. One story came up, in which confusion occurred when he had to board a bus and did not know where he could sit. At the time, Blacks were to sit in the back and Whites in the front. He was stuck with a dilemma. Richard Sann, a student veteran, talked about his choice of joining the U.S. Marine Corps and how his mother, a refugee of Cambodia, felt when he approached her with the decision. Amy Au presented a video she made in the Asian American Media Literacy 370 course. The video provided insights into Amy's reasons for joining the U.S. Army. These examples are just some of what defined the event and what made it successful.



Boston Veteran's Day Parade 2009
(Photo provided courtesy of David Ching)



From left to right: Richard Sann, Matt Seto, and Amy Au
(Photo credit: Frances K. Chow)



From left to right: Matt Seto, Amy Au, Richard Sann, and Vu Tran
(Photo credit: Frances K. Chow)

camouflage

*this foreign exchange in the attitudes of love your country
but go back to your land
a loss in translation
so i speak in tongue for which they can understand
but within the eye of the beholder
i am still the persecuted one
an immigrant in uniform and a traitor as a "native son"
where has truth become written and spoken without loyalty
which side is righteous for only mine is yours
and i am still the minority
and these traditions and elements of americanism
descriptive within my identity
this life and liberty, the pursuit of happiness in my dreams
but i am still looked upon as the enemy
pick and choose a side
but every side i own becomes a critique of another
this brainwashed soldier and this chinaman playing off each other
assimilation through the same society that lied to me
unbeknownst reasons for me to fight, so i plead the fifth
but i'm not guilty*

With RIPPLES,
we spread news in
continuous movements
of circles. We share the
same center. All of us.
Our work are circles
within each other - staff,
students, families,
and communities.
The transformation
begins within ourselves,
our own center.
We make ripples by
being fluid like water -
as we are touched by,
and touch, others.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Inter-Generational Veterans Forum

pgs. 1-2

X Degrees of Separation

pg. 4

Reflections on Race and Students of Color

pg. 5

What is Digital Storytelling?

pgs. 6-7

Japanese American Leadership Delegation

pgs. 8-9

VIET 101/102 at UMB

pg. 10

Community Health Forum

pg. 10-11

K-12 Education in Brookline

pg. 11-12

Asian American Voices Book

pg. 12

Dorchester Initiative for Youth

pg. 13

New Faculty/Grad Students

pgs. 14-16

Alumni Voices

pgs. 17-21

Student Awards

pg. 22-23

UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program Presents

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration

Events

April 28 (Tuesday) 2009 Asian Pacific American Inter-Generational Veterans Forum
sponsored by the Asian American Studies Program

with the Boston Chinatown American Legion Post 328

12:00-3:00pm Wheatley Building 4th Floor Room 0148 Student Lounge

May 6 (Wednesday) IAAS Research Fellow Presentations: *Untold Stories: Factors Lao & Khmer High School Students Consider When Deciding to Stay or Leave School* by Phitsamay Sychitkokhong Uy and *Perspectives of Successful Cambodian American Youth* by Dr. Michaela Wyman-Colombo

12:30-2:30pm Campus Center 2nd Floor Room 2540

May 7 (Thursday) AsAmSt 326 Multiracial Experiences Student Project Presentations

2:00-3:30pm Wheatley Building 2nd Floor Room 158

May 9 (Saturday) *Health Issues, Voices, and Visions in Massachusetts*

Asian American Communities

co-sponsored by the Asian American Studies Program, the Joslin Center Asian American Diabetes Initiative, and the Massachusetts Asian American Commission

1:00-5:00pm Wheatley Building 3rd Floor Venture Development Center

May 11 (Monday) *Teaching and Learning in Asian American Studies Final Project*

Exhibition by Brookline public school personnel taking the Asian American Studies Program's graduate professional development course with Dr. Nga-wing Anjela Wong

4:00-7:00pm School Committee Room, Brookline Town Hall,

333 Washington Street, Brookline, MA

May 12 (Tuesday) AsAmSt 220/228L/370 *Culture/Media Literacy*

Exhibitions of Student Work

plus *X Degrees of Separation* – Art Exhibit closing reception hosted by AASO

12:00-4:00pm Campus Center 3rd Floor Ballroom C

May 14 (Thursday) *Asian American Voices: Engaging, Empowering, Enabling* (edited by Lin Zhan, 2009) Book Party Reception with UMB AsAmSt faculty & student authors

4:00-6:00pm Wheatley Building 3rd Floor Venture Development Center

May 27 (Wednesday) Asian American Studies Program Graduation Celebration 2009

12:30-4:00pm Healey Library 11th Floor

For more information or special accommodations,
contact the Asian American Studies Outreach office
at 617-287-5658 or aaso.umb@gmail.com

X Degrees of Separation

an art exhibit



(Photo credit: Frances K. Chow)

by Frances K. Chow

X Degrees of Separation is the first of an annual art exhibit hosted by Asian American Studies Outreach (AASO) at UMass Boston. What does “X Degrees of Separation” mean? Inspired by the theory of six degrees of separation (the theory that every person on earth is separated from each other by at most six people), we chose to name this year’s exhibit X Degrees of Separation with X denoting a variable that we define for ourselves. The theme of X Degrees of Separation is how we see ourselves as makers and shapers of history. Through sharing our stories and histories in art, we are recording history and making connections to each other. These personal histories are just as profound as what we see, and also what we do not see, in the textbooks. This is history as we know it. We are living it. We are showing it.



(Photo credit: Kay Ye)



(Photo credit: Frances K. Chow)



(Photo credit: Kay Ye)

Reflections on Race and Students of Color in Higher Education



Jon Iftikar and Sam Museus
(Photo credit: Peter Kiang)

by Sam Museus

During graduate school, I developed a more nuanced understanding of how culture and race affect the experiences of individuals and institutions in our society. During that time, I realized that my undergraduate experience did not provide me and my peers with enough opportunities to engage in critical discussions around such issues. The absence of these opportunities prevented us from developing a more informed and richer understanding of our place in the world. In graduate school, I also realized that many minority college students were never exposed to the field of higher education or the fact that there is an entire professional community dedicated to studying those students' experiences. I believed that it was this type of exposure that can help students gain a more in-depth understanding of the importance of higher education and how it shapes their lives. Asian American Studies 420 was, in part, a consequence of these realizations.

Dr. Tara Parker and I taught the advanced special topics course titled "Race and Students of Color in Higher Education" for the first time in the fall of 2008. We intended for this course to be an opportunity for students of color to examine, learn about, and reflect upon their own identities in the context of higher education and society. Throughout the semester, students explored issues, such as the role of diversity in the mission and purpose of higher education, the causes of racial and ethnic inequities in postsecondary education, and how culture and race can influence the everyday experiences of racial and ethnic minority college students.

Although they were a small group, students enrolled in the course represented a wide range of diversity themselves. They included university staff, graduate students, and undergraduates. They also varied along dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity, and age. And, that diversity brought an enhanced richness to our critical discussions about the role of culture and

race in the experiences of minority college students. Together, we collectively created a space in which college educators could learn about the realities of college students of color and minority students could increase their knowledge of the institutional environments that shape the college experience. We also grappled with questions about how college educators and students can work together to transform their campuses to better serve diverse college students populations.

Although not perfect, the course did create some noticeable ripple effects, or evidence that our experience in the course spread beyond the classroom. Some students have indicated that, throughout the semester, their perspective regarding the impact of culture and race in the lives of college students has drastically changed, and many utilized the opportunity to deepen their understanding of cultural and racial influences on their lives. Since the end of the course, in response to their own realization that many college students do not have enough opportunities to discuss critical cultural and racial issues, some of the students from Asian American Studies 420 have created a student organization called MIX'EM (Multi-cultural Identity eXperiences Educating Minds) that is designed to bring together students from diverse backgrounds to bridge divides and create spaces where other undergraduates at UMass Boston can engage in rich discussions to explore the role of culture and race in education and society. In doing so, they are using the knowledge that they have gained to help better the college experience for their fellow university community members. And, it is this spirit of service and this agency that is necessary to create a rich learning environment in which students can maximize the benefits they gain from the college experience, for no graduate can completely understand herself or how culture and race inevitably shape her life, unless she understands both. Perhaps MIX'EM will send ripples throughout the rest of the university community so that students across our campus can benefit from and become advocates for opportunities like these.



Richard Sann
(Photo credit: Frances K. Chow)

What is Digital Storytelling in Asian American Studies at UMass Boston?



(Photo credit: Peter Kiang)

...a grounding in personal narrative that enables them to make meaningful and powerful connections to the historical and contemporary issues in Asian American Studies.

by Shirley Tang

Over the past five years, students in the AsAmSt 370 Asian American Media Literacy class have used digital stories to document and share their personal stories with campus- and community-wide audiences. The foundation of the course lies in UMass Boston Asian American Studies Program's commitment to supporting and training students to become socially responsible and effective story-tellers and media-makers in society. Through this course and related programs, we assist students in accessing and using media tools for advocacy and representation of their family and community issues and experiences at both local and transnational levels. Our course emphasizes the importance of real stories and real content in media empowerment, prioritizing first person narratives and visual and literary expressions of people's lives and environments. Students learn how to draw on living memory, family records, and academic sources and render them into accessible and usable products that highlight the power of personal stories, voices, and images. The end-of-semester exhibition, which is the culmination of students' semester-long individual and collaborative project work, brings together people of diverse backgrounds in a public venue and encourages civic engagement and meaningful dialogues concerning Asians (and Asian Americans), media, and society.

This year, with the support of a new grant received by the Asian American Studies Program, students in AsAmSt 370 Asian American Media Literacy have also had the

opportunity to contribute to a new social networking software platform that promotes civic engagement and democratic participation. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has recently funded a proposal to pilot the Boston Area Social Network proposed by Tisch College and the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University, in partnership with the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) and the Asian American Studies Program at UMass Boston, Community Knowledgebase LLC in Wisconsin, and Massachusetts Campus Compact¹. UMass Boston students have produced a collection of digital stories reflecting various Asian American communities in the greater Boston area. Themes of these stories include: family migration, war, health, gentrification, intergenerational issues, body and self-image, homeland ties, racial/class/gender inequity, and social justice.

AsAmSt 370 Asian American Media Literacy has become a core course for a number of students majoring or completing a program of study in Asian American Studies, a vehicle for them to acquire and practice storytelling and media production skills, and a grounding in personal narrative that enables them to make meaningful and powerful connections to the historical and contemporary issues in Asian American Studies. Many students who have taken this class before have applied their media skills and engaged in video documentation



Phong Nguyen in the Asian American Studies Program office preparing for the 2009 Asian American Media Literacy Exhibit

(Photo credit: Peter Kiang)



AsAmSt 370 student Chu Yu Huang (right) and AsAmSt staff Tri Quach (left) working on her digital story (Photo credit: Peter Kiang)

projects in other classes throughout the campus and in local, national and transnational organizations. Some have also participated in further training and facilitated statewide educational workshops and conferences using their own media products. Others have also developed training manuals and related resource materials for curricular support. 370 students have presented their digital stories in venues ranging from university campuses to the annual Boston's Asian American Film Festival to the national Asian American Studies Association annual meetings.

(Footnote)

¹ We work closely with Peter Levine and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg (Tufts) and John Saltmarsh (NERCHE) to develop the pilot program. Tri Quach, Frances K. Chow, and Son Ca Lam in the Asian American Studies Program at UMass Boston have played a critical role in course development this semester.

The gala 2009 exhibition of students' digital stories is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 2009, 11:30am-4:00pm, in the Campus Center 3rd Floor Ballroom C. For more information, please contact Professor Shirley Tang by email via Shirley.Tang@umb.edu

Announcements:

Summer 2009 Dr. Shirley Tang and Mr. Tri Quach will offer ASAMST 333 Asian American Politics and Social Movements in the summer of 2009. The focus of this summer's course will be on local Asian American youth and community organizing and the roles of web 2.0 social media technology in supporting civic engagement. Register before July 2nd online via www.wiser.umb.edu or www.ccde.umb.edu/moreinfo/registration/cart Register in person at Corporate, Continuing, and Distance Education (CCDE), UMass Boston, Wheatley Building, 2nd floor, Room 203. More information: www.summer.umb.edu



AsAmSt 370 student Chris Quigley aiding fellow students on their digital stories (Photo credit: Peter Kiang)

Coming Soon! Examples of digital stories produced in AsAmSt 370 Asian American Media Literacy will soon be available online. Go to UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program website — Arts and Media — Digital Storytelling in Asian American Studies.

People-to-People Bridges

2009 Japanese American Leadership Delegation Learns Jinmyaku Firsthand



Patricia Nakamoto Neilson at "meet the faculty" day at UMass Boston
(Photo credit: Peter Kiang)

by Patricia Nakamoto Neilson

For many in our Japanese American Leadership Delegation, the visit to Okinawa was the emotional highlight of our trip. None of us had ever been to Okinawa before. For me, it was truly special on a personal level, because in the early 1900s, all four of my grandparents had immigrated to Hawaii from Okinawa, a 'home' I'd heard them talk about throughout my childhood.

Thirteen of us had been selected by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership to travel to Japan as members of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation. Our mission was to promote U.S.-Japan relations through mutual understanding between Japanese Americans and Japanese through jinmyaku, or person-to-person relations.

The Japanese American Leadership Delegation program was started in 2000; we were the ninth delegation to visit Japan. We hailed from nine states in various regions of the United States: Boston, Massachusetts; New York City, New York; Chicago, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Jose, California; Seattle and Vancouver, Washington; and Honolulu, Hawaii. Our delegation represented diverse professions: business, finance, government, health, higher education, law, media, and marketing and communications. For three delegates, it was their first trip to Japan. The delegation was led by Irene Hirano, executive advisor (and former president and executive director) of the Japanese American National Museum, and Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles, Hiroshi Furusawa.

From February 26 through March 8, we traveled to Tokyo, Kyoto, and Okinawa. We had access to people at the highest levels: a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso, tea with a member of the Imperial family, dinner meetings with members of the Japanese Parliament and the Foreign Ministry, and participated in forums and lively discussions with executives of Japanese corporations. This interaction gave us the opportunity to learn about Japan's current economic and political issues, its culture and traditions and, conversely, provided a chance for the Japanese to learn more about our lives as Japanese Americans, about American economic and political issues, as well as about our own unique Nikkei culture and traditions.

Each year, one prefecture in Japan is selected to host the Japanese American Leadership Delegation Symposium. This year, it was Okinawa's Naha City. Upon our arrival in Okinawa, a welcome reception was held at the home of U.S. Consul General in Okinawa, Kevin Maher, and his wife, Sayako. The highlight of the evening was a wonderful performance by Misako Koja, who sang beautiful Okinawan songs while playing the Okinawan stringed instrument, the sanshin. The music stirred warm memories from my childhood, and I found myself joining in the singing and dancing kachashi, just as my grandparents had done. It was a magical moment, as if all parts of my life converged in this one moment; my Okinawan roots, my Hawaiian childhood, my Japanese identity, and my American life.