



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.

Emigrant Award Winner from the A/AC

Ms. Hong Wu, the Associate Director of the Asian/American Center, was one of five New Yorkers honored by the City Council in its presentation of the first Emigrant Savings Bank Awards to Outstanding Immigrants this past September. The awards, bestowed upon immigrants who have made a difference in today's city, were presented in a ceremony at City Hall on September 19.

City Council Speaker Peter Vallone announced the winners and presented the official proclamations from the City of New York. On Hong Wu's proclamation, the accomplishments listed included:

- The research conducted at the Asian/American Center that led to the development of numerous programs to assist immigrants;
- The Translation Program which helps service providers reach newcomers of diverse language backgrounds;
- Providing insights and consultation to the Streetwise Project, sensitizing the Police Department staff to immigrant communities;



At the City Hall Council Chamber ceremony (left to right): Speaker Peter F. Vallone, Ms. Hong Wu, Honorable Michael L. Pesce, Administrative Judge of the Supreme Court of New York, and Mr. Ted Morehouse, Senior Vice President, Emigrant Savings Bank.

- Her work with the City's Department of Health in identifying and treating unmet health needs;
- Support to the U.S. Census Bureau in assuring an accurate count of Asian Americans in Census 2000;
- Collaborations with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund conducting the Asian American voter survey project;
- Service as a board member for the New York Chapter of the U.S.-China People's Friendship Association and her dedicated work in weaving a tapestry between American and Asian cultures;
- Courses and training programs for American professionals through her teaching at the China Institute.

On behalf of the entire City Council, Speaker Vallone stated that "Ms. Wu's work has proved so extraordinary in bridging the cultural gap between immigrants and American culture. . . . The Council of the City of New York honors her for her outstanding contributions to the City's immigrant community as well as the community-at-large."

In her speech upon receiving the award, Wu stated, "I view these Emigrant Awards as an acknowledgment of the contributions immigrants have

made to the economic, cultural, and social fabric of New York. As new immigrants to NYC, though we often feel close to our own heritage and culture, we have come to respect and admire the variety and vitality of this great city and we have enjoyed so much being part of it."

In recognition of Hong Wu's achievements, Emigrant Savings Bank made a \$5,000 donation in her name to the Asian/American Center.

Communities of Interest Seminar

On December 2 and 3 the A/AC co-sponsored a seminar on *Defining "Communities of Interest"* with NYU's Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program and the Urban Studies Department of Queens College.

The demographic, economic, and social landscape of New York City continues to be transformed by new immigration. The settlement of new immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America has facilitated the dramatic demographic restructuring and revitalization of many local neighborhoods. The upcoming political redistricting provides a timely opportunity to assess the potential for multi-ethnic, multiracial alliances, particularly in light of the recent Supreme Court decision that political districts cannot be based on racial composition but must incorporate and reflect "communities of interest."

The seminar was organized with the commitment to further democratize the representation of people of color, and especially new immigrants of color. Through four working sessions, it brought together a diverse group of concerned New Yorkers to explore

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issues such as the history of community formation and multiracial alliances; neighborhood transformations and locating common interests; citizenship and political incorporation; and youth culture and leadership. Participants engaged in heated debates on such questions as:

- What are the historic and contemporary patterns of Asian migration, settlement, and community building in the Americas?
- What lessons can be learned from historic examples of multiracial/multiethnic alliances around shared interests and concerns regarding health care, affordable housing, community development, and political redistricting?
- How are New York City neighborhoods changing and what factors – real estate market, social networks, quality of local institutions including public schools, neighborhood composition – shape the residential patterns and settlement decisions of new immigrants?
- What are the key issues that frame “old timer” and newcomer dynamics?

Asian/American Center Staff & Associates

Ms. Hong Wu, Associate Director

Ms. Patricia Peitler, Secretary

Mr. Raja Roy, Web Designer

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. Allan Ludman, Provost

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- How do neighborhood institutions – such as public schools, churches, and hospitals – respond and adapt to multiethnic communities, and how do they serve as catalysts for constructing a shared community identity?

About 100 people attended the seminar, including public officials, scholars, community activists, and students. The proceedings from the four working sessions are currently being prepared and will be made available at the A/AC’s research library.

How Asian New Yorkers Voted in Election 2000

In collaboration with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the A/AC recruited and trained Queens College student volunteers to conduct the Asian American Voter Survey and Exit Poll on Election Day 2000.

Over 5,000 Asian American voters were surveyed in the nonpartisan, multilingual Election Day exit polls at 14 polling sites located in highly concentrated Asian American neighborhoods of Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

According to the preliminary survey results released by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 78% of Asian Americans polled voted for Democrat Al Gore, with 20% voting for Republican George W. Bush. Overall, Gore won 77% of all New York City votes and Bush won 19%.

In the U.S. Senate race, 82% of Asian Americans polled voted for Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, with only 17% supporting Republican Rick Lazio. Citywide, Clinton received 73% of the vote, with 26% going to Lazio.

Sixty percent of Asian Americans polled registered as Democrats, up 6% since the 1996 election. In contrast, the Republican enrollment dropped to 16%, down 6% since 1996, while those who chose no party affiliation remained about the same at 24%.



Panel for “Community Organizations and Political Incorporation” (left to right): Prof. Tarry Hum, Queens College; Dulce Reyes, New York Immigration Coalition; Saramaria Archila, Latin American Integration Center; Michelle De La Uz, Sunset United; and Arvind Rajagopal, NYU School of Education.

The survey also indicated that 37% of Asian Americans polled were first-time voters. Chinese American voters were the largest ethnic group participating in the poll (69%), followed by South Asians (15%), Korean Americans (9%), and Filipino Americans (4%); the remaining 3% included Thai, Burmese, Vietnamese, and Japanese Americans.

Among the student volunteers, Eileen Pang, a senior undergraduate and former President of the Chinese Christian Fellowship Club at Queens College, said that “Through working with the Asian/American Center on the Asian voter survey project, I have learned more about the Asian communities. I was very impressed by the enthusiastic Asians, especially the elderly, for their serious attitude about this past presidential election. Though many had difficulty with English, it did not stop them from participating in this very important political process.”

The A/AC would like to take this opportunity to thank all Queens College student volunteers for their assistance in this significant voter survey.



Eileen Pang (left) with Queens College students conducting an exit poll at a voting site in Flushing.

CUNY-China Exchange Program Anniversary

Year 2002 will mark the tenth anniversary for the CUNY-China exchange program. Though it is another year away, many CUNY faculty and CUNY-Nanjing Study Abroad Program alumni have started organizing a big anniversary celebration in Nanjing University, the host of our students. CUNY faculty, their family members, and program alumni are encouraged to participate. Certain stipends will be offered and some in-country expenses will be subsidized.

The CUNY-Nanjing study program has offered a unique opportunity for CUNY sophomores, juniors, and seniors to study Chinese language, history, culture, literature, and geography at Nanjing University in eastern China. Many returning students from the program have reported their wonderful learning experiences, including the access to historical sights in and around the ancient capital of Nanjing.

Please be aware that there has been a newly established grant for students who are interested in the program. For detailed information, call the Center for International Service at the College of Staten Island at 718-982-2100.

In the fall of 2000, the exchange program invited two Chinese professors from Shanghai University to visit CUNY, Professors Huang Minsheng and Zhang Xiaolan. During their two-month visit in New York City, both worked on an environmental protection project in collaboration with Professor Paul Lu of York University and Professor Yan Zheng of Queens College.



At the CUNY-China Exchange Program liaison meeting to welcome Prof. Huang and Prof. Zhang from Shanghai University in China (left to right): Prof. Daniel Smith, Chair of Development Skills Department, Borough of Manhattan Community College; Ms. Hong Wu, Associate Director of the Asian/American Center, Queens College; Prof. David Gordon, Department of History, Bronx Community College; Ann Helm, Director of the Center for International Service; Prof. Zhang and Prof. Huang, visiting scholars from Shanghai University; and Prof. Paul Lu, Chair of the Department of Health Sciences, York College.

Chinese Community Cheers Elaine Chao's Appointment

The Chinese community and media responded enthusiastically to Elaine L. Chao's recent appointment as Secretary of Labor of the United States by President George W. Bush. Ms. Chao came to New York at the age of eight from Taiwan. She holds an undergraduate degree in economics from Mount Holyoke College and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. As the former President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of America, Ms. Chao helped restore the organization's membership, finances, and public confidence at a critical juncture – just one of her most recent accomplishments.

Ms. Chao credits her accomplishments as a Chinese immigrant to her

parents who, according to her, brought her up with traditional Chinese values, yet strongly encouraged her participation in American public life. According to media reports, her appointment as the Secretary of Labor makes her the highest-ranking Asian American in the U.S. government.

The A/AC's staff was delighted to meet with her late last August when she served as Chair of the Asian Studies Center Advisory Council. At the 25th Annual Convention of the Chinese American Academic and Professional Society (CAAPS), she was honored with the Special Recognition Award for her achievements as a Chinese American.



Ms. Elaine L. Chao, the nominated Secretary of Labor (left), with Ms. Hong Wu, Queens College, at the CAAPS Convention.

RECOGNITION FROM THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

In November the A/AC was awarded a certificate of recognition by the U.S. Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, in appreciation of the Center's valuable contributions to the success of Census 2000.

In addition, Ms. Hong Wu received individual recognition from the New York region of the U.S. Census Bureau for being a key census partner and for helping to make Census 2000 a success.

STUDENT VOICES



Work-study student Varinderjit Kaur

To encourage Asian American students to share their views and their learning experiences at Queens College, the A/AC will publish writings sent in by students. The following is an article from Varinderjit Kaur, who came from India to the United States six years ago. She is currently an upper sophomore at Queens College majoring in Political Science.

Unexpected Pleasure at Queens College

I worked as a work-study student at the Asian/American Center during the Spring Semester 2000 and that was when my adventure began. I enjoyed my experience working at the Center, where I established my identity as an Asian American. While I was working there, I learned about a new course offered at the college titled "Asian Americans in New York City." It was through Professor Tarry Hum's efforts that such a course was offered for the first time from the Urban Studies Department.

I have to say that when I first took the course I was not sure what I was getting myself into, but I knew it was the right choice. I was deeply impressed by Professor Hum's involvement in this class and it turned out to be one of the most rewarding classes I have ever taken. Along with other exciting projects, we worked on the Community Survey Project. Through this project, we worked with Asian American Legal

Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) and we surveyed Asian Americans living all around Queens. We interviewed multi-Asian American groups such as Chinese, Korean, Indo-Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, etc. These interviews helped me to begin to understand some basic issues regarding Asian Americans and their concerns.

I was so interested in the kind of work this course had led me into that even after completion of the course, I volunteered to continue to work with AALDEF on other community surveys.

This experience at Queens College was unexpectedly interesting to me. It was started first by working at the Asian American Center, then getting myself registered in the fascinating course, and then working voluntarily on the various community projects. One thing led to another. It was just amazing! I know that what I have learned has made a big difference to me.

-Varinderjit Kaur