



RED THREADS

Bound #2 Artwork by Associate Professor Beili Liu

Newsletter for the Center for Asian American Studies

“An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet, regardless of place or circumstances. The thread may stretch or tangle, but will never break.”
 –Chinese Proverb



Bhutanese Nepali refugees in Austin, TX. Mary Kang Photography (www.marykang.com)

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Resettlement City? Austin’s Refugee Communities By Eric Tang

The federal government recognizes Austin, TX as a refugee resettlement city. Of the nearly 5,000 refugees who resettle in Texas each year, many are choosing Austin as the place to rebuild their lives after years of political violence followed by confinement to international camps. Refugees are also part of the city’s rapidly expanding Asian American community, and yet they are often dropped from broader discussions on race, immigration and the economy. The general narrative surrounding Asian Americans in Austin is one of economic stability, educational achievement and cultural integration. There may be truth to some of the above, and yet for many refugees in Austin—particularly those who have escaped

the political volatility of nations such as Bhutan and Burma/ Myanmar—life in the United States is characterized by working-poverty, confinement to cramped apartment complexes and uncertainty about the future. Meanwhile local public schools are scrambling to figure out how to serve the children of these unique populations.

On February 15, 2013, the Center for Asian American Studies organized a panel entitled “Resettlement City? Austin’s Refugee Communities.” As part of the Abriendo Brecha Activist Scholar conference, the goals of the event were to shed light on the largely invisible refugee community, to better understand its history and its needs,
(cont. on P. 3)

Message from the Director



Dear Friends and Supporters of CAAS,

For the first time in 2009, Asians passed Hispanics to become the racial group immigrating in the highest numbers into the United States, reaching 430,000 in 2010 or 36 percent of the total compared to 370,000 Hispanics at 31 percent. In 2012, the 17.3 million Asian Americans comprised 5.8 percent of the American population, a startling increase from the less than one percent of the 1960s. Furthermore, as described in a report issued by the Pew Foundation, these recent waves of Asian immigrants are “almost surely . . . the most highly educated cohort of immigrants in US history,” with about 60 percent of recent adult arrivals already bearing BA degrees, double the average of non-Asian immigrants. Such trends reveal the considerable impact of the 1965 Immigration Act both in facilitating higher levels of Asian immigration but also screening for the best educated and most economically useful individuals.

If we compare the outstanding levels of educational attainment by Asian Americans with that of those who don't immigrate, and have little to no chance of doing so, we see that the nearly 70 percent of adult immigrants from Korea and Japan who are college educated is disproportionately high compared with the 27 and 25 percent of college educated at home. Even more stark is the disjuncture between adult Indian Americans, 81 percent of whom hold BA degrees, compared with only 10 percent of the college-age population in India enrolled in tertiary education. US immigration laws have performed magnificently in securing high numbers of highly skilled workers and

entrepreneurs to work in the United States--it is no wonder that America remains the wealthiest country in the world.

For their part in advancing American economic interests, Asian Americans have been celebrated as “model minorities.” Although borne out statistically, our accomplishments should be understood against the backdrop of how immigration preferences have privileged those of us already bearing education and useful training and skills. For example, in recent years about 70 percent of H-1B visas have gone to Asian recipients, 60 percent in computer and IT industry related fields. Workers without the kinds of credentials required for such programs do not receive the same kinds of access. Even as we celebrate the kinds of opportunities that are made available in the United States, we should also remember those who remain shut out.

Best wishes for a cooler fall!

Sincerely,

Madeline Y. Hsu

Director, Center for Asian American Studies
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WHO WE ARE — Founded in 2000, The Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS) at The University of Texas at Austin is an interdisciplinary academic program promoting understanding and awareness of Asian Pacific American (APA) issues and communities. We house undergraduate major, minor, and honors programs and organize lectures, films, conferences, speakers' series, discussion forums, and collaborate partnerships with community and campus organizations. CAAS seeks to develop and highlight transnational and hemispheric perspectives and narratives of Asians in the Americas and the American South.

Resettlement City? Austin's Refugee Communities (cont. from P. 1)

and to hear from local refugee community leaders and agencies that are working with them. The panel also included noted scholars and activists from other cities who have developed successful community-based projects that build the leadership skills and educational opportunities of refugee residents in cities such as Boston and the Bronx, New York.

Panelists included:

- Chhaya Chhoum, Founder and Director of the Mekong Center of the Bronx, New York.
- Lesley Varghese, Executive Director, Austin Asian American Resource Center
- Meg Goodman Erskine, Co-founder and Executive Director, Multicultural Refugee Coalition
- Suresh Pokhrel, Member, Center for Survivors of Torture
- Dr. Peter Kiang, The University of Massachusetts, Boston
- Aaron Rippenkroeger, Refugee Services of Texas

There are several organizations in Austin that are servicing the immediate needs of refugees. In particular, Refugees Services of Texas (RST) has been instrumental in helping newly arrived refugees find short-term employment and housing. Yet such groups are confronted with the challenge of a U.S. refugee resettlement policy that only grants six months of support to refugees; once this short period ends, agencies are no longer funded to work with families who are only beginning to make adjustments to life in the United States after years of living in refugee camps. The task, then, is to build the capacity of refugee communities to develop their own networks of mutual support, and to help them develop programming and services that are rooted in their communities and cultures. Here, the Multicultural Refugee Coalition (MRC) has been instrumental in working with refugee leaders to establish programming ranging from support groups, youth development programs and even a refugee soccer league. According to Meg Goodman Erskine, executive director of the MRC, these programs aim to draw on the local knowledge, specific cultural practices and leadership skills of refugees to meet their most pressing needs.

Refugees are often called upon to provide the rest of us with the kind of feel-good, redemption stories that fuel American exceptionalism: the U.S. has not only saved the unfortunate and displaced, but has conferred upon them a freedom unmatched anywhere else in the world. Indeed, the economic opportunities of the U.S. free market are said to be unparalleled. This narrative masks two critical facts. First, many refugees continue to live in both working and jobless poverty for years, if not decades. The second generation that comes of age in the United States often fares no better than their parents. Second, the traumas of the past remain a central feature in the lives of refugees, presenting psychological and emotional obstacles that

continue to hold refugees back from achieving the kinds of freedoms portended by resettlement officials. The redemption narrative is but a fiction for many refugees.

According to Chhaya Chhoum, director of the Bronx-based Mekong Project, it is important that refugees are able to speak truth to power: to do so not only brings them closer to developing meaningful solutions to the harsh realities they face in the United States, but it also provides opportunities for reckoning and healing. Chhoum spoke to the audience about her own journey as a refugee and activist, describing the ways in which her advocacy of welfare and housing rights for fellow Bronx refugees is inseparable from her own healing process.

Finally, Dr. Peter Kiang, Professor of Education and director of the Asian American Studies Program at UM--Boston spoke of the role that public universities can play in supporting the refugee community. The university can carry out research on refugee employment and poverty and solutions to address that poverty, while supporting local groups in pursuing accountability from city and county officials, as well as large nonprofit institutions. The university can also work with local public schools and teachers to develop programs that meet the specific needs of refugee students to ensure that they have equal opportunities to pursue higher education. These are just some of the goals that Dr. Kiang's program has successfully implemented in Boston over the past twenty-five years, and his presentation served as a call to action for the UT Austin community. Indeed, as the refugee community grows in Austin, UT can play a vital role in ensuring that this particular refugee city lives up to its title.

Dr. Eric Tang is assistant professor of African and African Diaspora Studies, core faculty of Asian American Studies, and director of the Social Justice Institute.

Core Faculty

Rowena Fong
Professor of Social Work

Heather Hindman
Assistant Professor of Asian Studies

Madeline Y. Hsu
Associate Professor of History

S. Akbar Hyder
Associate Professor of Asian Studies

Madhavi Mallapragada
Assistant Professor of Radio-Television-Film

Robert M. Oppenheim
Associate Professor of Anthropology

A. Naomi Paik
Assistant Professor of American Studies

Sharmila Rudrappa
Associate Professor of Sociology

Snehal Shingavi
Assistant Professor of English

Nancy K. Stalker
Associate Professor of Asian Studies

Cynthia Talbot
Associate Professor of History

Eric Tang
Assistant Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies

Kamala Visweswaran
Associate Professor of Anthropology

Why Asian American Studies Matters Now By Irene Garza

On September 6, the Center for Asian American Studies organized a talk by renowned scholar and activist George Lipsitz. Delivering a campus-wide lecture titled, “Why Asian American Studies Matters Now,” Professor Lipsitz argued that the University of Texas is part of a network of institutions with a valuable role in shaping society’s future, and who and what are being taught in UT’s classrooms are critically important to the nation, to which he added, “I hope others share my sense of urgency over the importance of Asian American Studies in those classrooms.”

Lipsitz began the lecture by relaying his experiences thirty years ago as a young professor at the University of Houston at Clearlake, where in addition to working with undergraduate students, he taught the same courses to inmates at the Correctional Detention Center at Ramsay near Angleton, TX. Despite their proximity, Lipsitz recounted his frustration over the inability of students from these two different backgrounds to speak to one another, noting, “it taught me something about the value of a diverse and critically cosmopolitan conversation and the costs we pay for the many different forms of segregation in society.” For Lipsitz, these divisions are replicated in academia where rhetorical and methodological borders separate different knowledge forms between disciplines. Yet he argued, this is precisely why Asian American Studies plays a transgressive role, interrogating and challenging the humanities and social sciences—disciplines whose epistemological frameworks originate in typologies of racial and cultural difference, constructed from Europe’s encounters with non-Europeans. Noting that “Asian American studies as an intellectual project has had to see what the disciplines enable and what they inhibit”, the field allows for sensitive analyses limning tensions between margin and center, insider and outsider using the experiences of Asian-Americans as historically excluded national subjects.

That Asian American studies, like other ethnic studies programs, evolved from the social change movements of the 1960s is critical to its project of challenging institutional practices of racism, discrimination, and oppression. In his analysis, Lipsitz provided a general overview of changes within the university

system that discredit ethnic studies programs, or the perception that these fields are “a self-esteem program for marginalized undergrads”, suggesting instead that Asian American Studies provides insightful and sensitive critiques of power. As an example, Lipsitz related the work of legal scholars Erik K. Yamamoto and Susan Serrano, who cited *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), a Supreme Court case challenging the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II to draw parallels with the post-September 11th detention of thousands of Arab Americans. In so doing, Lipsitz argued, they drew on the “situated knowledge” of Asian American historical and cultural experiences of marginalization in the U.S. As Lipsitz underscored, this situated knowledge contributes in vital ways to contemporary conversations about the debt crisis, war on terror, national disasters, and mistreatment of people of color. In examples ranging from the discriminatory housing policies against Asian American families in San Diego, CA to the racist mocking of Asian American students by a fellow college student at UCLA last year, or the recent mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, Lipsitz argued that Asian American studies meaningfully challenges such activities, by broadening perspectives on relationships between identity and power, social opportunity and exclusion. According to Lipsitz, to the extent that Asian American Studies animates discussions regarding politically disenfranchised communities, bridging conversations in much the same ways he had hoped to do so with his students thirty years ago, it offers a capacious intellectual terrain that challenges the status quo both in the academy and local communities.

Dr. Lipsitz concluded his talk with a short video entitled, “Strong Threads”, a documentary chronicling the work of the Laotian Organizing Project, an affiliate of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network in Richmond, CA empowering Laotian families confronting environmental health hazards in their homes and neighborhoods.

Irene Garza is a doctoral candidate in the Department of American Studies at UT Austin. She taught Introduction to Asian American Studies in Fall 2009.

ACE Foundation Awards Scholarships to UT Students



From left to right, CAAS director Madeline Hsu, Lalini Pedris, Jennifer Tran and Tu-Uyen Nguyen

Three UT Austin students received \$500 scholarships each from the ACE Foundation. The foundations’ mission is to ensure the growth and success of Austin’s Asian American community through education and financial support. CAAS worked with ACE Foundation again this year to identify UT students based on merit and leadership activities. CAAS selected Tu-Uyen Nguyen, Asian American Studies and Classics double major, Lalini Pedris, CAAS student associate and double major in International Relations and Global Studies and Geography, and Jennifer Tran, Asian American Studies and Government double major.

Shared Histories?: Asian American, Native American and Indigenous Studies

By Sam Vong



Dr. Paddison, top left, Dr. Rohrer, bottom left, and Dr. Vimalassery, on right.

In spring 2013, the Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS) collaborated with Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) and I to organize a special lecture series titled, "Shared Histories?: Asian American, Native American, and Indigenous Studies." This series served as the first step in a long-term collaboration between CAAS and NAIS. The series featured scholars whose work bridges the fields of Native American, Indigenous, and Asian American Studies. The objective was to bring to the UT campus innovative scholarship that examines the shared and uneven histories of race and racial formation, colonialism, capitalism, and whiteness between and across Native American, Indigenous, and Asian American communities, to consider how indigeneity and immigration, often presumed to be essentially contradictory experiences, actually share key connections in constructions of the nation-state.

For the series, CAAS and NAIS invited three speakers to address the theme of intersectionality. The first speaker was Dr. Joshua Paddison, a visiting assistant professor at Indiana University, Bloomington, where

he teaches courses for the departments of Religious Studies, American Studies, and History. Dr. Paddison's talk, "Chinese Immigrants, Native Americans, and the Religio-Racial Politics of Reconstruction," examined the role that religion played in structuring racial hierarchies in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The second speaker, Dr. Manu Vimalassery, assistant professor of History at Texas Tech University, presented a talk titled, "Guests in the Land: Asian American through American Indian Studies." Dr. Vimalassery's presentation explored the potential benefits of framing Asian American Studies through the lens of American Indian Studies, in order to deepen our critique of colonialism.

The last speaker, Dr. Judy Rohrer, assistant professor in residence in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, concluded the series with her talk, "Staking Claim: Race & Indigeneity in Hawai'i," which critically examined how settler colonialism helped to forge whiteness in

Hawai'i, also known as *haole*.

Each of the presentations drew an audience comprised of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and community members of Austin. The series helped to encourage conversations of the productive possibilities and challenges in studying how individuals and communities have negotiated questions of difference, organized against inequalities, and resisted exclusion and oppression. We hope that this series will provide a foundation for future collaborations between CAAS, NAIS, and other centers at UT.

Sam Vong earned his Ph.D. from Yale University this past May and will serve as the inaugural Bruce Gray Postdoctoral Fellow at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota this fall.

Asian American Studies Graduates

Congratulations to our majors graduating from The University of Texas at Austin!

Julian Joseph

Nathan Kwiatkowski

Faculty and Staff Notes



Shuang Shen, Madeline Hsu, Yvonne Chang, and Xiaojue Wang at the TransPacific China in the Cold War conference co-sponsored by CAAS

Graduate student, **DANA S. HARADA**, joined CAAS in spring 2013 as a volunteer/graduate intern. She is a second year master's student in the Higher Education Administration Program. Harada has been working part-time at CAAS over the summer on programs for AAS majors including a student blog and orientation.

MADELINE Y. HSU was awarded the 2012 Community Leadership Award by the Network of Asian American Organizations and the Asian American Resource Center. She has been elected to the executive board of the Association for Asian American Studies in the Sections position and as vice-president of the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas.

In 2012-2013, **S. AKBAR HYDER** is "Scholar in Residence" at the University of California, Berkeley. His research focuses on South Asian aesthetics and Muslim devotional traditions, including those of the United States. With the assistance of a Faculty Research Assignment from the university this year, he is completing his

study of the aesthetics of autobiography.

CAAS lecturer, **RAMEY KO**, is now a named partner with Jung Ko PLLC, an immigration and business law firm. He was also nominated for, but did not win, a Leader Excellence award from the DFW chapter of the National Association of Asian American Professionals.

The Association for Asian American Studies awarded **JULIA H. LEE**'s book, *Interracial Encounters: Reciprocal Representations in African and Asian American Literatures, 1896-1937*, an honorable mention for the AAAS Book Award in Literary Studies.

NHI LIEU's article, "Beauty Queens Behaving Badly: Gender, Global Competition, and the Making of Post-Refugee Neoliberal Vietnamese Subjects," appears in the new issue of *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Volume 34, Number 1, 2013. Lieu has another article, "Disrupting Nostalgic Scenes of Whiteness: Asian Immigrant Bridal Shops and Racial Visibility in the Ethnoburb," in the new issue of

Spaces and Flows: An International Journal of Urban and ExtraUrban Studies, Volume 3, Issue 2, pp.1-13.

BEILI LIU, CAAS faculty affiliate, received the 2012 Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award. Twenty-seven faculty members from The University of Texas at Austin received the UT System Board of Regents' highest teaching honor in 2012.

A. NAOMI PAIK received a postdoctoral fellowship through the Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University, which she declined in order to accept the Early Career Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh for 2012-2013. She is working towards the completion of "Rightlessness," her manuscript-in-progress. Her article, "Carceral Quarantine at Guantánamo: Legacies of US Imprisonment of Haitian Refugees, 1991 – 1994," was published in the 2013 winter issue of *Radical History Review*.

LALINI K. PEDRIS joined CAAS as the student associate in January 2012. She graduated from The University of Texas in 2013 with bachelor's degrees in International Relations & Global Studies and Geography and an interdisciplinary concentration in Human Rights & Social Justice. She is currently applying for a Fulbright program in Kenya to study human-elephant conflict and the illegal trade in ivory.

SHARMILA RUDRAPPA is currently researching the broad area of reproductive technologies and the globalization of immaterial labor. Her manuscript, titled "Outsourced: Surrogate Mothers on India's Reproductive Assembly Line," is based on field work in Bangalore, southern India, with Indian surrogate mothers, egg donors, and commissioning individuals/ couples from the U.S. and Australia.

SNEHAL SHINGAVI published his book *The Mahatma Misunderstood: The Politics and Forms of Literary Nationalism in India* (Anthem 2013). The book is a study of the fiction about Gandhi produced in his lifetime that explains why novelists both vehemently critiqued and lovingly collaborated with the Mahatma simultaneously.

NANCY STALKER's next monographic project will examine the role of ikebana, the art of flower arrangement, in constructing national and international Japanese identity in the twentieth century, especially focusing on its rapid expansion in postwar Japan from the 1950s-70s.

CYNTHIA TALBOT recently had the article, "Justifying Defeat: A Rajput Perspective on the Age of Akbar," appear in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*.

ERIC TANG won the Constance M. Rourke Prize for Best Essay in *American Quarterly* for his essay "A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East" 63:1 (March 2011) which examines the forms of community life and solidarity created by Black and Vietnamese Americans in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

THOMAS A. TWEED, CAAS faculty affiliate, was elected vice-president, and future president of the American Academy of Religion, the largest professional organization for scholars of religion.

KAMALA VISWESWARAN is the editor of *Perspectives on Modern South Asia* (Blackwells, 2011), and *Everyday Occupations: Experiencing Militarism in South Asia and the Middle East* (Pennsylvania, 2013). Her book "A Thousand Genocides Now: Gujarat in the Modern Imaginary of Violence," under contract with Duke University Press, is a study of mass violence and its relationship to "conflict diasporas." She is also at work on another book, "Histories of Rights, Histories of Law," an examination of how women's rights and minority rights have been framed historically by democratic societies like India, Britain, and the U.S.



Core faculty member, Dr. Rowena Fong, introducing Dr. Sharmila Rudrappa for her presentation on "Rethinking Asian American Studies"

SONA A. SHAH received the RAISE Staff Excellence Award for her work at CAAS and with the Asian American community in Austin and The University of Texas.. The RAISE Excellence Awards is hosted annually by the Asian/Asian American Faculty and Staff Association and the Asian Desi Pacific American student group to celebrate excellence in the Asian/Asian American community. Each year one UT faculty and staff member is recognized for this honor.

Her article, "Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative," which first appeared in the British journal *Modern Asian Studies*, has been reprinted in the collection of essays *Expanding Frontiers in South Asian and World History*, edited by Richard M. Eaton et al. She is currently working on a book on historical traditions relating to the twelfth-century Indian king Prithviraj Chauhan.

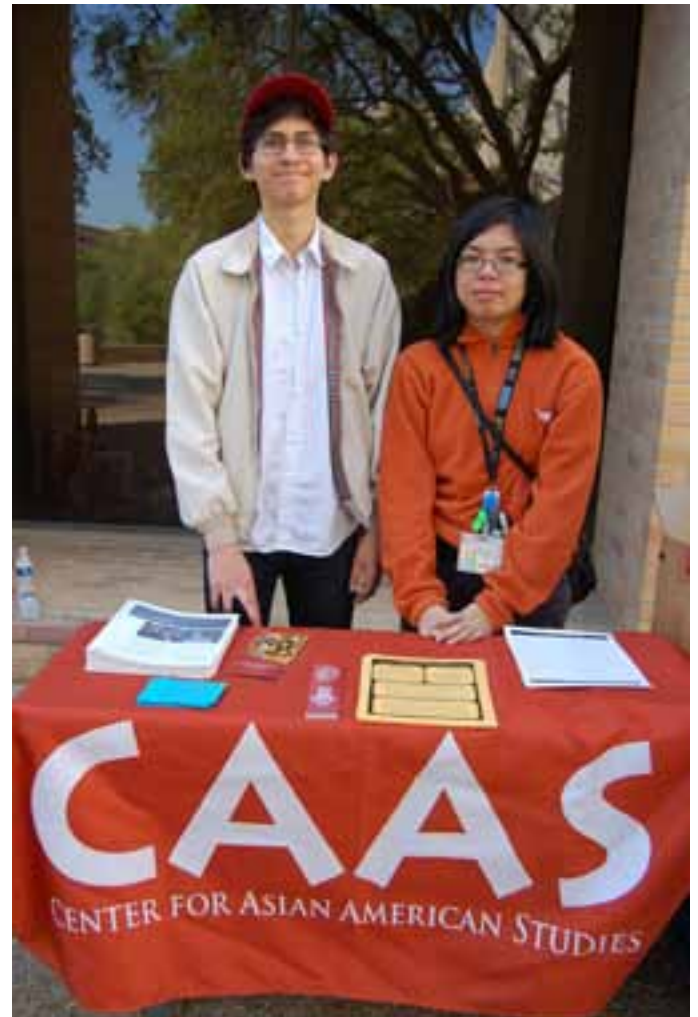
B.A. Student Profiles

MARLON HEDRICK

I'm not so sure if anyone who becomes an Asian American Studies major in undergrad has planned it to be that way. For me, the sole credit goes to the compelling efforts of Professor Naomi Paik. She is fiercely intelligent -- mostly terrifying. I remember as a freshman in her "Introduction to Asian American Studies" class, feeling intimidated by her syllabus. The readings were lengthy, thorough, and constant, but I never noticed this until after the fact. Although Dr. Paik's constant commitment to recruiting sparked my initial interest in becoming an Asian American Studies major, her impactful material, intellectual charisma, and commitment to the importance and possibility of Asian American Studies is the reason why I decided to major.

Asian American Studies has been tremendous for me both academically and personally. Because of Asian American Studies, I've engaged with my professors more fervently, learned more humbly, and thought more about intersectionality. Most importantly, being an Asian American Studies major has given me the privilege to view how race operates more openly, more critically, and, thus, more positively, for which I am grateful for.

Post-graduation, I would like to further my studies in history, American studies, or an area studies program. Being an Asian American Studies major has enabled me to think of pursuing graduate school through the numerous mentors I've acquired in the program--all of whom have continued to keep me lifted and afloat. I'd like to continue to think about Asian American Studies through an interdisciplinary lens in my future work and research. Eventually, I would like to teach what I have learned, in an academic setting or otherwise, as others and I continue to ask, "What does it mean to be an Asian American?"



Marlon Hedrick tabling for CAAS with fellow major Diane Tram Le.

KRISTINE STAGGS

I think the most influential factor in becoming an Asian American Studies major was the crossover of Asian American and English courses. I love literature, and being Filipino American drives my desire to delve into the literature of Asian Americans with an emphasis on the Filipino American experience. Being a major and a part of CAAS has helped me grow immensely. I've become more aware of the challenges and issues in our community and I have been able to be a more vocal student through the student group, United with CAAS, a group dedicated to promoting Asian American Studies on campus. As a result of being exposed to these courses and issues, my postgraduate plans are centered on becoming an English professor and teaching Asian American literature.

CAAS at the White House Initiative on Asian and Pacific Islanders Texas Regional Summit



From left to right, Tu-Uyen Nguyen (AAS major), Kristine Staggs (AAS major), Sona Shah (CAAS staff), Marlon Hendrick (AAS major), and Julian Joseph (AAS major)

On February 23, 2013 over 500 people throughout Texas attended the Regional Conference for the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in Houston, TX. The White House Initiative works to improve the quality of life and opportunities for AAPIs by facilitating increased access to and participation in federal programs. The conference was co-organized by CAAS lecturer, Ramey Ko, and Rogene Gee Calvert in Houston and featured several sessions on issues affecting the AAPI community such as immigration, economic development, health disparities, civil rights, labor and employment issues, and housing and community development. CAAS's director, Madeline Hsu, served on the host committee, delivered a keynote address about the state of AAPIs in Texas, and moderated a panel discussion on "Educational Resources and Challenges to the Community." Several Asian American Studies' majors attended the conference, read more about their experiences below.

The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders gave me new perspectives on how the government serves the Asian American community. In particular, panels on immigration gave insight to the government agencies that are focused on assisting undocumented immigrants and not just deporting them. This panel had a wide range of

individuals from those who worked for the White House to even a UT student who represented undocumented students and the DREAM Act. Panelists were open to feedback from the audience in ways to streamline the immigration processes, which can be cumbersome at best.
-Julian Joseph, Asian American Studies '13

Attending the first-ever White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders was, for me, a visceral experience. Despite the intellectual engagement each breakout session provided (I attended the Civil Rights and Education panels), the unbridled energy that flowed throughout the conference was always in mind. Wherever, and whenever, I turned, I was met with the crackling energy of words forming and ideas exchanging, almost exclusively in languages foreign to me, but not foreign to the conference and its peoples. This energy was present and equal in the voices of the senior citizens of SAIVA to the young persons of College Forward -- all eager to envision a meaningful future together. As the conference came to its close, and we all shifted into the reception room and reception mood, it was not the rumbling of the crowd that I heard, but individual voices, each distinct in cadence and timbre; it was in these individual voices that I found the conference to be triumphant.
-Marlon Hedrick, American Studies and Asian American Studies '14

During the Higher Education panel moderated by CAAS director, Madeline Hsu, I came to the realization that I as a student could be very blinded to the realities of the Asian American community. I think as students we are so immersed into the history and the theoretical frame works in discussing Asian American issues that the communities we discuss--those that have been affected by paths of immigration and racialization--don't become tangible until we hear the first-hand stories of those on the panels. Especially for me, I found that listening to other members of the Asian American community that are also trying to make a difference and be proactive was invigorating and frustrating. I wanted so much to cry out, "You're a clear example of why the model minority exists!" or "That's exactly why I want to be an Asian American Scholar." While I did indulge in one of these moments in the space of this panel, I realized that throwing words like "Hegemonic Masculinity" and "White Normativity" wasn't going to make the situation any better.

For me, it only made me realize this gap that I had placed between that of the scholar and the community. In some ways, I think that this gap does in fact exist in our narrative and amongst the community. I hope that we as Asian American studies majors get to experience a more hands on interaction with the community. Not only talking about the issues at hand, but also understanding them outside the educational realm. If there is one major point I can take away from these interactions, it is the fact that we must be united as a community. For those that were there; the positive energy that resonated within the hall, the desire to progress, to keep pushing on against the odds, to know this was simply the beginning was overwhelming and empowering.

As I approach my last year here at UT, I hope that these emotions and goals remain strong within this community as well and we continue to push ourselves as a Center here on campus.
-Kristine Staggs, Asian American Studies and English '14

CAAS Speakers and Events (September 2012 – May 2013)



Islamophobia panel discussion held at Nueces Mosque in west campus.

“Why Asian American Studies Matters Now” talk by Dr. George Lipsitz

In September, CAAS hosted a public lecture by renowned American Studies scholar Dr. George Lipsitz, professor of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has written numerous books and articles including: *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (1998), *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (2001), and *How Racism Takes Place* (2011). This event was made possible with support from the departments of English and American Studies, the Center for Mexican American Studies, and the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies.



George Lipsitz

Asian Americans and Fisher v. Texas

In November, CAAS organized a panel discussion on affirmative action and its implications for Asian American students and faculty. The panelists included: Tu-Uyen Nguyen, classics and Asian American studies major; Dr. Sharmila Rudrappa, associate professor in sociology and Asian American studies; Dr. Eric Tang, assistant professor in African and African diaspora studies and Asian American studies; Dr. Kamala Visweswaran, associate professor in anthropology and Asian American studies; and Tony Vo, Asian American studies alumnus and staff at the Multicultural Engagement Center. Dr. Edmund T. Gordon, chair of the department of African and African diaspora studies moderated the panel. This event was co-sponsored with Asian/Asian American Faculty and Staff Association, Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective, and Texas Exes Asian Alumni Network.

Islamophobia

CAAS worked with the Asian American Resource Center (AARC) to coordinate a discussion on Islamophobia in early December in response to recent hate crimes against Sikhs and Muslim Americans. Nueces Mosque, located in west campus, graciously offered to host the event in their prayer room. The panel included: Dr. Snehal Shingavi, assistant professor of English and Asian American studies; Lesley Varghese, executive director of the AARC; and Sheikh Umer from Nueces

Mosque. Special thanks to the Office of the President for providing funding and to several campus and community organizations that co-sponsored the event by helping with publicity.

“Asian Americans in a Majority-Minority Nation,” talk by Deepa Iyer

In January CAAS hosted a talk on campus with Deepa Iyer, executive director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering civic and political engagement by South Asian communities in the United States. Ms. Iyer spoke on “Asian Americans in a Majority-Minority Nation” to a group of around 50 students and community members.



Michael Omi

“The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Situating Asian Americans” talk by Dr. Michael Omi

In January CAAS hosted several events featuring Dr. Michael Omi, associate professor of Ethnic Studies and associate director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Equitable Society at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California Center for New Racial Studies, a multi-campus research program. Dr. Omi is the co-author of *Racial Formation in the United States*, one of the most influential books about critical race theory. Special thanks to the many co-sponsors of Professor Omi's events.

Video and audio recordings of these events available at www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas



Samip Mallick from SAADA at the Austin History Center. Mary Kang Photography (www.marykang.com)

Spring Speaker Series on “Shared Histories?: Asian American, Native American, and Indigenous Studies”

Native American and Indigenous Studies and Asian American Studies are often perceived as fields that share little in common with each other. This spring speaker series, hosted by CAAS and Native American and Indigenous Studies Program, featured scholars whose work defies such perceptions by exploring how these seemingly disparate fields possess overlapping and frequently, contested histories. CAAS and NAIS organized three talks over the spring semester with Drs. Joshua Paddison, Manu Vimalassery, and Judy Rohrer, which showcased the overlapping themes between the two fields. Special thanks to Sam Vong, visiting scholar, for his leadership in organizing these events.

South Asian American Digital Archive Lecture & Reception

In April CAAS invited the executive director and co-founder of the nonprofit South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), Samip Mallick, to present on SAADA’s innovative approach to archiving and sharing stories from the South Asian American community collected by SAADA over the last four years. CAAS hosted the event with the Austin History Center and received generous support from the Asian

American Resource Center and the Network of Asian American Organizations.

Trans-Pacific China and the Cold War Conference

CAAS director, Madeline Hsu, co-convoked this conference bringing together an international, interdisciplinary group of scholars from Hong Kong, Taiwan, England, the US, and Canada to consider new research highlighting cultural and social formations emerging from diasporic Chinese experiences of the political fissures of the Cold War. CAAS co-sponsored this conference that was organized on behalf of the Institute for Historical Studies with co-sponsorship from the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Asian Studies, the Center for East Asian Studies, the Taiwan Studies Program, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and the Taiwan Academy.

“Participatory Citizenship and Civic Engagement: Asian Immigrants in DFW,” talk by Dr. Caroline Brettell

How do Asian immigrants to the United States participate in the public sphere and hence become citizens, not only in the legal sense but also socially and culturally, through various forms of civic engagement? Drawing theoretically on a community of practice model that emphasizes situated learning,

Dr. Caroline Brettell, University Distinguished Professor at Southern Methodist University, discussed how Asian immigrants in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area have developed a sense of belonging and learned forms of civic engagement in the United States. The lecture was organized by CAAS with support from the Asian American Resource Center, the departments of Anthropology and Asian Studies, and the Center for East Asian Studies.



AAS major, Tu-Uyen Nguyen and Helen Zia at the Trans-Pacific China and the Cold War Conference.

Mark your Calendars Fall 2013 Events

September 12 – “Constructing the Muslim Identity from the Crusades to 9/11” talk by Dr. Deepa Kumar from Rutgers University

September 28 – CAAS exhibit on display at the City of Austin’s Asian American Resource Center’s Grand Opening

October 14 – “A Nation of Immigrants? History, Politics and Immigration Reform” talk by Dr. Mae Ngai from Columbia University

For more details on these events, visit www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas

Alumni Notes



Asian American Studies majors and Professor Nhi Lieu at CAAS farewell dinner for Drs. Lee and Lieu, and AAS major Julian Joseph.

2003

After graduating from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in Asian American Studies and Psychology, **DIXON K. DEUTSCH** moved to New York City to teach through the Teach For America program in the South Bronx and received an M.S. from Lehman College. After two years teaching kindergarten and fifth grade special education, Dixon worked to continue to close the achievement gap at a high-performing network of schools in Brooklyn, Achievement First Charter Schools. In 2009 Dixon received his Ed.M. from Bank Street College of Education in Leadership for Educational Change and lead the special education team for the Achievement First NY schools. Currently Dixon is incubating a new non-profit special education initiative at the NYC Charter School Center, with his goal of creating a social enterprise that promotes and supports world-class special education in NYC schools.

2004

NEESHA DAVÉ resigned from her position at the Texas House of Representatives to stay at home with her baby twins and ponder her next new challenge.

APARNA GUPTA currently serves as the Assistant Director for Student Chapters at the American Constitution Society (ACS) in Washington D.C. In this capacity, she connects and organizes progressive law students, scholars, and practitioners around important legal and policy issues.

Prior to ACS, Aparna was an Equal Justice Works Fellow at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) in New York City. As a workers' rights attorney at AALDEF, she utilized litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy to empower low-wage, immigrant workers seeking enforcement of their labor rights.

Aparna received her J.D. in 2009 from UCLA School of Law, where she was enrolled in the Critical Race Studies specialization and the David J. Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy.

2005

Since graduating, **MADHAVI KASBEKAR** traveled extensively and then went on to law school at St. Mary's University School of Law where she graduated in 2009. She's currently living and practicing immigration law in Charlotte, North Carolina.

CHRIS LEE graduated from UT Austin in December 2005. He then attended medical school at the University of Miami from 2006-2010. He's currently finishing his residency at UT-Southwestern.

2008

After graduating from UT with dual degrees in Journalism and Asian American Studies, **KATHERINE FAN** went to China with the UT Journalism department as a TA for the Maymester program. Following that, she went to Taiwan to volunteer in an orphanage for babies

with AIDS for two months, and then completed a full-time marketing internship at Austin corporate success story, Bazaarvoice. Katherine worked at Bazaarvoice and another start-up for a few years before switching to the Google Austin office, where she worked in local advertising sales. She most recently transitioned into an account executive role with another homegrown Austin company called HotSchedules. In her free time, Katherine has kept up with a freelance photography business which formerly focused on weddings and event but now primarily does portraits. I am a recent yoga addict, have completed the Austin Distance Challenge this past year (only to admit to myself that I don't really enjoy running), and am trying to become more fit to keep up with my growing foodie habits.

2009

WILLIAM LIU is currently working with Kidventure camps as a counselor over the summer. He has plans to move to Houston to start a job as a 6th grade science teacher at Cullen Middle School. William has been involved with the Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team at UT and as an Austin community member. Asian American Studies was a cornerstone of his experience at UT Austin, which helped him develop the confidence to step forward as an educator rather than other traditional career avenues for Asian Americans.

2011

DEAN PHAM is currently a second-year Master of Public Health Student at the University of Texas School of Public Health - Austin Regional Campus. He's also a Graduate Assistant, helping with admissions and recruitment efforts. Dean's areas of concentration in the MPH program include physical activity, health promotion, and global health.

2013

The day after graduation, **JULIAN JOSEPH** left for South Korea to work on a North Korean refugee documentary. For two weeks, he and three other UT students from worked alongside a South Korean crew to interview refugees and those involved in their rescue. As an Asian American Studies alumnus, I used my interest in the marginalized to collect oral/visual histories of a discriminated group that even many South Koreans do not know much about. Julian has enjoyed representing UT and CAAS abroad.

Support CAAS

Make your tax-deductible contribution to Asian American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Our goal is to increase awareness of Asian American issues by facilitating multidisciplinary teaching and research enabling students to become active members of their community. Your support will allow our Center to develop new courses, provide scholarships for students, increase research opportunities, and sponsor university and public programs.

MAIL

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Center of Asian American Studies
210 W. 24th St. Stop A2200
Austin, TX 78712-1695

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Contact Kathleen Aronson, Assistant Dean of Development, at mcaronson@austin.utexas.edu or call (512) 475-9763 to receive more information.

Thank you for your contribution and continued support!

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Subscribe to our Electronic Newsletter, **Red Threads**

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