

Association for Asian American Studies
NEWSLETTER

May 2008

Vol. 25, No. 2

NEWS

The Association for Asian American Studies
Presidential Meditations

President Rajini Srikanth, 2006-2008

This presidential address was delivered at the 25rd Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies, held in Chicago, Illinois, April 16-20, 2008.

A few weeks ago, I posed the question to a group of students, “What does it mean to have an Asian American consciousness?” In implying that there is a mode of being that is uniformly understood to be “Asian American” I was deliberately skimming over the many fissures within the category, of course. But what I was trying to elicit was the articulation of a posture and an attitude to life that are informed by a particular way of absorbing and reacting to the world. The quintessentially American author Thoreau exhorted us to simplify, simplify, simplify. His call, perhaps appropriate to what he saw in his time as an ever increasing departure from the basic values of an ethical pursuit of life, nonetheless is problematic in that it requires that we focus on self, on the individual. The condition of the world today demands, however, that to be truly responsible in our actions we must complicate, complicate, complicate and envision lives beyond our own. Paul Farmer, the physician anthropologist famous for his analyses of power in the area of human rights and global health care, observes that we must bring to our understanding of the conditions under which people live a perspective that is “historically deep” and “geographically wide.” At some level, therefore, to have an Asian American consciousness could be construed as the readiness to complicate analysis by attending to the deep history and wide geography of observable realities.

The academic discipline of Asian American studies has been forced to respond to the ever expanding boundaries of its domain. In the 14 years of my involvement with the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS), I have seen the field widen beyond a focus on the U. S. nation state to consider the Americas (Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean); to engage transnational allegiances spanning the United States and ancestral homelands in East, Southeast, and South Asia; and, more recently, to explore West Asia (what is known in the United States as the Middle East). Asian America is also being challenged to discuss Islam and Muslim Americans who are Asian American. The academic discipline, therefore, has been forced to complicate itself, even to examine its original preoccupation with the allure of exclusive commitment to the U.S. nation state.

Some might view this ever-expanding Asian America with alarm; I see it as a sign of vibrancy, as evidence of the field’s confident assertion of its value in studying and responding to changing conditions locally and globally. We may take refuge in articulating our narrow cultural and ethnic identities—Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Pakistani, Pilipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and so on—and there is no reason that one should not seek the comfort of familiar spaces, but as Asian American scholars and educators we are obliged to problematize our own attachment to these cultural and ethnic enclaves. It is our task to caution against the temptations of cultural affiliation, to expose them as convenient and reassuring distractions from the urgent work of challenging exclusions, inequities, and injustice.

It may be that we seek refuge in culture and ethnicity as a reaction to our vulnerable citizenship. Culture and ethnicity provide a bulwark against the unpredictability of our membership within the United States; they provide us assurance that there is some space within which we unequivocally belong. It’s true that our citizenship is fragile, frequently called into question, and endlessly requiring proof of sincerity. Perhaps it is unfair, therefore, to criticize ourselves for clinging to cultural and ethnic membership and eschewing the more amorphous realm of politicized anti-imperialist struggle. The call to participate in this struggle sounds like sloganeering, we might say; it draws attention to our already tenuous position within the U. S. nation state. One could justifiably argue that it is

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more responsible to ourselves and our communities that we strengthen and solidify our position within the United States, render ourselves indispensable to the business of the nation both in the near and long term. The steady increase in the number of elected and appointed Asian American politicians and government officials is evidence that Asian Americans are successfully pursuing this trajectory of entering the realms of power.

But are such gains entirely to be celebrated? It may be sacrilege to ask ourselves what we lose by proximity to power and what we sacrifice by becoming too comfortable with inclusion, considering the incredible difficulties that Asian Americans have experienced in their encounters with the powers of the U. S. political and social apparatus. Nonetheless, I argue that it may actually be to our advantage to be “reluctant” Americans, precisely so that we do not get seduced by the many mythologies of the nation, mythologies that prevent us from seeing clearly and thinking strategically. It is worth remembering Edward Said’s famous observation that exile is the pre-eminent condition of a responsible and ethical way of being in the world. For it is only when you cannot arrogantly declare that you are completely “at home” that you realize what it is like to be vulnerable. And this realization is the first step to declaring solidarity with and acting for those who are vulnerable.

As I end my term, I want to thank the members of the AAAS board for three years of incredible support, and my numerous comrades among the general membership for their trust in me. Finally, I wish to recognize three individuals who have mentored and supported me in incalculable ways: Gary Okihiro for encouraging me to trouble and challenge the traditional landscape of Asian American studies and to believe in my vision; and, on my campus, Paul Watanabe for reminding me of shared histories and for his eloquent articulations of the meaning of true “patriotism,” and Peter Kiang for the amazing student-centered culture he inspires and sustains.

Rajini Srikanth, University of Massachusetts Boston
AAAS President (2006-2008)

FROM THE AAAS BOARD

Huping Ling, Professor of History at Truman State University, was unanimously approved as the incoming Executive Editor of the *Journal of Asian American Studies* (JAAS) by the Executive Board at the AAAS Chicago Conference (April 16-20, 2008). Ling has authored/edited 10 books on Asian American studies. She has been an active member of the AAAS since 1988 and has served on the Executive Board and Editorial Board since 2001.

FROM THE SECRETARIAT

DIRECTORY

Additions and corrections to the **Directory of Asian American Studies Programs and Departments** may be sent by email to: ssh13@cornell.edu. Changes will be updated as they are received for viewing on the website. Please visit www.aaastudies.org to view the online Directory.

2009 ANNUAL MEETING

Honolulu, Hawaii

April 22-27, 2009

Hilton Waikiki Prince Kuhio

Honolulu, HI

Phone: 808-921-5507

www.waikikiprincekuhio.hilton.com

Single/Double Rate

\$200.00 (plus taxes)

AAAS CALL FOR PAPERS

Challenging Inequalities: Nations, Races, Communities 2009 AAAS Annual Conference

The conference theme can be interpreted in two different ways. Political, economic and social inequalities among nations, races, and other communities are indeed challenging insofar as they have persisted to the present and continue to resist reduction. At the same time, the theme can also be understood as a call for scholars, students and community activists to develop ways to challenge inequalities in order to foster equality, justice and fairness among nations, races, and communities of various backgrounds, including ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and nationality. Honolulu, and more generally Hawai‘i, provides an appropriate site for the Association for Asian American Studies annual conference because 2009 marks the fiftieth anniversary of statehood for Hawai‘i. The islands became a state in 1959 because of the unequal power relations between the nations of Hawai‘i and the United States that resulted in the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom in 1893 and its annexation as a U.S. territory in 1898. The fiftieth anniversary of statehood is not likely to be officially celebrated in Hawai‘i out of respect for the concerns of the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) people who became U.S. colonial subjects after annexation. By contrast, some Asian American groups, such as Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans, have benefited substantially from statehood as evident from their dominant economic and political status in Hawai‘i. Our conference can serve as a forum to rethink the causes and differential consequences of the emerging American Empire in the Pacific and Asia in the late nineteenth century and its peremptory status in the affairs of Asian Americans and of

Asian and Pacific Island peoples in the twentieth century, and to consider its possible decline in the current neoliberal age. The historical injustices and violence of U.S. colonization of Hawai'i and the contemporary marginalization of Kanaka Maoli in their homeland provide a political, economic and cultural context for rethinking other challenging inequalities that continue to plague us and compel us to develop appropriate means to contest them. Such inequalities, albeit constantly shifting, include those between the United States and Asian and Pacific nations, especially as a result of the economic, cultural and military globalization of the latter nations, including Hawai'i, under the impetus of transnational capital. In response, nationalist movements, including the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, have emerged to resist such globalizing processes. What role can Asian Americanists play in our teaching, research, and community service in rethinking and challenging such global inequalities among nations and their peoples?

Inequalities among races include those between Asian Americans and other racial groups, including Pacific Islanders. In what is being referred to as his "A More Perfect Union" speech on March 18, 2008, Honolulu-born and raised Barack Obama described contemporary race relations as "a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years." How then can we as academics and activists contest persisting racial inequalities and hierarchies? How do we challenge "color-blind racism" and appropriations of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s in limited ways that deny the persistence of vast racial inequalities? How can we develop collective strategies and coalitions toward a society based on tolerant and egalitarian race relations?

Inequalities among communities include those among and within Asian American groups based on ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Women and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities continue to face institutional hurdles that bar them from gaining equal treatment. Those inequalities certainly intersect with those based on nation and race (and with each other) and clearly indicate the social and cultural complexity of inequalities in society. How do such inequalities and their intersections challenge us to rethink our theoretical approaches and political strategies for resolving them?

Please join us in Honolulu in 2009 as we address the above and other significant questions and issues on challenging global, racial, ethnic, gender, class, and other inequalities. Complete panel submissions (with a minimum of three papers and a maximum of four) will be given priority, but individual paper submissions will also be considered. We invite submissions for workshops and roundtables as well. Please note that all paper and panel applicants, including other paper presenters and discussants in a panel, must be members of the Association for Asian American Studies. If you are not an association member at the time of the submission deadline of October 31, 2008, you will have until January 1, 2009 to join by sending your payment and completed annual membership form to The John Hopkins University Press, the publisher of the association's journal. The membership form

is available on the AAAS website at <http://www.aaastudies.org/forms/index.html>. Note also that paper presenters and discussants must pay the conference registration fee prior to the conference in order to be included in the printed conference program.

CALL FOR PAPERS

2008 East of California Conference: A Movement to Look Back To October 31, 2008 – November 1, 2008 The University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut

ABSTRACTS DUE: Monday, June 30, 2008

Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Transnationalism & Cosmopolitanism
- Demographic Shifts
- Border studies
- Cross-ethnic/racial collaborations and coalitions
- Multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary collaborations and coalitions
- Scholar-activist work, within and outside the academy
- Civil Liberties and Civil Rights, before and after 9/11
- Teaching in the 21st century
- The state of "Asian America"
- Asian American methodologies and epistemologies
- Asian American visual cultures
- The Asian American archive: what is it and where is it?

Requirements for Submission:

- Roundtable: 1 page curriculum vitae; 1 page outline for 5-7 minute remarks
- Panel: 1 page curriculum vitae per participant; 1 page panel abstract (500 words)
- Individual paper: 1 page curriculum vitae; 1 page panel abstract (250 words)

Please send electronic copies of all materials to both Cathy Schlund-Vials (schlundvials@gmail.com) and Jennifer Ho (hojennifer@earthlink.net) by June 30, 2008.

This *Newsletter* is published quarterly in March, May, September, and November for members of the Association for Asian American Studies. Deadlines for receipt of copy are February 15, April 15, August 15, and October 15, respectively. Direct correspondence and inquiries to its editor: Sunn Shelley Wong, Asian American Studies Program, 420 Rockefeller Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-2502, (607) 255-3320. We do not assume responsibility for the truth or accuracy of the information provided to us by our contributors. We reserve the right, however, to edit copy for clarity and consistency. *The editor* acknowledges with thanks the support of Cornell's Asian American Studies Program.

OPPORTUNITIES

Cornell University's Asian American Studies Program invites applications for a one-year Visiting Assistant Professor position to begin August 2008. Field is open. Candidate is expected to teach two courses per semester, including Introduction to Asian American Studies. Applicants must have Ph.D. in hand. The committee will begin reviewing applications on May 15, 2008. Applications received by this date will receive full consideration but the search will remain open until the position is filled. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, a writing sample, and three letters of recommendation to: Director, Asian American Studies Program, 420 Rockefeller Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Fax: (607) 254-4996. *Cornell University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer and Educator. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.*

The Department of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), invites applications for part-time Lecturer positions (Non-Senate) with primary responsibility in teaching interdisciplinary courses in Asian American Studies for the 2008-2009 academic year. Appointments are usually made per course. Academic appointment dates are Fall (October 1-December 31, 2008); Winter (January 1-March 31, 2009); and Spring (April 1-June 30, 2009). The Department of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, offers a major, minor, a graduate concentration, and Master of Arts.

We are looking for applicants who can teach the following courses; however, we also welcome applicants who can offer other special topics courses that complement our curriculum: Asian American History (lower division, general education, offered Winter 2008 only), Asian American Contemporary Issues (lower division, general education, offered Spring 2008 only), Asian American Community Research Methods/Applied Research Methods, Asian American Film, Asian American Theater/Drama, Asian American Popular Culture Asian American Religion, Pacific Islander Studies, South Asian American Film/Popular Culture, Asian American Studies Ethnic Community Specific Courses, Asian American Gender and Sexuality

Requirements

Applicants with a Ph.D. preferred. Applicants who are advanced to candidacy or who have a M.A., M.F.A., or equivalent will be considered.

Application Procedure

Send materials via e-mail attachment to Stacey Hirose, Department Manager, <stacey@asianam.ucla.edu> followed by a hard copy of your application materials: Cover letter,

Curriculum vitae, Teaching evaluation summaries, Names and contact information of three references, List titles of course(s) you are willing to teach, Quarters that you plan to teach the course in, A paragraph description and syllabus of each proposed course

Applications will be accepted until positions are filled. However, to ensure fullest consideration, all applications materials should be submitted by MONDAY, MAY 19, 2008 FOR FALL 2008 COURSES and MONDAY, JUNE 30, 2008 FOR WINTER AND SPRING 2009 COURSES to Stacey Hirose (stacey@asianam.ucla.edu) or to: Dr. Thu-huong Nguyen-vo C/O Stacey Hirose, UCLA Department of Asian American Studies, 3336 Rolfe Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90095-7225

The University of California, Los Angeles and the Asian American Studies Department are interested in candidates who are committed to the highest standards of scholarship and professional activities, and to the development of a campus climate that supports equality and diversity. The University of California is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer. This position is covered by a collective bargaining

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Department are very pleased to share the wonderful news that Dr. Victor Bascara has been promoted to Associate Professor, Step II with tenure in the Department of Asian American Studies at UCLA. He is also an active member of the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Asian American Studies Center.

Professor Bascara's research and teaching interests include Asian American literature and cultural politics, postcolonial studies, Filipino / Filipino American studies, comparative ethnic studies, critical race theory, and queer studies. He is the author of *Model Minority Imperialism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006), which traces U.S. economic, political, and cultural hegemony back to the turn of the century through an examination of Asian American cultural production. His study analyzes how Asian American culture uncovers the repressed story of U.S. imperialism in ways that demand that the imperial present reckon with its imperial pasts. His essays, articles, and reviews have been published in such journals as *American Quarterly*, *Amerasia*, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, and *Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States (MELUS)* and in such volumes as *Imagining Our Americas: Towards an International Frame*, *East Main Street: Asian American Popular Culture*, and *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*.

Among his current projects is a second monograph near completion on the contestation between colonialism and

isolationism in U.S. culture between the World Wars. He is also at work on a book on the emergence of Asian American refugee culture in the Cold War. And he is co-editing, with Professors John D. Blanco of UC-San Diego and Courtney Johnson of the University of Wisconsin - Madison, a collection of scholarly essays on the transition from Spanish to U.S. colonialisms in the Philippines and other sites in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Latin America, a volume emerging from a multi-year Mellon-funded humanities workshop.

Dr. Bascara's parents immigrated from the Philippines in the early 1960s, settling down in New Jersey, where he was born and raised. He received his B.A in English with a minor in Ethnic Studies from UC - Berkeley. He went on to complete an M.A. in English also at Berkeley, writing a thesis under the direction of Oscar Campomanes. His Ph.D. is from the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Prior to joining the faculty at UCLA, he had been a faculty member in English and Asian American Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, where he received tenure in 2006.

NEW RELEASES

Emerging Voices: Experiences of Underrepresented Asian Americans

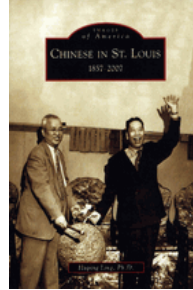
by Huping Ling, Ph. D.
Rutgers University Press
Paper ISBN: 978-0-8135-4342-0
Pages: 288 pages, 3 graphs
Pub Date: August 2008

While a growing number of popular and scholarly works focus on Asian Americans, most are devoted to the experiences of larger groups such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Indian Americans. As the field grows, there is a pressing need to understand the smaller and more recent immigrant communities. *Emerging Voices* fills this gap with its unique and compelling discussion of underrepresented groups, including Burmese, Indonesian, Mong, Hmong, Nepalese, Romani, Tibetan, and Thai Americans.

Unlike the earlier and larger groups of Asian immigrants to America, many of whom made the choice to emigrate to seek better economic opportunities, many of the groups discussed in this volume fled war or political persecution in their homeland. Forced to make drastic transitions in America with little physical or psychological preparation, questions of "why am I here," "who am I," and "why am I discriminated against,"

remain at the heart of their post-emigration experiences.

Bringing together eminent scholars from a variety of disciplines, this collection considers a wide range of themes, including assimilation and adaptation, immigration patterns, community, education, ethnicity, economics, family, gender, marriage, religion, sexuality, and work.



Chinese in St. Louis: 1857-2007

by Huping Ling, Ph. D.
Images of America Series
Paper ISBN: 0738551457
Pages: 128 pages
Pub Date: August 2007

Read the new book *Chinese in St. Louis: 1857-2007*. This photographic history book, written by Huping Ling, Ph. D., explores the history of Chinese Americans as they settled in St. Louis for better lives and the obstacles they faced during that challenge.

Ling has dedicated *Chinese in St. Louis: 1857-2007* "To the Chinese Americans in St. Louis, whose struggle and success have inspired this book."

Highlights of *Chinese in St. Louis: 1857-2007*:

- Unfolds the story of the old Chinatown in St. Louis: Hop Alley
- Reveals the rich ethnic heritage and diversity of the Mount City
- Tells the story of the earliest Chinese immigrants in midwest America
- Highlights key landmarks of the ethnic community in St. Louis

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