

California State University  
**Northridge**

**ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER**

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**Hours of Operation:**

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**Welcome**

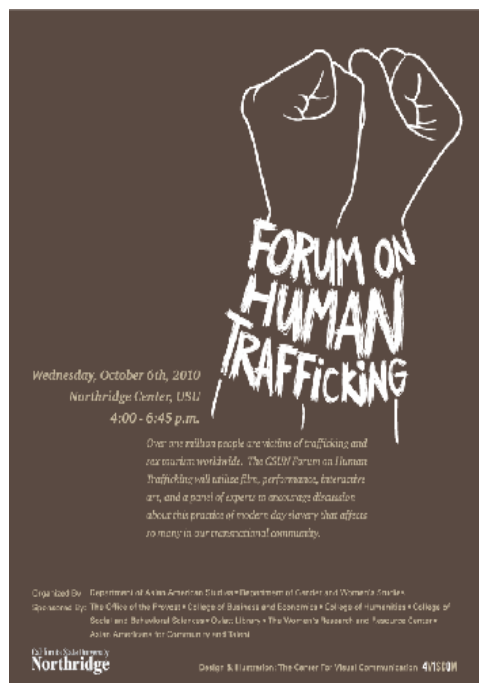
This year has been a very full year for the Asian American Studies Department. Faculty, with help from staff and students, completed the Department's Self Study, applied for a major multi-million dollar AANAPISI (Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution) grant, hired two new tenure-track faculty, and organized multiple AAS events. This Newsletter will recap some of these major events.

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## Forum on Human Trafficking



The Department of Asian American Studies and the Department of Gender and Women's Studies organized a Forum on Human Trafficking on October 6, 2010. The event, sponsored by the Provost's Office and a number of Colleges and student clubs across the campus, focused not only on victims of human trafficking and sex tourism, but also the work of modern day abolitionists. The United Nations reports that over 12 million people are trafficked worldwide for forced labor or sexual exploitation, and in the US, California is one of primary destination states for human trafficking.

The catalyst for the forum arose out of the outrage expressed by many over a CSUN professor's blog on the "Thailand Girl Scene." Faculty and students, as well as a number of community leaders, spoke out against this blog that they felt perpetuated an exploitive and objectifying view of Thai women. Feeling that this website raised concerns about larger issues related to the exploitation and trafficking of women and children in the sex tourism trade, AAS and GWS faculty and students wanted to provide thoughtful critiques concerning the underlying issues related to these concerns and

organized this forum to encourage a broader discussion on the subject of human trafficking.

The forum had a very full program. Attended by over 500 students, the forum featured a film on human trafficking and a skit called "Sexonomics," enacted by a student Performance Ensemble troupe. Damrong Kraikruan, Counsel General of Thailand, spoke about the current situation in Thailand, emphasizing the importance of viewing human trafficking as a global issue. Wanda Pathomrit, Vice President of AACT, introduced the panel of speakers: Chancee Martorell, Executive Director of the Thai CDC, Flor Molina, a member of the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), and Imelda Buncab, Not for Sale Constituency Director.

The students and faculty who organized this forum hope that the issues raised will serve as a catalyst for all the attendees to not only be educated about human trafficking, but to think of ways to fight against the practices of modern day human slavery. In fact, the Polaris Project, an anti-trafficking organization, was started by two college students, and today, they have developed an effective organization dedicated to eradicating slavery in the world. When individuals are committed to change, they can change the world.

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## The Distinguished Lecturer and Student Awards Event Featuring Phil Yu

The Asian American Studies department sponsored their annual Distinguished Lecture and Student Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, April 20, in CSUN's Grand Salon.



The night kicked off with a lecture by Phil Yu, founder of the popular Internet blog, AngryAsianMan.com. The Washington Post has called Yu's blog "a daily must-read for the media-savvy, socially conscious, pop-cultured Asian American." Yu shared with the audience his experiences attending and graduating from college and developing his blog, which he started ten years ago. He expressed the importance of creating content for Asian Americans and encouraged students to push the boundaries by developing their creative talents and political awareness.

Several students were honored for excelling in Asian American Studies as well as for their hard work and dedication to their communities. Students received awards such as the Special Recognition Awards (Kevin Laparan, Tran Le, Jon Fuller, and Carolina Quintanilla), Academic Achievement Award (Justin Balatbat), Special Achievement Award (Hansook Oh), Promising Teacher Awards (Stacy Lee and Stephanie Lobos) and the Promising Transfer Student Awards (Linda Yu and Josh Cabrillos).

Recognized for her contributions to the Department, Claudine Sarmiento, who is currently working as a producer of KTLA's morning news, received the Outstanding Alumni Service Award, which was first awarded last year. Senior Brian De Guzman received the Department's first Enrique de la Cruz Social Justice Award, acknowledging his passion to serve the Asian American community, educate his peers in political activism and fight for human rights.



## Professor Maria Turnmeyer's AAS 420 Class' Mockumentary Film *To the White House*

Derek Tang



On May 2, 2011, Professor Maria Turnmeyer's Asian American Studies 420 (Literary Self Representation) class produced and premiered *To The White House*, a mockumentary “following” four fictional characters as they train for presidential candidacy. Students wrote, filmed, and edited individual montages referencing concepts examined in Asian American Studies courses. The montages presented historical, political, and social events that have shaped and perpetuated stereotypes about Asian Americans. In addition to the montages, students wrote a creative script satirizing the “climb” to the White House.

After the viewing of the mockumentary, Derek Tang (director) took questions from the audience. When asked how the primary idea of the film evolved (the idea of the possibility of an Asian American candidate for the U.S. presidency), Tang responded by pointing out that “the fact that Americans do not think it is a possibility makes this topic important. Why can't America have an Asian American president? Asian Americans have contributed to the building of this country, and they need to know that they have the opportunity to run for the highest office in the country.”

Under the direction of Tang, the AAS 420 class worked as a class community to overcome the many hurdles faced during the production and came to understand why many Asian Americans “shy away” from professional media productions. In addition to the need to carefully craft a film that does not recreate stereotypes for the sake of humor, access resources and complete tasks on time (the mockumentary was filmed and edited in less than five weeks), the students found that producing a one-hour and fifteen minute meant facing constant challenges. The work on the film necessitated constant negotiation and the class worked diligently on sharing leadership roles while building and maintaining a supportive creative and academic environment.



The AAS 420 class hopes that Asian American Studies, AAS students and alumni will continue to support creative classes that allow students to produce work that can be shared with the CSUN community. AAS 420 students believe that it is important to creatively engage with the history and experiences of Asian Americans.

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## The AAS Carnival—In Celebration of Asian American History Month



The Asian American Studies Department and its students hosted a carnival celebration Thursday, May 5, at the Asian American Activities Center. Students organized performances, planned games and provided food for attendees.

The main event was a Chinese Lion dance performed by members of a Chinese performing group called the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, from San Diego. Two individuals danced in a large traditional Chinese lion costume while the others played traditional instruments.



Among other performers were Freshman and Psychology/AAS double major, Nate Tuvalu, who sang and played guitar with alumna Derek Tang. They sang original songs such as “Lemonade” and “Can’t Help Myself.”

Students from the Filipino Student Association also performed dances from this year's Pilipino Cultural Night. Students Megan Lum and Ariyana Nues performed a traditional dance called "The Nylon," otherwise known as "Hen and Hawk."

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## Professor Tracy Buenavista's AAS 495 Mexipina/o Class

Hansook Oh

Students of Professor Tracy Buenavista's AAS 495ES class hosted an event exploring the experiences of U.S. Pilipina/os, Chicana/os, and multiracial Mexipina/os.



Students educated peers at the event on topics such as boxing in Filipino and Mexican communities, the military-industrial-complex and critical scholar Andrea Smith's theory on the Three Pillars of White Supremacy. Johnny Itliong, a chef and the son of the late UFW worker Larry Itliong, and Professor Rudy Gueverra, whose forthcoming book is on Mexipina/o communities in San Diego, also spoke at the event.

AAS495 is a comparative ethnic studies course exploring the experiences of U.S. Pilipina/os, Chicana/os, and multiracial

Mexipina/os. According to the Professor Buenavista's syllabus, this course introduces students to "scholarship on an emergent Mexipino identity and examines the historical and contemporary social, political, and economic issues shared by U.S. Filipinos and Mexicans."

Buenavista noted how although CSUN is home to various ethnic studies departments and programs, AAS 495 represents a meaningful curricular attempt for students to explore how their identities and experiences are grounded in the shared, as well as conflicting, histories among and between different communities of color.

Click on the following link to watch a video of Johnny Itliong speak about his experiences growing up as a Mexipino and his memories working with his father as a farm worker.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SdbCEbimCY>.

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## Professor Allan Aquino and AAS 220: Survey of Asian American Literature

Hansook Oh

Students at Cal State University, Northridge might decide to take AAS 220, Survey of Asian American Literature, merely to fulfill a general education requirement to graduate or to fulfill an Asian American studies major or minor. However, AAS 220 may also exceed students' expectations as it provides students a unique space for intellectual and creative growth that they won't forget.

Professor Allan Aquino has been teaching the course since 2002, drawing from his own learning experience while taking classes at CSUN more than ten years ago. His former professor, George Uba, influenced Aquino by emphasizing that students in his class develop craft, discipline, and organizational skills.



According to Aquino, the class practices many different disciplines of prose, such as journalism, creative non-fiction, short stories, “flash” fiction and poetry, building on the knowledge of Asian Pacific Islander writing traditions.

“Our foundation is based on a belief in our common rhizome of human experiences,” Aquino explained. “Discrimination between popular and common writers is illusory... we read and write to know we're not alone.”

The students are required to write academic interpretation essays and original creative works. They also organize an arts event near the end of the semester and invite the community to see their work. Aquino chooses to take a minimal role in students' creative projects for the arts event.

“I leave the final product largely in the hands of the students. I provide strict guidelines, deadlines and organizational parameters,” Aquino said, “but the heart of their creation, as it were, must truly spring from them.”

Aquino expects students taking the course to thoroughly engage in the “process of working toward a masterpiece” and expects “active and fair cooperation and participation” during class discussions. In his experience, students impress him by fully committing to the creative process.

“I typically am surprised and inspired by what they create, since I allow them free reign to indulge their visions,” Aquino stated. “This certainly, and delightfully, goes beyond my expectations. AAS 220 has proved to be an important piece of the Asian American Studies experience at CSUN because it always stays relevant to popular culture as well as academia.” According to Aquino, the Northridge campus is key to nurturing his students' creative spirit.

“The CSUN community has a wonderful *joie de vive* and spirit of creativity I simply do not sense on other campuses,” Aquino observed. “I have taught courses for years at UCLA and LMU and, hands down, my CSUN community is the best environment where students can truly enrich themselves—the fundamental purpose of college.”

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## Krunk Fu Battle Battle—Culminating Experience

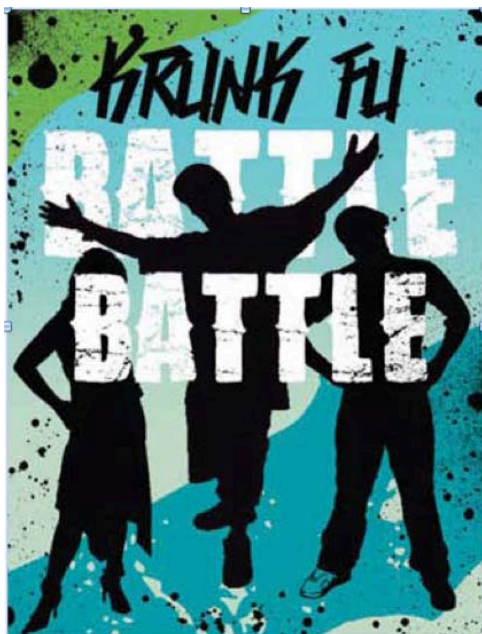


Figure 1: East West Players Promotional Poster of Krunk Fu Battle Battle

During the last week of classes, almost 100 students and faculty attended East West Players' hip hop production of *Krunk Fu Battle Battle* on the evening of May 12. For many students, this was the first time they had not only visited Little Tokyo, but also seen an East West production. CSUN's DIGLA program provided the students with free tickets and transportation.

The high energy musical tells the story of young Norman Lee who challenges a b-boy crew to a hip hop battle; in the end he learns a lesson less about battling, and more about respect and community. After the rousing finale of the musical, the students held their own dancing exhibition—breakin', poppin', and lockin'—in the courtyard. The musical also reminds the students about the roots that Asian Americans have in hip hop culture—a point they learn in AAS contemporary and popular culture classes.

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## Welcome to Two New Faculty Members

The AAS Department conducted two tenure-track positions during this past year. We are delighted to welcome two new faculty members to the Department.

### AAPI Literatures and Cultural Studies



**Tomo Hattori** received his Ph.D. in English Literature, with a focus upon Asian American Literature, from McMaster University. He helped to establish the Ethnic Studies Program major at the University of Utah, and he designed the Asian American survey course and program goals at Vassar. He has been teaching a full range of courses--from freshman to graduate students--since 1995, in both private and public institutions. Professor Hattori chaired the MLA committee that led to the successful petition to make Asian American Studies an official Division at the Modern Language Association, the major conference for those in Literary Studies. He published, with Professor Stuart Ching at LMU, the article "Reexamining the Between-Worlds Trope in Cross Cultural Composition Studies" in *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric* (2008), which received an Honorable Mention for the prestigious Modern Language Association's Mina P. Shaughnessey Prize. He has published works on theoretical understandings of model minority discourse and Asian American writing (écriture) in well known journals in his field, and his work has been cited by well-known literary

scholars, such as Rey Chow and Viet Nguyen.

## AAPI History, Politics, and Public Policy



**Clem Lai** received his Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. His areas of expertise include the following: historical studies of Asian American communities; urban policy and politics; race and space; and comparative studies of race and racialization, social movements, and political economy, including globalization. He has two articles published or forthcoming in top-tiered journals and one working paper for the Institute of Social Change. He is currently working on completing a book manuscript, “*Between Blight and a New World: Urban Renewal and the Multiracial Neighborhood, 1940-1980*,” in which the University of Minnesota Press has expressed serious interest. According to scholars in his field, his work has the “potential to change the overarching research agenda within planning in regard to the studies of race.” He has been an assistant professor at Cornell University in the Asian American Studies Program and in the Department of City and Regional Planning for the last four years. A former community organizer, Professor Lai looks forward to renewing his ties with California community groups.

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## Alumni News Corner

Sharlene Bagon (2005) is working as an immigration attorney at Bagon Law Firm.

Huy Chheng (2003) is a filmmaker and producer and has completed three feature films. She also completed an MA degree in Asian American Studies at UCLA.

Singer Charmaine Clamor (1998--early association with AAS) has been chosen by President Benigno Aquino's incoming Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Jose Cuirias, to entertain State Department and Diplomatic Corp guests in Washington, DC for the embassy's official Filipino National Day celebration, June 12-13, 2011.

Karin Anna Cheung's (1998--early association with AAS) latest movie, *People I've Slept With*, is now available on DVD.

Brian DeGuzman (2011) has been admitted into San Francisco State's Asian American Studies MA Program.

Patricia Gopez (2008) is a writer for Buzznet.

Patricia Ho (2009) is currently working in Human Resources at Lions Gate Film.

Nicole Manalang (2009) is working as a teacher at San Gabriel High School.

Wanda Pathomrit (2010) is working as a community organizer at the Thai Community Development Center.

Diana Sakata (2006) graduated from UCSD with an MA degree in Education.

Precious Singson (2004) is completing her doctoral degree in History at UCLA.

Derek Tang (2007) completed his MA in the CSUN Educational Leadership and Policy Program.

Julie Tran (2010) is attending the Asian and Asian American MA Program at California State Long Beach.

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