



Asian/American Center News

MISSION OF A/AC

The Asian/American Center is dedicated to community-oriented research that analyzes the multicultural diaspora experience of Asians in global and local communities. The A/AC's mission is to foster scholarship, disseminate information and create awareness about Asian American issues, and serve as a liaison between the communities and university, press, and other City and national agencies. The Center reaches out to the Asian community and sponsors various programs and events.

A/AC's Faculty Advisory Board Established

The Asian/American Center celebrated the establishment of its first Faculty Advisory Board on May 10. At the inaugural board meeting, the founder and first Acting Director of the A/AC, Prof. Roger Sanjek, briefed the board on the origins and history of the A/AC, and Associate Director Hong



Faculty Advisory Board members (back row, l-r): Pyong Gap Min, Yunping Jiang, Ravi Kulkarni, Roger Sanjek, Zai Liang, and Zhigang Xiang; front row: Lakshmi Malrouth and Yan Sun. (Not pictured: Yin Mei Critchell, Yunzhong Shu, and Joyce Tang.)

Wu described its current programs. Board members also discussed their responsibilities and shared their insights regarding the A/AC's mission and programming.

All the members were delighted to participate and very enthusiastic in their support of the College's decision to conduct a nationwide search for a director for the A/AC.

The Advisory Board consists of eleven professors representing the following departments: Anthropology; Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian

Languages & Culture; Computer Science; Drama, Theatre & Dance; Family, Nutrition & Exercise Sciences; Mathematics; Political Science; and Sociology. The A/AC intends to recruit more faculty for this rotating board in order to fully utilize the unique resources our College offers.

The A/AC expresses its deep gratitude to all its Faculty Advisory Board members for their willingness to serve and support the Center's work of making a difference in the lives of our faculty, students, and communities.

Welcoming the Chinese Delegates

On April 17 the Asian/American Center joined the College in welcoming the Chinese delegates from the Beijing Institute of Machinery. The Institute, formerly under the government's Ministry of Machinery of the People's Republic of China, has had a working relationship with Queens College for more than a dozen years. The delegation consisted of President Liu; Prof. Bingheng Ke, Director of Foreign Affairs; Prof. Xinquan Ge, Dean of the School of Business; Prof. Tianli Zhai, Director of Foreign Languages Department; and Mr. Yutao Fan, Director of the Center for International Exchanges.

During their visit to Queens College, the delegates explored the possibility of a joint degree program and faculty exchanges. They also met with QC administrators as well as faculty and staff from College English as a Second Language (CESL), Computer Science, Continuing Education, Mathematics, and Sociology.



Chinese Delegates: L-r: Prof. Tianli Zhai, Ms. Hong Wu, Prof. Xinquan Ge, Prof. Bingheng Ke, President Hotzler, Dr. Barbara Ritchin, Dr. Howard Kleinmann, and Mr. Yutao Fan.

Seminar Examines Pan-Asian Boundaries

To celebrate Asian American Heritage Month, the A/AC organized a seminar on "Pan-Ethnic Boundaries Among Asian Americans" on May 16. Sociology Prof. Pyong Gap Min, a leading scholar in examining ethnic and pan-ethnic identities among Asian Americans, presented an enlightening talk. He pointed out that pan-Asian studies have focused on the pan-Asian coalition at the collective level, but have neglected to examine the strong ethnic and regional attachments within the Asian di-



Madhulika Khandelwal (left) and Pyong Gap Min discussed pan-Asian issues at a recent seminar.

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aspora dividing East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.) from South Asians (Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis, etc.). Prof. Min used his research in Queens to demonstrate that East and South Asians maintain strong or at least moderate pan-ethnic attachment within each cluster, but weak attachment across the two groups in terms of friendship, dating, marriage, residential proximity, and religious congregation. He also illustrated through many examples that East and South Asians in Queens remain fairly segregated from each other in their work at the community level. This fact suggests that not only structural factors, but also pre-migrant ties play a role in forming pan-Asian coalitions.

Prof. Madhulika Khandelwal from the University of Massachusetts in Boston served as a commentator for Prof. Min's presentation. Prof. Khandelwal, whose scholarship focuses on pan-Asian identity, shared with the audience her research in Queens and New York City and called for attention to the intersections of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and culture in the making of American communities.

Even though the seminar was scheduled during the first week of final exams, over seventy faculty, staff, and students attended the event, demonstrating the great interest in the topic and speakers. The A/AC greatly enjoyed the active participation of the students in attendance.

Asian Population Continues to Grow

As the new census has indicated, Chinese Americans are the largest Asian group in New York City, growing more than 53 percent over the last ten years. Asian Indian Americans rank second, growing over 80 percent from 1990 to 2000. In Queens, South Asians are the fastest growing ethnic group; the Bangladeshi American community alone has a growth rate of nearly 400 percent. As a community-oriented research center, the A/AC is eager to facilitate discussions addressing the concerns and issues related to our growing communities.

Candidates Meet with Asian Americans



City Council candidates: (l-r) Evergreen C. Chou, Paul Graziano, and John Liu participated in the District 20 election forum.

The Flushing City Council race is getting attention around the City as a contest that may produce New York's first Asian-American elected official, heralding a new era in New York City politics. To become more familiar with the candidates, the Asian/American Center joined the Young Korean American Service & Education Center, the Asian Americans for Equality, and the Organization of Chinese Americans in co-sponsoring the District 20 City Council Candidate Forum "Empowering the New Flushing Community: Asian Americans in District 20." The forum was held on August 1 at the Sheraton Hotel in Flushing.

The candidates shared their views on a wide range of issues, including bilingual education, the housing shortage, government funding, anti-Asian sentiments, redistricting, immigration, living wages, and same-day registration for elections. The audience also raised important questions, with many addressed in particular to John Liu, who seems most likely to replace current councilwoman Julia Harrison in the upcoming election.

Although the invitation to participate was accepted by candidates Ethel Chen, Evergreen C. Chou, Martha Flores-Vazquez, Paul Graziano, Richard Jan-naccio, John Liu, Linda Mandell, and Terence Y. Park, only Chou, Graziano, and Liu participated. The forum attracted an audience of over one hundred. Simultaneous interpretations in Chinese and Korean were provided.

STUDENT VOICES

To encourage students to share their views and their learning experiences at Queens College, the A/AC has provided this column specifically for our students. The following is an article from Katherine La Forte, a senior majoring in Psychology.

The Greatest Gift to Yourself: Giving to Others

Last spring the Asian/American Center afforded me one of my most enriching experiences at Queens College, where I am entering my senior year in pursuit of a B.A. in psychology. Under the exemplary leadership of Associate Director Hong Wu, the Asian/American Center established the QC/India Relief Fund to raise emergency funds for the victims of the cataclysmic earthquakes in India.

Compelled by the urgency of this overwhelming human tragedy, I collaborated with several other students in placing this project above our many other pressing responsibilities. Our time investment proved profitable in numerous ways, and the resulting teamwork and commitment to this endeavor were truly inspiring. To maximize our efforts, we allocated tasks according to their efficiency and feasibility. Everyone displayed the generosity and flexibility needed to achieve success within our extremely limited time frame and resources.

Among the fund-raising projects for the QC/India Relief Project was a bake

sale held on April 4 in front of the Student Union building. In helping to organize this activity, I was surprised to learn how much behind-the-scenes work such an event entails. Beginning with assessing favorable times and locations, you then need to obtain appropriate administration approvals, process paperwork and signatures, etc. It is also essential to coordinate with other events planned for the same or nearby locations to avoid competition or interference. Additionally, separate protocols and approvals are needed to have posters designed, printed, and displayed on College bulletin boards. Fliers must also be produced and distributed throughout the campus.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of my participation was working with the vendors who contributed to our bake sale. Their magnanimity and eagerness to amplify our efforts were deeply moving. I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart all of the local businesses mentioned in this newsletter, and hope that grateful members of the community will join me in patronizing them often.

As someone who has volunteered extensively throughout my life on various causes such as environmental protection, preventing animal cruelty, and helping people with mental and emotional disturbances, I can state unequivocally that in donating my services, I reaped far more than I sowed. From a purely practical stand point, volunteering allows you to explore

areas of your own talents in a way that a structured assignment may not permit. Ensuing experience and knowledge can then be used on your resume and applied to paying jobs. One also gains important contacts that can be used in networking or obtaining references for future employment. In addition, working in concert with a group of peers imbues a greater sense of responsibility and cooperation than typical employer/employee situations and can later evolve into enhanced working relationships in other settings.

Beyond all other benefits, however, is the intrinsic joy of helping others. Attempting to build lasting happiness solely out of material possessions is as futile as trying to build a house out of water. Whenever I have given my time freely to others, without expectation of receiving anything in return, it has graced my heart with an indelible joy that sustains me through my most difficult times. In tribute to the Asian traditions that have inspired me by embodying the true spirit of charity for thousands of years, I close with the following quote:

“Giving is the noble expression of the benevolence of the mighty. Even dust, given in childish innocence, is a good gift. No gift that is given in good faith to a worthy recipient can be called small; its effect is so great.”

– Jatakamala 3.23, from *Jesus and Buddha, the Parallel Sayings*, by Marcus Borg (Berkeley, Ulysses Press, 1997)

A/AC and Campus Unite for Relief Effort



An April 4 bake sale in front of the Student Union helped raise funds for Indian earthquake relief: (l-r) QC students Ivanka Kovalyshyn and Corina Mintz; Hong Wu, of A/AC; student Katherine La Forte; and Varinderjit Kaur, A/AC's work/study student.

Immediately following the calamitous earthquake in India in March, the A/AC, working with QC students to raise money, established an India Relief Fund to help relieve the suffering endured by thousands of people. Hindu Student Council and Indian Cultural Exchange, two student clubs on campus, enthusiastically endorsed this effort.

The A/AC's staff and student volunteers went to many classes to encourage donations. Among the fund-raising activities was a major campus bake sale on April 4. Our

gratitude goes to all the following vendors who donated food for this important fund-raising event: America's 99 Cent Store, Boston Market, China Buffet, Gotta-Getta-Bagel, Family Restaurant, Homestead Gourmet, Key Foods, Natural Foods, and Pari-Pari-Ko.

The A/AC also salutes the following QC student volunteers who helped organize the activities: Katherine La Forte, Corina Mintz, Dhaval Hrish Shah, Varinderjit Kaur, Amar Patez, Ivanka Kovalyshyn, and Saleema Khan. Our heartfelt thanks is also extended to the following community members: Bashar A. Barto, Bikramjit

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Educational, Cultural, and Fun



Prof. James Zhang (left) taught participants how to write with Chinese brushes.

In March the A/AC organized a celebration on campus for the Chinese New Year, the year of the snake. The A/AC invited Prof. James Zhang, a talented Chinese calligrapher from the China Institute, to discuss the history of Chinese calligraphy and demonstrate the different Chinese writing styles. Using special brushes and inks, Prof. Zhang wrote the character “snake” and presented the writing to a QC staff member who was born in the year of the snake. As we all watched Prof. Zhang

write, we realized the patience, steadiness, cultivation, and practice involved in achieving this beautiful art form. Prof. Zhang made this difficult task of writing with brushes appear easy. However, when the participants had the opportunity to try to write, we realized how difficult it was.

Those who came to the event felt that “it was not only fun, but very educational.” The A/AC was pleased by the many requests for us to offer more programs like this.

Relief Effort

(continued from page three)

Kaur, Viral H. Shah, Beverly White, Serena White, Feline Veterinary Hospital, and many other anonymous donors. Though the A/AC worked mainly with the students for the India Relief Fund, we also received generous support from faculty and staff at QC.

The proceeds, \$1,118.57, were forwarded to the American Red Cross in June. In their letter of appreciation to the A/AC, the Red Cross thanked “the students, staff, and the faculty of Queens College for raising the funds to aid the victims of the India Earthquake. Thank you for helping the Red Cross to continue its tradition and for safeguarding the Red Cross as the primary humanitarian organization everyone can trust.”

Going beyond a dollar figure, the project was significant for its strengthening of ties between the Center, our students, and the local community.