



Association for Asian American Studies
NEWSLETTER

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NEWS

**The Association for Asian American Studies
Presidential Meditations
President Rajini Srikanth, 2006-2008**

This presidential address was delivered at the 24rd Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies, held in New York City, New York, April 4-7, 2007.

What should an Asian American Studies association be thinking of in this time of the continued presence of Guantánamo Bay, troop surge in Iraq, and threatening postures toward Iran? What do these urgent conditions mean to the realities of our everyday lives or to the questions we raise in our classrooms and other forums? How do we nurture a sense of the capacity of the individual to effect change even as we acquire the tools to recognize overwhelming structures of power and the various axes of domination?

Two weeks ago, at the campus where I teach, there was a conference on Frantz Fanon and his relevance to the United States today. During a discussion period, one of the attendees made the point that the trouble with things now is that there is no understanding of who or what is the enemy, and that we are unable to generate the kind of passion that infuses struggle and resistance with a strong sense of purpose. Fanon and others like him, in the middle part of the 20th century, knew they were battling colonial oppression; theirs was a clear and definite goal: the overthrow of foreign powers and the reclamation of collective worth and human dignity. Today, we seem unable to identify the adversary. Is it poverty? Is it political corruption? Or the lack of health care? Or systemic racism? Or laissez-faire capitalism? We are able to articulate and wage a “war on terror,” but we seem to have no will to wage a war on global poverty. Another audience member at that conference wondered whether it was possible to create alliances among people; he spoke specifically of the alliances among African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos. We are no stranger to this question, but a true alliance among various racial and ethnic groups seems ever elusive, especially when each group is focused on making the case for its eligibility for legitimate membership in the United States and in proving its allegiance to the group in power.

As Asian Americanists we take, or ought to take, seriously the responsibility for cultivating a mode of engaging the world that rejects suspicion, hostility, and paranoia and replaces them with empathetic imagination. At another conference I attended not long ago in the Boston area, the topic was oil and water and the geopolitical forces surrounding their use. The audience

was made up of young men and women who were training to be future diplomats and policy makers. What I heard gave me little hope for the future. The tone was alarmist, the battle lines already drawn. China and India with their runaway energy demands were to be contained and coerced into “playing ball” with the United States. It simply would not do that India and Iran were discussing the possibility of a gas pipeline between the two nations. India was to be reprimanded for “not being on board” and for complicating matters for the United States. The diplomats-in-training, the policy experts-in-waiting, were eagerly absorbing the fundamentals of confrontational posturing.

It is easy to succumb at such moments to a sense of helplessness and to feel that our efforts as educators, researchers, and activists are paltry gestures at best. It

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may be that we delude ourselves that our words and work count, or that what we say and do matters, that it has an impact. And yet, the undercurrent of doubt is just that—an undercurrent—not a whirlpool that pulls us downward. We do not sink into an abyss of despair. More to the point, we simply cannot. The paradox of our field of study is that it teaches us to recognize structures of oppressive power even as it simultaneously shows us how to chip away at these structures. Our challenge every day is to take the insights we gain from the study of power and turn them into manifestos for change.

Rajini Srikanth
University of Massachusetts Boston

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.

2008 ANNUAL MEETING

Chicago, Illinois
April 16-20, 2008
Hyatt Regency McCormick Place
2233 S. Martin Luther King Dr.
Chicago, IL 60616
Phone: 312 567 1234
<http://mccormickplace.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp>

AAAS CALL FOR PAPERS

Where is the “Heart” of Asian America?: Troubling “American” Identity and Exceptionalism in an Age of Globalization and Imperialism

Chicago specifically and the Midwest generally function as the symbolic “Heartland” of “America,” a culturally homogenous space relative to the main cosmopolitan sites of Asian America on the coasts. The “Chicago School” of sociology has played a large role in shaping the discourse and research on immigration, race, and urban development. Immigrants to this part of the country gradually have assimilated, become “American,” settled into the rhythms of an industrial and capitalist economy, and exhibited “proper,” normative and idealized notions of citizenship: nationalistic, “wholesome,” “corn-fed,” solid “American.” Their ability to do so speaks to the supposed unique character of the U.S. But this is only one face of the Midwest. African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans have played, both historically and currently, an essential role in building up the area while also serving as the discursive “other.” Even European Americans complicate the notion of uniform Whiteness with sustained enclave settings based on historic and continued migration flows. Still, the “Heartland” serves as an organizing trope in framing the U.S., both internally and abroad. In this age of globalizations and new imperialisms, precisely how does this trope play out? How does Asian American Studies both reinforce and resist, both accept and complicate the framing of the Midwest as the “center” of the United States? This conference seeks to trouble the Midwest as a key space of a homogenous “America.” How does geography shape the experiences and study of Asian America? What are the new politics in the heart of Asian America? How have pan-Asian American movements fared in the Heartland relative to other spaces? What types of inter-racial, intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic coalitions have formed? What implications has the homeland security apparatus had on Arab American and South Asian American relationships with the state? How does the “Heartland” serve as a device in analysis focused on the coasts? Asian American Studies is rooted in challenges to many of the assumptions of the nation, but typically these resistances have been seen as concentrated on the East and West Coasts and not where they supposedly have the most resonance, in the “Heartland.” Yet, the Midwest has given birth to powerful forces of counter-consciousness and interrogated an uncomplicated framing of the idea of a “true America” and essential core of the nation. Here, in the heartland of America, we ask “What is the ‘Heart’ of Asian America?”, how does geography shape and “What is the uniquely Midwestern approach of doing Asian American Studies?”

We encourage submissions that deepen our understanding of the transformative capabilities of a region too often seen as guarding “American-ness.” A range of issues provide complicating potential. The list below is in no way meant to be definitive; we hope you will add to its suggestions:

1. While Asian American studies in recent years have become more focused on the city, we should not forget the idea and physicality of the rural both as a site of normalizing practices as well as a node for community construction apart from the urban.

2. How do population size and geography impact the growth of counter-consciousness movements. For instance, did the smaller size paradoxically lead to easier coalescing, as in, for example, when Chicago Filipino American postal workers organized in the 1920's or in the '70s when Filipino American created the first Filipino American community center in the U.S. - the Rizal Center.

3. How have residential enclaves grown, disappeared, and altered in response to city demographics and politics, and what role do they play for communities with greater or lesser urban density?

4. What lies at the heart of vibrant Asian American commercial and residential enclaves: districts in Chicago such as Devon Street Little India, Lawrence/Bryn Mawr Koreatowns, Uptown's Argyle enclave, South Side Chinatown, and towns like Glendale Heights (near Chicago where the first Filipino American mayor was elected), Skokie, Naperville, University City (MO), or Madison Heights (MI)?

5. How have Asian Americans negotiated the road to political empowerment? There have been interesting campaigns and success stories of Asian Americans elected in regions with very few Asian American registered voters, including State Senator Moua from St. Paul, MN who is the first Hmong American elected official and Swati Dandekar, an Indian American from Des Moines, IA.

6. How have community-based organizations contributed both to community empowerment and to research and teaching in Asian American Studies? How can we in the academy develop stronger relationships with CBO's and non-profits to advance the field and the on-the-ground realities of Asian American communities? How do we link our students to urban, rural, and less visible communities in all regions to minimize the "myopia" in our field? How are organizations focusing on gender, sexual, and class issues creating alliances and moving forward in the age of increased reliance on government and foundation money?

7. What are new trends in ethnic businesses, and how are newer concentrations in the labor market responding to

local, national, and international forces (e.g., ethnic-dominated occupational niches include Pakistanis owning over 2/3rds of Dunkin Donuts)? What are the new trends in labor organizing, especially in ethnic niches (e.g. Filipina nurses on strike, forming a new union at Cook County Stroger Hospital)?

8. What, if any, are popular culture representations of Asian Americans that have particular salience, and how are representations shaped not only by national and transnational but also by local forces?

9. How are hate crimes in urban and rural areas symbolic of new or continued trends within Asian America?

10. Can we discern new phenomena in family and religious life? For instance, among the populations demanding our attention are Korean adoptees in Minnesota; Hmongs in small town Wisconsin or urban enclaves in Minneapolis-St. Paul. How are Hmong American students faring in schools across small towns in the Midwest where they now represent 20% of the population?

11. How are LGBT communities and allies responding to the growing institutionalized restrictions ushered in by the conservative political Right, well represented in the “Heartland?”

Complete panel submissions (with a minimum of 3 papers and a maximum of 4) will be given priority, but individual paper submissions will also be considered. Submissions of individual papers must identify the main disciplinary linkage or contribution offered by selecting on the key sub-themes listed above that the paper addresses or elaborates upon. We invite submissions for workshops and posters as well.

All proposals must be submitted to the Secretariat no later than October 31, 2007. Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged; please visit the link below to complete the on-line submission form and upload abstracts and CVs.:

<http://www.aaastudies.org/call.tpl>

CONFERENCES

Conference on Southeast Asian Americans to be held at Carleton, May 12

Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, is pleased to host the Conference on Southeast Asian Americans on May 12, 2007. Featuring multi-disciplinary research presentations by undergraduate students on the Hmong, Vietnamese, and Cambodian experience in America, this conference is the first of its kind. The student speakers will represent several Minnesota and Wisconsin schools, including Carleton, Saint Olaf, Macalester, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition, students are coming from several west and east coast universities to present their research, including Stanford, the University of California-Los Angeles, University of California-Irvine, University of California-Santa Cruz, and University of Massachusetts-Boston. For a list of paper titles and panels see the conference website:

http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/posc/Conf_SE_Asian_Amer/

Three prominent scholars in Hmong studies will offer commentary on the student papers: including Professor Yang Dao, Professor Gary Yia Lee, and Professor Kou Yang. The keynote speakers are: Professor Mai Na Lee, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and Ms. Hai Binh Nguyen, Asian Pacific Environmental Network in Oakland, California.

In addition, Penh Lo of Minnesota State University at Mankato will deliver a talk on ethnic minority groups in Laos during lunch time (Great Hall, Severance Hall). The Honorable Mee Moua, Minnesota State Senator will give a dinner lecture at 6 p.m. (Great Hall, Severance hall) All events are free and open to the public (excluding meals, which are open to the public but require advance reservation and payment in advance or at the door). Conferences sessions will be held in Leighton Hall from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on May 12, Saturday.

There will be a special evening performance by Tou Ger Xiong (Carleton B.A., 1996), rapper and comedian, in Concert Hall from 8-10 p.m. The band Watching Leona will perform after the Tou Ger Xiong performance.

For more information and to register, contact Carolyn Wong at cwong@carleton.edu or 507-646-4680.

Carleton College
One North College St.
Northfield MN 55057

CALL FOR PAPERS

Call for Submissions Asian American Adoptee Anthology

Each and every Asian American adoptee has a different story. However, we all have one thing in common and that's the need to be heard. I am searching for essays, memoirs, and poems written by Asian American adoptees. Submissions should reflect Asian American adoptee issues and experiences. This anthology will reveal various aspects of adoption, serve as a link between Asian American adoptees, an encouraging guide for many who face the long and hard road to discovering and accepting identity, and an insightful read for adoptive parents. Submissions will be collected for the intention of publishing a book. Potential subjects may include:

- *Your relationship with your adoptive family
- *Growing up in a predominantly white town
- *Returning to your birth country
- *Searching for your birth family/ foster family
- *Meeting your birth family/foster family
- *The word "chink"
- *Meeting and mingling with other Asians
- *Language barriers
- *How do you feel about adoption?
- *Encountering stereotypes, racism, discrimination
- *The desire for acceptance as an adoptee
- *Exoticism or "yellow fever"
- *Ashamed of your Asian appearance and Caucasian inside?
- *Finding voice and confidence as an adoptee
- *Culture Camps
- *Fellow adoptees
- *Interracial dating
- *Reactive Attachment Disorder

Submission deadline: July 1, 2007

Mail or E-mail submissions to:
Ms. JL Campbell
9979 Owenton Road
Frankfort, KY
Joohlee22@gmail.com

Please include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for either return of work or response from editor. Please make sure to include enough postage for return of manuscript (if that is desired). Submissions should be legible.

For information and updates visit: <http://www.xanga.com/koreanamericanadoptee>

Call for Papers
Journal of Asian American Studies
Special Issue: Asian Americans and Violence

Please note the early deadline: July 15, 2007

This special issue invites essays that address the relationship between race, culture, and violence as it pertains specifically to Asian Americans. Extra consideration will be given to essays that consider this topic broadly, and that focus on Asian Americans not only as the objects of violence but also its agents. For instance, essays might address questions like: What does it mean for Asian Americans to be perpetrators as well as victims? What effect does this have on our understanding of gender roles and gender relations? What effect does this have on representations of Asian Americans? How important is it for us to define violence broadly to include domestic abuse, public policies that abandon large groups to premature death, or war? How does focusing on violence help us to understand transformations in the structural position of Asian American racial formations? The primary occasion for this special issue is the recent shooting at Virginia Tech. As revelations of the shooter's racial and ethnic identity led to expressions of worry about a racial backlash, we are reminded of the ways in which race and violence have long been inextricably linked to one another in the U.S. When the shooter turns out to be Asian American, adding Seung-Hui Cho's name to a list that includes Chai Vang, Andrew Cunanan, and Gang Lu, we are compelled to consider how complex this link can be.

Because of its topicality, this special issue has been fast-tracked to appear in print this year. The deadline for essays is July 15, 2007, and should be emailed as an attachment following the appropriate JAAS submission guidelines to the guest editor, Min Hyung Song (<<mailto:songm@bc.edu>>). Questions about this special issue can also be emailed to him.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Asian American Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania is delighted to announce that Kal Penn (star of "The Namesake" and "Harold and Kumar") will teach 2 courses in Asian American Studies in Spring 2008!

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of Asian American Studies at Penn, and Kal Penn sent a video clip congratulating us and announcing his courses. For more information, please see the press release below and go to our website for links to other articles and a video clip featuring Kal Penn: <http://asam.sas.upenn.edu/>

CONTACT: Jacquie Posey: jposey@pobox.upenn.edu or 215-898-6460

Actor Kal Penn to Teach at the University of Pennsylvania **March 26, 2007**

PHILADELPHIA – Kal Penn, star of the new film "The Namesake" and known for his role as Kumar in the movie "Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle," will be a guest instructor at the University of Pennsylvania. He will teach two undergraduate courses in the spring semester of 2008 tentatively titled "Images of Asian Americans in the Media" and "Contemporary American Teen Films."

"The Asian American Studies Program is delighted that Kalpen Modi, a.k.a. Kal Penn, chose our program to host his teaching engagement at Penn," Grace Kao, director of the Asian American Studies Program at Penn, said. "Mr. Modi is one of the leading Asian American actors of his generation and is particularly aware of how his racial and ethnic identification has affected his professional experiences."

According to Kao, the courses will be offered by Asian American Studies, and be cross-listed by Cinema Studies. Both programs are in Penn's School of Arts and Sciences. Kal Penn's numerous television and film credits include the television series "24" and "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" and films "Epic Movie," "Van Wilder," and "Van Wilder: The Return of Taj."

He currently stars as Gogol Ganguli in "The Namesake" and has just completed shooting on the tentatively titled "Harold and Kumar 2." A native of Montclair, N.J., Penn received his B.A. in sociology with a specialization in theater, film and television from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is currently working on a graduate certificate in international security at Stanford University.

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