



# Asian/American Center News

QUEENS COLLEGE

The Newsletter of the Asian/American Center

Spring 2002

## Assessing the Impact of the Sept. 11 Attack on Immigration Laws

In the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, the Asian/American Center collaborated with Asian Americans for Equality to present *The Changing Face of Immigration: A Community Forum on the Impact of the Sept. 11 Attack on Immigration Laws*. The event took place on November 14 in the Flushing Library.

The panelists for the forum included Bryan Pu-Folkes, the president of New Immigrant Community Empowerment; Ivan Larios, director of Community Services for U.S. Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-Jackson Heights); Arshad Majid, legal adviser to the Council of American/Islamic Relations; Margie McHugh, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition; and Cyrus Mehta, chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the City Bar Association.

Among the hundreds who attended the forum were representatives from dozens of civic organizations and immigrant communities, as well as local public officials. Simultaneous interpretations were offered in Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Urdu. John Liu, the newly elected city council member for the Flushing district, opened the forum by thanking the audience, many of whom were from his district, for their trust and support in electing him as the first Asian American city council member in New York City. He then emphasized how timely and important this forum was to all immigrant communities.

*The Changing Face of Immigration* was held in response to the USA Patriot Act, which President Bush signed into law on October 26 after it was passed overwhelmingly by both the House and the Senate. The act expands the government's right to conduct wiretapping and allows for longer detentions of non-citi-

zens "suspected" of being terrorists.

It is the detention provision that most concerns many immigrant rights advocates. As Pu-Folkes pointed out, "there is a lot of fear and nervousness in immigrant communities . . . and people are afraid to leave the country to see their family for fear of not being able to come back."

According to Mehta, a non-citizen suspected of being connected, however vaguely, to terrorism can be detained for seven days without being charged with a crime. Most of the more than 1,000 non-citizens detained on suspicion of terrorism since September 11 actually have only simple paperwork problems and no involvement with the Al Qaeda network.

Majid agreed with Mehta and said that his experience was that law enforcement was using opinion-based questions to implicate people. "A lot of people are getting themselves into trouble that could be avoided if they were properly educated."

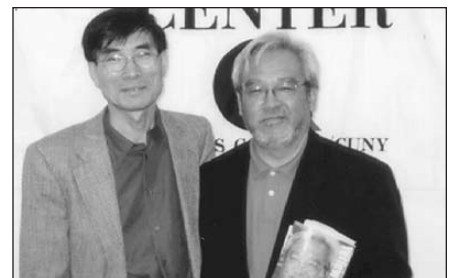
Questions from the audience echoed the concerns raised by the panelists. In addressing these questions, State Assemblyman Brian McLaughlin (D-Flushing) said, "We have worked very hard on breaking down some of the barriers that confront immigrants. . . . In the wake of the attack, many of the barriers we had taken down are now in front of us again."

McHugh noted that "economic downturns tend to hit immigrant communities harder than other communities." Certainly, since September 11 unemployment has surged among New York's immigrants, particularly those in food and hotel services. For example, nearly 7,700 workers – one in four of Chinatown's workers – remained unemployed three months after the attack. Five months after September 11, 40 garment

factories had closed; 70% of garment workers and 33% of restaurant workers were still on reduced hours (Asian American Federation of New York's Impact Study, April 2002).

The panelists pointed out that several provisions in the Patriot Act could benefit immigrants. For example, a few filing deadlines were extended for immigrants whose lives have been disrupted by the events of September 11. However, because of the severe erosion of immigrants' civil rights, the panelists encouraged the audience to be wary of these changes in immigration laws and to work together to reclaim their rights.

## Yellow Journalist Wong Visits Queens College



At William Wong's reception at the Asian/American Center, Prof. Pyong Gap Ming (left), the Chair of A/AC's Faculty Advisory Board, and William Wong.

At the end of last year, the Asian/American Center invited William Wong to discuss his book *Yellow Journalist: Dispatches from Asian America* with Queens College faculty and students. *Yellow Journalist* has provoked many enlightening discussions since its publication.

For many years Wong has contributed columns to the *San Francisco*

(continued on page two)

*Chronicle's* op-ed page and Sunday section. He has also written provocative articles about Asian America, politics, race relations, multiculturalism, and the changing face of America for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Oakland Tribune*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, and *Asian Week*. Many of his concerns reflect the research interests of the A/AC.

Wong stakes out his territory with his clever play on words in *Yellow Journalist*. He writes as a Chinese American reporting on Asian American issues without sensationalizing events. He chides the media for ignoring Asian Americans or depicting them as either "a model minority who excels in academics and business or bad guys like gangsters, influence-peddling political contributors, and spies for China."

Wong covers most of the major issues of the last 20 years: affirmative action, legislation against bilingual education, racism, domestic violence, interracial dating politics, crime – even colorblind casting in the theatre.

During his appearance, Wong mentioned one of his more personal columns in the *San Francisco Examiner* last year, "I Am a Gook," written in response to Sen. John McCain's use of the word in one of his speeches. For two pages, Wong lists the ways in which he considers himself a "gook." He ends with: "I am a gook, even though I was born in Oakland, California, and lost my primary language (a Chinese dialect). I knew I needed English to survive in this often-intolerant society. I was thus unable to fully communicate with my immigrant parents before they died after devoting their adult lives to rearing seven children to be productive citizens of the United States."

As a review in the Hills Newspapers of California stated, "Wong's passion for his heritage, his parents' homeland, and his own country shines in many ways. He campaigns for Asian Americans. He exposes injustices. But he also takes pride in his people's achievements."

Prof. Joann Lee, director of journalism at Queens College, introduced Wong and facilitated the discussion following his presentation. The students, many of them aspiring journalists, enthusiastically joined in with their questions and comments.



At the Art Center in Rosenthal Library, l-r: Tai Lam Wong, Suzanna Simor, President Hotzler, Corky Lee, Wennie Huang, Ken Chu, Nina Kuo, China Blue, Su-li Hung, Hong Wu, and Jennifer Keane.

## First Chinese American Artists' Show in New York City

The Asian/American Center collaborated with the Art Center of Rosenthal Library and Creatures for Culture on the first exhibit in New York City history solely devoted to contemporary Chinese American artists. This exhibit, *Perspectives: Artists of Chinese Descent and New York*, ran from February 5 through March 22. It included the works of eleven artists, varying from paintings and sculptures to installations.

The artists, all Americans of Chinese descent, explored their common concerns regarding East-West presentations of culture, heritage, and identities. At the same time, one could readily appreciate how their different experiences shaped their perspectives, reflecting who they are and with whom they identify. These artists do not speak with a single voice; they reflect in microcosm the diversity within New York and its Chinese American communities. The eleven artists were China Blue, Patty Chang, Ken Chu, Ming Fay, Arlan Huang, Wennie Huang, Su-li Hung, Nina Kuo, Corky Lee, Mary Ting, and Tai Lam Wong.

On February 7 Queens College Interim President Russ Hotzler attended the reception for the exhibit, which drew many people from throughout the city. Both the *World Journal* and *Liberty Times* covered the show and reception.

It was fitting that the exhibit was held at Queens College, where 20% of our undergraduate students are of Asian back-

ground. As the 2000 census indicated, the Asian American population in Queens county has increased over 60% in the past ten years. Now, more than ever, it is important for us both as an institution of higher education and as a community to address, through various media, issues of multiculturalism, diversity, and cross-cultural presentations.

*Perspectives* allowed us to examine our own perspectives, expanding our perceptions of others and ourselves through art. It also provided an opportunity for the audience to appreciate each artist's experiences and how they interweave their personal and cultural histories with fantasies, myths, and traditions.

### Asian/American Center Staff & Associates

Ms. Hong Wu, Associate Director  
Ms. Patricia Peitler, Secretary  
Mr. Raja Roy, Web Designer  
Ms. Varinderjit Kaur, Work/Study Student

**Phone:** 718-997-3050

**Fax:** 718-997-3055

**e-mail:** Asian/AmericanCenter@qc.edu  
www.qc.edu/Asian\_American\_Center

### Queens College Administration

Dr. Russell K. Hotzler, Interim President

Dr. Evangelos Gizis, Interim Provost  
Subscribe to A/AC News. For a free subscription, send your name and address to Asian/American Center, Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., Flushing, NY 11367.

Please mention where you saw a copy of our newsletter. Thank you!



Prof. Tao Chen (l) and Prof. Li Liu (r) at the Queens College Chinese New Year celebration.

## Celebrating the Year of the Horse

On February 27 the Asian/American Center organized a concert on campus for the Chinese New Year celebration. We were very fortunate to have Prof. Tao Chen, king of the *dizi* (Chinese bamboo flute), and Prof. Li Liu, renowned performer of the *guqin* (ancient seven-string zither), for this well-attended event.

Prof. Liu opened the performance with her solo “Flowing Waters,” an ancient piece going back to the Spring and Autumn Warring Periods (770-476 BC). The music is inspired by a widely known Chinese story of the friendship between Boya and Ziqi. Prof. Liu’s performance was notable for its generous, rich, and mellow tones, as well as its skillful execution and variation of expression.

Prof. Chen, a well-known woodwind musician from China, has won numerous prizes, including first-place at the National Folk Instrument Competition in China. Following Prof. Liu’s opening piece, he gave a fascinating introduction to the history of the Chinese bamboo flute and a lively demonstration of the different types of bamboo flutes and the sounds they can produce. Among the pieces he played were “Trip to Gusu,” which captured the scenic beauty of the Jiangnan region in China, and “New Song of the Herdsmen,” which vividly describes the herdsman’s life. The galloping sound of horses from Prof. Chen’s flute brought the audience back to the Year of the Horse.

According to the Chinese calendar, each year is part of a twelve-year cycle, symbolized by the animals of the Chinese

zodiac. People born in the following years are considered to be horses: 2002, 1990, 1978, 1966, 1954, 1942, 1930 and 1918. It is believed that those born in the Year of the Horse are popular, independent, cheerful, quick, and diligent. Horses are said to be loyal and talented, but are not always good at heeding advice.

## Film Series

Since September 11 there has been a great deal of misunderstanding about Islamic cultures and Muslim beliefs. In an effort to respond in a more sensitive and enlightened way, the Asian/American Center and the Michael Harrington Center ran a film and discussion series to help the college community better understand Islamic religious practices.

The two films selected for this project were *Covered: The Hejab in Cairo, Egypt* and *Don’t Ask Why*. Through the eyes of Egyptian women of different ages and backgrounds, *Covered*, directed by Tania Kamal-Eldim, offers a rare opportunity to examine the restoration of veiling in Egypt and the reasons for its pervasiveness. Timely and compelling, the film addresses a phenomenon poorly understood outside the Muslim world.

*Don’t Ask Why* tells the story of a 17-year-old girl growing up in Karachi, Pakistan. Her desire to continue her studies and live “as free as her brothers” is drawing her to the Islamic Political Party. This film, made by Sabiha Sumar, a leading independent Pakistani filmmaker, describes this young girl’s struggle to realize her dreams and cope with her disappointments.

All present greatly enjoyed the films,



At the film discussions were Iris Delutro of LEAP (first on left), Eileen Moran of the Harrington Center (second on left) and Vice President Hrach Zadoian (second from right).

but South Asian students were especially responsive, relating their experiences to the films and expressing their thoughts on these themes.

The Asian/American Center would like to thank Verizon for its generous support of this project.

## College Funding Workshop

On March 17 the Asian/American Center and the Hunter College High School Chinese Parents Association jointly presented a workshop on *Ways to Fund Your Child to the College of His/Her Choice* at the Chinese Cultural Service Center in downtown Flushing. Over 200 people attended the presentation. Simultaneous interpretation in Mandarin was provided for immigrant parents.

Among the issues covered in this two-and-a-half hour workshop were how to fund four years of college without going broke; how to win the best financial aid package; strategies to improve your eligibility for financial aid; and the dos and don’ts of applying for aid.



David Michaels, the presenter and the president of College Aid Solutions, Inc.

### 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.

## ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN QUEENS

To respond to the inquiries regarding the census, the following is an easy-to-read fact sheet the A/AC made that focuses on each of the significant Asian ethnic groups in Queens, illustrating the demographic shifts from 1990 to 2000.

	<b>Number 1990</b>	<b>Number 2000</b>	<b>Number Change 1990-2000</b>	<b>Percent Change 1990-2000</b>	<b>Year 2000 % of the Entire Population in Queens</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>1,951,598</b>	<b>2,229,379</b>	<b>277,781</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
White	937,557	732,895	-204,662	-21.8	32.9
Black	390,842	422,831	31,989	8.2	19.0
Hispanic	381,120	556,605	175,485	46.0	25.0
Puerto Rican	100,410	108,661	8,251	8.2	4.9
Other	280,710	447,944	167,234	59.6	20.1
Asian	237,556	391,500	153,944	64.8	17.6
Asian Indian	56,601	109,114	52,513	92.8	4.9
Bangladeshi	2,567	12,786	10,219	398.1	.6
Cambodian	114	97	-17	-14.9	.0
Chinese	86,885	139,820	52,935	60.9	6.3
Filipino	22,324	30,520	8,196	36.7	1.4
Indonesian	987	1,682	695	70.4	.1
Japanese	4,037	5,103	1,066	26.4	.2
Korean	49,088	62,130	13,042	26.6	2.8
Malaysian	393	660	267	67.9	.0
Pakistani	6,449	11,210	4,761	73.8	.5
Sri Lanka	310	811	501	161.6	.0
Thai	2,317	2,491	174	7.5	.1
Vietnamese	2,419	3,268	849	35.1	.1
Other	3,065	11,808	8,743	285.3	.5
American Indian and Alaska	5,606	6,275	669	11.9	.3
Other	6,643	28,098	21,455	323.0	1.3

Source: New York City Department of City Planning