The Asian American Studies Program Finds a New Home

The Asian American Studies Program building, on its way to its new location

When the Asian American Studies Program (then Asian American Studies Committee) was created in 1997, the UIUC administration showed generous support. This translated into faculty lines and the provision of a house for the new program, at 1003 West Nevada Street in Urbana. As the program grew, this house served program needs well, as it provided a conference area for meetings, film showings, workshops, and lectures and also much needed office and work space for a growing staff and resource materials.

However, in Fall 2000, a temporary crisis faced the program related to its facilities. The site of the AASP building (together with the adjacent offices of the Music Annex) was selected as the new location of the Child Development Laboratory and slated for demolition. To make matters worse, this decision had been made without securing alternative facilities for the program.

The first few months of the Fall semester were uncertain ones, as AASP director George Yu met several times with UIUC administrators to negotiate alternative quarters. When Asian American students also heard of the news, they began to coordinate letter writing and petition campaigns, urging the UIUC administration to continue its unprecedented commitment to Asian American Studies by finding a suitable new building as well as addressing the question of a permanent director for the program.

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Asian American Studies Finds a New Home, continued from front page

Due to these collaborative efforts, the AASP building was saved from demolition. The new plan was to physically relocate the house from the current site so as to continue with plans for the Child Development Laboratory. The AASP house would be moved, a few blocks west on Nevada street. This new site, once a parking lot, sits at 1208 W. Nevada Street behind the School of Social Work and adjacent to the campus quad.

Furthermore, not only would the building be relocated, it would also be renovated. Due to the physical structure of the house, architects decided to move it without its basement. Because the basement housed several rooms for meeting and student work space, an annex would be built in its place. This annex will hold a spacious new conference room, enlarged work areas, and an additional office.

The AASP offices were temporarily housed in the International Studies Building starting in April 2001. From that time on, builders boarded up the AASP building, broke ground at the new site, and lifted the house onto a flatbed truck. The move took place on July 10 and took under seven hours, with movers stopping periodically to trim tree branches that obstructed the house’s pathway. Local press covered the event, with stories in the Daily Illini, Inside Illinois, the News Gazette, and Channel 3 News. The move was also covered in the Chronicle of Higher Education (volume 47 no. 46).

As finishing details are completed, the main office and staff relocated yet again to larger temporary quarters in 84 Bevier Hall in August. The renovations will be completed by mid-Fall, when there will be a grand re-opening of the new facilities. For further updates on the AASP location, please contact the office at 217-244-9530.

Introducing the 2001-2002 AASP Interns

Katherine Chuu is a pre-Law sophomore majoring in English and Political Science. She is involved in the pre-Law club, the Phi Eta Sigma Honors Society, and the Alpha Lambda Delta Honors Society. She is interested in Asian American politics.

Frances Gestoso is a junior majoring in English. She is involved in the Philippine Students Association and the English club. She is interested in Asian American literature and poetry.

Cate Macapagal is a junior majoring in Economics. She is involved in the Philippine Students Association and the Asian Pacific American Coalition. She is interested in Asian American history.

Asian American Studies Program Staff

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George T. Yu, Professor of Political Science
Staff Associate
Sharon S. Lee
Secretary
Mary Ellerbe
Graduate Assistant
Kapila Sankaran
Work Study Student
Jocelyn Yin

Nexus Staff

Editors: Sharon Lee
Contributors: Sharon Lee, Yoo-Jung Kong
Layout: Sharon Lee

Please direct questions and submissions to The Nexus editor at (217) 244-9530.
The Asian American Studies Program is pleased to welcome Min Song, assistant professor of Asian American literature at Boston College, as its post-doctoral fellow for the 2001-2002 year. Song will teach an introduction to Asian American literature course in Spring 2002.

**SL:** What is your background?

**MS:** I was born in Korea and came to the United States when I was five years old. I grew up in Michigan, near Detroit, and did my undergraduate work at the University of Michigan, where I took one of the first Asian American literature courses ever offered there (as far as I know), taught by Stephen Sumida. I received a Ph.D. in English and American Literature from Tufts University. Currently I teach Asian American literature at Boston College.

**SL:** How did you become interested in Asian American Studies and Asian American literature?

**MS:** A number of factors fed into my interest in Asian American Studies. As I mentioned earlier, the course I took at Michigan opened up my mind about what literature written by and about Asian Americans could accomplish in a social environment defined, over rigidly, by the opposition between Blacks and Whites. I was already keenly aware of how difficult it is for Asian Americans to be in a country—and also a place like southeastern Michigan—so polarized by race. Psychically, being neither Black nor White when these options are all there are and when race is on everyone’s mind (though often unspoken) leaves one always feeling left out, incomplete, and overly self-conscious. I recall, in particular, the day Vincent Chin was mistaken for a Japanese man and beaten by a couple of unemployed autoworkers. I remember the tense social climate, the feelings of hurt and outrage, but it wasn’t until I saw the documentary “Who Killed Vincent Chin?” that I began to see this event in a larger historical context. I feel especially that literature, including film, is a wonderful vehicle for understanding how race in America is often lived through affect. Taking that class at Michigan gave me a language to talk about experiences that seemed previously too thick to decipher.

**SL:** What research project will you be working on?

**MS:** I’m currently at work on a book that focuses on the way the majority of Korean American literature is preoccupied by a traumatic history, both in Korea and in the United States, ranging from Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. I’m interested in the way this literature draws upon and contributes to critical discussions about migration, history and memory, and racial oppression. Hopefully, one of my contributions to these discussions will be a heightened sensitivity to the way literature gets at these issues at the level of affect: such as mourning, anger, and love.

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**Asian American Studies Program Welcomes Post-Doctoral Fellow**

*Interview by Sharon Lee*

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**Fall 2001 Asian American Studies Courses**

**ANTHROPOLOGY 381**

Globalization and Asian Diasporas
Instructor: Professor Martin Manalansan
00517 LEC D 3:00-5:50 M 209 DAVENPORT

**EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES 300**

TOPIC: Asian American Education in Historical and Contemporary Contexts
Instructor: Professor Yoon Pak
02660 LEC D 4:00-5:50 TU 137 ARMORY

**HUMANITIES 395**

TOPIC: Asian-American Cinema
Instructor: Professor David Desser
04398 LEC D 1:00-2:50 M 66 LIBRARY

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 324**

Asian American Politics
Instructor: Professor Wendy Tam Cho
06982 LEC A 10:00-11:20 MW 223 DKH

**SOCIAL WORK 297**

Asian Families in America
Instructor: Professor Pallassana Balgopol
08687 LEC A 10:00-11:20 TUTH 1207 W. Oregon

**SOCIOLOGY 224**

Asian Americans of Hawai’i, Past and Present
Instructor: Professor Moon-Kie Jung
07541 LEC MKJ 3:00-4:20 TUTH 300 LINCOLN

**THEATRE 128**

Introduction to Asian American Theatre
Instructor: Professor Esther Kim
08184 LEC A 1:30-2:50 TUTH 4503 KCPA
2001-2002 AASP Film Series, Fighting the Tide: Asian American Resistance

The Asian American Studies Program’s film series for the 2001-2002 year has the theme of “Fighting the Tide: Asian American Resistance.” Conventional wisdom may imagine Asian Americans silently enduring injustice and avoiding confrontation; however, there exists a long legacy of protest and resistance within the Asian American community. This year’s series will portray these acts of legal, political, and cultural resistance, revealing a reaffirmation of Asian American culture and ethnicity.

Each showing of the film series will take place from noon-1pm and will be followed by discussion in the Illini Union. For more information, contact the AASP at 244-9530.

Friday, September 7
Forbidden City U.S.A
Union Room 314A

In the swinging thirties, crowds were packing the nation’s premiere all-Chinese nightclub, Forbidden City. Forbidden City gained an international reputation with its unique showcase of Chinese American performers in all-American extravaganzas. This documentary details the untold stories of Asian American pioneers who fought cultural barriers and racism to pursue their love of American song and dance.

Friday, October 5 -- Letters to Thien, Union Room 407
Thien Minh Ly was 24 years old when he was brutally murdered in 1996 in California. He is memorialized through anecdotes, tributes, and letters from his family and friends. A letter boasting, “Oh, I killed a jap [sic] a while ago,” led to the arrest of Thien’s young murderers and to the community’s struggle to have the murder declared a hate crime.

Friday, November 9-- Do 2 Halves Really Make a Whole? Union Room 407
Performance artists Velina Hasu Houston, Dan Kwong, and Brenda Wong Aoki address the viewpoints of people with multiracial Asian backgrounds through their creative work and discuss how they have resisted constricting societal definitions and instead, embraced all their heritages.

Friday, December 7-- The Fall of the I-Hotel, Union Room 407
This film brings to life the battle for housing in San Francisco. The brutal eviction of the I-Hotel’s tenants in 1977 ended a decade of spirited resistance. Almost 20 years since the International Hotel’s demolition, the former site of the heart of Manilatown remains vacant. Many of its surviving elderly residents still seek low-cost replacement housing.


The Asian American Studies Program is pleased to announce a 2001-2002 Workshop series, “New Frontiers: Asian American Studies in the Midwest.” This is a year-long interdisciplinary workshop for interested faculty and graduate students. Each session of the Workshop will focus on one scholar’s work in progress. The piece will be posted on a website prior to the meeting and will also be available for copying at the AASP office. The workshop is designed to provide an informal setting for academic discussion: a short presentation of the work will be followed by open dialogue and conversation.

We have chosen this year’s theme because it highlights the most recent work being done on Asian Americans in the Midwest. This new work signals a movement in the field towards establishing new paradigms that depart from and revise the California/West coast-centric foundations of Asian American Studies. This Midwestern Asian American scholarship not only focuses on our immediate environ but signals a paradigm shift and a re-orientation of the field.

Fall 2001 Presenters


Friday October 26, 2001, 1-3pm, 37 Education Building, Becoming a Chinese Family in St. Louis: What Chinese Culture Means to Families Formed Through Adoption From China, Andrea Louie, Assistant Professor, Anthropology, Michigan State University.

Friday November 30, 2001, 1-3pm, Lucy Ellis Lounge, FLB, Race, Space, and the “Heartland”: Regional Constructions of Asian American Identities in the Midwest, Barbara Kim, Assistant Professor, Asian and Asian American Studies, California State University, Long Beach.

Workshop Series Committee:
Moon-Kie Jung, Assistant Professor, Sociology
Martin Manalansan, Assistant Professor, Anthropology
Yoon Pak, Assistant Professor, Educational Policy Studies

For more information, contact Sharon Lee (Staff Associate at the AASP) at lee1@uiuc.edu.
Recent AASP Events, Spring 2001

by Yoo-Jung Kong

The past academic year was a busy one for the Asian American Studies Program. Some highlighted events from the Spring 2001 semester include:


In this lecture, Professor Wang asserted that the Wen Ho Lee case was the most significant Asian American case since the murder of Vincent Chin in terms of its far-reaching implications. He put the case in the context of a long historical and legal legacy of discrimination against Asians in the United States, through which Asians have been cast as “foreigners” and “perpetual aliens.”

Spring 2001 Council Meeting, “Asian Americans and the Bush Presidency: Turning the Political Tide?” a talk and town-hall discussion on March 20, 2001 with Shamina Singh, former Executive Director of the first White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) under President Clinton. In this discussion, Singh shared her experience implementing Executive Order 13125 that seeks to improve the quality of life of AAPIs through their increased participation in federal programs. She also discussed the current state of political affairs affecting Asian Americans under President George W. Bush and encouraged students to remain involved and active in Asian American issues.

Film screening with filmmaker Regge Life. April 13, 2001. Filmmaker Regge Life, well known for his documentaries, screened two films; Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan chronicled the lives of African Americans who have chosen to make Japan their home and Doubles: Japan and America’s Intercultural Children examined the lives and identities of children of dual heritage. During his stay he also met with students, faculty, and staff from various disciplines. His visit was part of the joint Asian American Studies/Asian Educational Media Service film series that ran through the year.

Upcoming Events, Fall 2001

The Fall semester will see a variety of events sponsored or co-sponsored by the Asian American Studies Program.

Asiantation, August 23, 7-9pm, Illini Union Ballroom—the new orientation for Asian American students. This orientation will provide information about the wealth of resources, student organizations, and fields of study that may interest Asian American students. A picnic will also take place on August 24, 5-8pm, at the Illini Grove.

“Asian American Experiences” Library Display, October 2001, Main University Library Central Hallway—the annual library exhibit detailing information on Asian American history and issues. This display is created by the AASP interns, and last year was recognized as the “outstanding program/event” at the Asian Pacific American Leadership Awards ceremony.

Conferences

APATITE: Asian Pacific Americans Transforming Illinois Through Education, an all-state student conference. September 15, 2001, 9am-5pm, 223 Gregory Hall. Sponsored by the Asian Pacific American Coalition and other student groups. This is the second annual conference which aims to bring together APA student leaders from around Illinois to discuss issues and concerns of the APA community. For more information contact Jocelyn Yin at jyin@uiuc.edu.

“Asian American Studies in Illinois,” sponsored by UIUC’s AASP in conjunction with the Governor’s office on Asian American Affairs, November 2-3, 2001, Illini Center Chicago—a state-wide conference to discuss Asian American Studies in Illinois. Participants will include representatives from Loyola University, Northwestern, University of Illinois Chicago, UIUC, and community organizations. Pre-registration is required. For more information contact the AASP at 217-244-9530.

APA Mentoring Program

Now in its third year, the Asian Pacific American Mentoring Program has grown to include over 50 participants and is jointly sponsored by the UIUC Counseling Center and the Office of the Dean of Students. This program helps develop mentoring relationships between APA undergraduate students and APA professional staff, faculty, and graduate students. Mentors often help address the particular experiences of APA students such as ethnic identity, family, relationships, college life, and career choices. If you are interested in becoming part of this program, as either a mentor or a protégé, please visit: www.odos.uiuc.edu/apaa.
Urbana High School’s Asian American Awareness Month

For a second year in a row, the UIUC Asian American Studies Program was involved in helping commemorate Asian American Awareness Month at Urbana High School. AASP interns created informational displays on Asian American issues which were posted through the main hallways. These displays were coordinated with Jeff Nelson, a teacher at Urbana High School and advisor of the school’s Asian American Club.

Asian Americans in Popular Culture

The exhibit consisted of three large display cases, two cases outside the main auditorium and one outside the principal’s office. The first auditorium case held information about young adult fiction and literature written by Asian American authors such as Laurence Yep and Marie G Lee. The second auditorium case featured Asian American artists and displayed replicas of paintings such as Sumio Arima’s “Boats in the Harbor” (1923) and Valeriano Montante Laigo’s “Dilemma of the Atom” (1953). It also showcased a timeline of events in Asian American history. The principal’s office case featured information and images of Asian Americans in movies, music, fashion, and literature such as Michelle Yeoh, Lucy Liu, Russell Wong, James Iha, Deepa Mehta, Sandy Dalal, and Jessica Hagedorn.

The cases ran from April 16-27, 2001 and were created by 2000-2001 interns Jennifer Lau, Stephanie Lee Moy, Emily Wu, and Michelle Yu. The interns felt strongly in the educational influence of the cases, as they themselves had little exposure to positive Asian American images and information in high school. They wanted to create affirming displays that would bolster young Asian American identities and images of themselves.

Asian American History Highlighted in the City of Champaign

This past Spring, the UIUC’s Asian American Studies Program also worked with the City of Champaign’s Office for Community Relations to raise awareness of Asian American history. Denise Gordon, Assistant to the City Manager for Community Relations, approached the program about coordinating a large display case on Asian American experiences for May 2001, to commemorate Asian Pacific American Heritage month. The display was housed on the first floor of the City of Champaign’s main building at 102 North Neil Street.

The display case featured four sections of information. The first detailed information on pre-WWII immigration and the experiences of the earliest Asians in Hawaii and the American West. The second section held information on World War II and the internment of Japanese Americans. The third area covered post-WWII and post-1965 immigration and the experiences of new East, South, and Southeast Asians in America. The final section held information on current Asian American issues including Asian Americans in popular culture and literature as well as statistics on the Asian American population at UIUC, in Champaign county, in the state of Illinois, and nationally. Free materials also were available outside the case which included AASP literature and a bookmark detailing a timeline of key events in Asian American history.

The case and materials were created by 2000-2001 AASP graduate assistants Ida Fadzillah and Yoo Jung Kong. It was well received by the community, and the AASP was asked to continue the case next May.
New AASP Graduate Assistant

The AASP welcomes Kapila Sankaran, the program’s new graduate assistant for the 2001-2002 year. Sankaran was born in Nigeria to parents of southern Indian descent. She lived and studied there and in Canada during her teenage years, after which she pursued her undergraduate degree in early childhood education at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto. In part due to her love for languages and the history of her home country, she decided to pursue a Master’s degree in African Studies at UIUC. She is focusing on the Asian diaspora in Africa, specifically Indians living in Zimbabwe. She is exploring identity, especially the role of religion in the establishment of a Zimbabwean-Indian-African identity.

Sankaran’s interest in Asian American Studies has grown recently. Last year she was the teaching assistant for the Asian American Studies/Religious Studies course “Hinduism in America.” She will be assisting with AASP events such as conferences, film screenings, workshops, and lecture series, working with the AASP interns, and building up the program’s Reading Room.

AASP Faculty and Graduate Student Grants

In Spring 2001, the Asian American Studies Program dispensed eight one-time grants to its faculty and graduate students to fund research projects on Asian American issues. Grants were awarded to fund the following projects:

- “Expanding the Logic Behind Asian American Campaign Contributions,” Wendy Tam Cho, Political Science
- “Processes of Accommodation by Indonesian Migrants to Southern California,” Clark Cunningham, Emeritus, Anthropology
- “Education for the Open Door and the Formation of a Chinese American Intellectual Community at Urbana-Champaign, 1905-1954,” Carol Huang, Graduate Student, Educational Policy Studies
- “The Making of Hawai‘i’s Interracial Working Class,” Moon-Kie Jung, Sociology
- “Chinese Americans in the Mississippi Delta,” Sieglinde Lim de Sanchez, Graduate Student, Educational Policy Studies

New Student Representatives for the AASP Advisory Committee

The Asian American Studies Program has a governing Advisory Committee with one undergraduate and one graduate student representative. The 2001-2002 student representatives on this committee are:

Sieglinde Lim de Sanchez is a graduate student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies. Her research includes contemporary educational issues facing Asian Pacific Americans. This is her second year serving on the governing committee for the AASP.

Jocelyn Yin is a senior majoring in Economics and minoring in Cinema Studies. She has been involved with the AASP since her freshman year. Jocelyn is co-president of the Asian Pacific American Coalition and tutors for the America Reads/America Counts program.

Susan Muchshima Moynihan at AASP as Visiting Scholar

The Asian American Studies Program will have a visiting scholar for the 2001-2002 year. Susan Muchshima Moynihan is currently a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Purdue, with a primary field of contemporary American literature and a secondary field of political theory, particularly theories of nationalism and transnationalism. Moynihan will be working with AASP professor Martin Manalansan as she finishes her dissertation research on the autobiographical writing of contemporary Asian American women. She is examining the construction and status of historical knowledge in these texts and how race, gender, sexuality, and class (especially as they are imbued with Orientalist ideologies) affect the authority granted in personal narratives.

At Purdue, Moynihan worked with Jocelyn Lieu, at that time an adjunct professor in Asian American literature, who encouraged her to research Asian American women’s lifewriting. Due to her family background (Moynihan’s mother is from Thailand), she also had a personal interest in the experiences of Asian women immigrating to the United States and Asian American women in general.

Moynihan met members of the UIUC’s AASP in November 2000 at the meeting it jointly sponsored with the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), “the State of Asian American Studies in the Big Ten.” Impressed with the resources and faculty support available at UIUC for Asian American Studies, she acquired a Purdue Research Foundation grant, which allows her to seek out the resources in Asian American Studies which currently do not exist at Purdue.
FACULTY, STAFF & GRADUATE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Susan Matoba Adler, Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, received a UIUC Campus Research Board grant to fund a project in the St. Paul, Minnesota schools on the identity of Hmong elementary students and home-school relations.

David Chih, Assistant Dean for Students, received third-year funding approval for his grant addressing campus hate violence through the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority.


Augusto Espiritu, Assistant Professor of History, presented a paper at the 18th Annual Association for Asian American Studies Conference in Toronto titled, “The Colonial Pacific: Historicizing Asian American Transnational Discourse.” For the 2001-2002 year, he will be finishing the University of California, Berkeley’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Program on Academic Diversity.

Esther Kim, Assistant Professor of Theatre, received the Arnold O. Beckman Research Award from the Campus Research Board for support of a project titled, “Documenting Asian American Theatre History.”

Sharon Lee, AASP Staff Associate, was elected as co-coordinator for the East of California caucus for the term of 2001-2003.

Sieglinde Lim de Sanchez, graduate student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, was interviewed on the state-wide ABC talk show “Good Morning Mississippi” in July 2001 about her research on Chinese Americans in the Mississippi Delta.

Martin Manalansan, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, was a plenary speaker featured in the opening session of the 7th Annual Asians in America conference, “Palates of Pleasure: The Philosophy and Politics of Southeast Asian Food” at New York University, April 19, 2001. He is also co-editing an anthology on Queer Globalization with Arnaldo Cruz Malave, forthcoming from New York University Press.

Sumie Okazaki, Assistant Professor of Psychology, was elected as the Secretary of the Society for the Psychological Study of Minority Issues. She and her husband Allen Poteshman also welcomed their second child Lucy Hana Poteshman on June 20, 2001.


George Yu, Professor of Political Science and AASP Director, was appointed to the Board of Directors for the national organization Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE).