



Asian/American Center News

QUEENS COLLEGE

The Newsletter of the Asian/American Center

Winter 2004

Celebrating the *New Immigrants and Old Americans Research Project*

On March 25 Queens College and the larger community of New York City joined the Asian/American Center in celebrating the conclusion of *New Immigrants and Old Americans*, a comprehensive and groundbreaking research project undertaken by the A/AC. The project was a team study of changing relations among established white and black Americans and new Asian and Latin American immigrants in Elmhurst, Corona, and other Queens neighborhoods. Directed by Roger Sanjek (Anthropology), the project staff included sixteen postdoctoral, graduate, undergraduate, and community resident researchers. Funding was provided by the Ford Foundation, National Science Foundation, PSC-CUNY Anthropology Panel, Queens College, the Elmhurst Economic Development Corporation, Con Edison, the National Research Council, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

The project's results are documented in six books:

Hsiang-shui Chen (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan), *Chinatown No More: Taiwan Immigrants in Contemporary New York* (Cornell University Press, 1992).

Steven Gregory (Columbia University), *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton University Press, 1998).

Madhulika S. Khandelwal (Queens College, CUNY), *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* (Cornell University Press, 2002).

Kyeyoung Park (UCLA), *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City* (Cornell University Press, 1997).

Milagros Ricourt (Lehman College, CUNY) & Ruby Danta, *Hispanas de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood* (Cornell University Press, 2002).

Roger Sanjek (Queens College, CUNY), *The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City* (Cornell University Press, 1998).

Six of the authors participated in a symposium and reception held at Queens College to celebrate the project's success. Also speaking at the symposium were Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, New York City Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs Sayu Bhojwani, QC President James L. Muyskens, and Dean

of Social Sciences Donald Scott. Commissioner Bhojwani brought with her a letter of commendation from Mayor Michael Bloomberg, which stated, "Our city's diversity is our greatest strength, and your findings prove that we can learn from one another and come together to create a stronger and better New York for all." Joining in the celebration were faculty, staff, and students, along with representatives from various academic and civic communities, including the Asian American Federation of New York, Columbia University, the Commission on Human Rights, CUNY Graduate Center, JM Kaplan Fund, the Museum of Chinese in the Americas, New York University, Queens Council of the Arts, Queens General Assembly, Queens Public Library, and St. John's University.

The event also attracted the *New York Daily News*, *Queens Chronicle*, and *CUNY Matters*, as well as various Chinese, Korean, Indian, and Latino newspapers and TV stations.

For those who are interested in understanding the ethnic communities in Queens and want to explore the ethnic future of us all, the six books listed above are available at the A/AC's Research Library.



Six authors at the celebration (l-r): Kyeyoung Park, Ruby Danta, Roger Sanjek, Madhulika Khandelwal, Milagros Ricourt, Hsiang-shui Chen.

Photos: Nancy Bareis



A



B



C



D



E

In addition to the authors, five other speakers addressed the audience at the celebration: A) Helen Marshall, Queens Borough President, B) Sayu Bhojwani, NYC Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs, C) James Muyskens, Queens College President, D) Donald Scott, Dean of Social Sciences, Queens College, E) Hong Wu, Associate Director, Asian/American Center.

A New Research Project

In the last few decades, many neighborhoods in New York City, particularly in Queens, have experienced an intense and complex cultural diversity marked by a variety of ethnicities, religions, and languages. Since the 1970s, among other immigrant groups, two distinct streams of South Asians have made their home in the Queens neighborhood of Richmond Hill: Indo-Caribbeans from countries such as Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, and Jamaica, and immigrants from the Punjab region of India. These new communities can be found in locations distinct from the historic Richmond Hill: in businesses along Liberty and 101st Avenues, in scores of houses of worship, and in a range of cultural and social activities. A new research initiative will focus on the efforts of these immigrants to form local communities with global connections, the civic and political issues they face, and new patterns of leadership.

A/AC's Faculty Advisory Board

The A/AC established its first Faculty Advisory Board in 2001 in order to most effectively involve the college's Asian faculty in its research and to solicit their support in examining the critical issues that affect the Asian and Asian American



An Indo-Caribbean Hindu Temple on Liberty Avenue

communities. It is a rotating board with two-year term limits so that more faculty can participate in A/AC's programming.

A formal meeting of board members serving from 2003 to 2005 was conducted on September 10, at which the board and the Center's staff discussed A/AC's mission, programming, and challenges. Over the past two years, board members have made serious commitments and significant contributions to the A/AC and its projects. They will continue their vital role as the A/AC develops into a stronger, unique, community-oriented research center that links the academic arena with the multifaceted communities we all live in.



Faculty Advisory Board members (l-r), front: Xiaobai Lin, Yin Mei Critchell, Premilla Nadasen, and Joyce Tang; back: Pyong Gap Min, Yunping Jiang, Yunzhong Shu, Roger Sanjek, Bette Weidman and Zhigang Xiang (not pictured: Tarry Hum and Sun Yan).

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.

Asian/American Center

Phone: 718-997-3050

Fax: 718-997-3055

e-mail:

Asian/AmericanCenter@qc.edu

www.qc.edu/Asian_American_Center

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!

Madhulika Khandelwal Participates in the Asian Pacific American History Collective (APAHC) Meetings

In August 2003 A/AC Director Madhulika Khandelwal participated in the twin meetings of the Asian Pacific American History Collective (APAHC) held at Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Scholars of Asian Pacific American history from a wide range of universities in the United States and Canada discussed their research perspectives, shared teaching experiences, and met with a number of local community documentation project leaders.

The APAHC aims to create and share teaching resources among scholars, educational institutions, and the larger public. Evolving out of the History Caucus meetings of the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) between 1998 and 2001, the APAHC addresses gaps and inequities in the distribution of educational resources concerning Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The Collective's goal is to produce a new understanding of Asian Pacific American history that will remain open to



Dr. Madhulika Khandelwal (r), Director of the Asian/American Center, makes a presentation on teaching Asian Pacific American history. At left, Prof. Linda Vo of UC-Irvine.

new interpretations and emerging histories. After organizing a series of focused workshops in different locations, the APAHC will shift its efforts toward the creation of web-based and print resources.



Some participating scholars at the University of Vancouver, BC campus (l-r): Henry Yu (UCLA), APAHC Co-Coordinator; Sucheta Mazumdar (Duke University); Shirley Hune (UCLA); Gail M. Nomura (University of Washington-Seattle); Richard Kim (UC-Davis); Anthony Chan (University of Washington-Seattle); Linda Maram (Cal State-Long Beach); Madhulika Khandelwal (Queens College, CUNY); and, in front, Midge Ayukawa, a Japanese Canadian community scholar.

Symposium: Bridging Communities & Scholars

The Asian/American Center hosted a symposium entitled *Bridging Communities and Scholars* on February 25 at Queens College. How to best link scholarly research in Asian American studies to its relevant communities is an issue that has been heatedly debated by scholars and community activists in recent years. As we are all aware, the college has many faculty whose work is related to Asian American studies, but this impressive body of research is often known only within the researcher's own department. The symposium provided a platform for faculty from various disciplines to share each other's work reflecting their common academic interests, and also to bring together a diverse group of Asian American community leaders to join our faculty and students in discussing various aspects of Asian American communities.

QC President James Muyskens and Tina Lee, Special Assistant to the President from the *World Journal*, greeted our colleagues and friends. We were honored to have New York City Council Member John Liu, the first Asian American legislator in the City, as the symposium's keynote speaker. Councilman Liu gave his point of view as an active community leader, addressing the history of Asian American studies and the importance of public service.

Dr. Tarry Hum (Urban Studies) presented her research on community economic development, immigration, and neighborhood planning. Dr. Pyong Gap Min (Sociology) discussed ethnic and racial identities among second-generation Asian Americans, including the social construction perspective of identity issues. Ms. Eun Joo Kim, an English Ministry Pastor at the Yale Korean Presbyterian Church in Bayside, vividly described her experience as an immigrant child, and offered a presenta-

(continued on page four)



City Council member John Liu addressing the symposium.

tion on the Korean American community's struggle and sacrifices to build a better life for their families in the United States. Dr. Dais Akiba, a new member of the Division of Education, talked about his research on parental involvement with children's education in a Cambodian community in Providence, Rhode Island, where Cambodians represent the largest Asian group. Dr. Joyce Tang (Sociology) shared the research that went into her book *Doing Engineering: The Career Attainment and Mobility of Caucasian, Black, and Asian American Engineers*. Mr. Tito Sinha, an attorney and community activist, offered his view on "Academia in the Service of the Community," which beautifully captured the theme of the symposium.

This event attracted many of the college's faculty as well as members of the various Asian ethnic communities

Student Voices

by Saleema Khan

I am a Queens College undergraduate student pursuing a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Anthropology, with a minor in Urban Studies. I will be graduating in December 2003, with the intention of becoming an elementary school teacher. I have worked



Saleema Khan, presenting her paper to the class.

part time with the Flushing YWCA for over two years, contributing to both the Youth Center and Early Childhood Education Center. Through the YWCA, I have gained much experience in working with the community by conducting workshops for teenagers, mentoring and tutoring individuals, supervising and teaching in after-school programs, etc. My years at Queens College have truly been the best, as the knowledge and experience gained from my academic studies, work, and social relations have prepared me for the "real world."

One of the most rewarding courses I've taken at Queens College was one offered by the Urban Studies Department, entitled "South Asian Diaspora," taught by Professor Madhulika Khan-

delwal in Fall 2002. This class tackled all the questions I had about the feedback I received growing up, either in or out of school, because I am American-born with Guyanese parents. Many do not know that Guyana is in South America, and is not located anywhere near India, although our skin tones are similar. This class covered India's history, and how later, under British rule, the South Asian diaspora began. With the study of Professor Khandelwal's newly published book, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City*, supplemented by field visits around Queens neighborhoods, videos, and lectures, we focused on South Asian communities around the world. We examined the diaspora's reasons for immigration, survival and change in culture, religions, family, gender, generations, and various organizations within the diaspora.

This interesting class concluded by having all the students contribute to a panel discussion of their research papers, examining the various Asian communities in Queens. In all, I strongly feel that this class enabled me to better answer questions about my own identity and provided a great deal of knowledge about my ancestry and the interconnectedness of South Asian communities, as well as Asian populations overall.

QUEENS COLLEGE
ASIAN/AMERICAN CENTER
65-30 KISSENA BOULEVARD
FLUSHING, NY 11367-1597

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
FLUSHING, NY
PERMIT NO. 48