



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

The Department of Asian American Studies

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Dear Friends of CSUN Asian American Studies,

The Academic Year 2014-15 was a full and successful year for AAS students, faculty and staff. Although we became short-handed with the departure of our competent administrative assistant midway through the Fall semester, with collaborative teamwork and an emergency hire, we were able to pull off an event-filled year short of staff support. We also missed the efficiency of Professor Tracy Buenavista who was on sabbatical during the spring semester and look forward to her return in Fall of 2015.

We began the year with retreats for faculty and students to plan out events. We, thus, proceeded with our annual Welcome Back event. We also were graced by alumni Diana Sakata and Dan Lê's visit to share their experience with and give advice to students about working abroad. We tried out a new format this year with three distinguished speakers instead of our usual one to start off APA Heritage Month celebration. The theme, "Asian Americans in the Media," featured filmmaker and UCLA Professor Renee Tajima-Pena, Sri Lankan American comedian and actor D'Lo, and CSUN alumna and Jazz singer Charmaine Clamor. We had a separate student awards event with the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP).

Thanks to the contributions from our generous donors, we were able to give four major money awards to eight of our students. We also supported ten students to travel to Evanston, Illinois to present their paper at the annual conference of the Association for Asian American Studies. This is the second year we have brought students to the AAAS conference. New this year was our collaboration with CSU Fullerton's Asian American Studies Program on two integrated roundtables. The College of Humanities, Associated Students, and our own department funded this student trip. Our students also had a chance to meet with SFSU faculty, students, and alumni to explore their interest in pursuing a Master's degree in AAS. As was last time, this was an inspiring and transformative experience for our students. With continued support from our donors, we plan to continue providing our students with opportunities to intern with local organizations and travel to conferences to present their research.

Again, thank you everyone for your support in making CSUN AAS possible. We look forward to another productive year!

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## **AAS Welcome Back Event** by Andrew Carrasco, Elijah Kang, Min Park

The CSUN Asian American Studies Department held their annual Welcome Back event at the Glenn Omatsu House on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2014. The event was for students interested in learning more about Asian American Studies and how to get involved in the community.

The event started off with Professor Gina Masequesmay's welcome back speech in which she notified students about upcoming classes, community service events, and work opportunities in the Asian American community.

Professor Clement Lai spoke next. He talked about his class, AAS 495SM Selected Topics in Asian American Studies, and how Asian American Studies can contribute to the Asian American community.

Professor Tomo Hattori then discussed his new course, AAS 430 Asian American Popular Culture. He said "this course will compare zombies to Asians." He further explained that zombies are about having civilization destroyed. He suggested that zombies might be Asians in relation to the United States and the West.

After Professor Hattori, Professor Eunai Shrake told the students her goal is not



*Photo credit: Kelly Fong*

only to inspire and teach students, but to help pursue their dreams of becoming a teacher. She went on to say, "If you need help becoming a teacher, come see me."

Two representatives from the Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles (AJLA), Nathanel Lowe and Shelly Chen, were next to speak. They were seeking volunteers within the neighborhood to increase representation of AA & NHPI voters. Lowe and Chen passed around a sign-up sheet for any attendees interested in volunteering for Election Day.

Readers may contact Nathanel Lowe at [nlowe@advancingjustice-la.org](mailto:nlowe@advancingjustice-la.org) for more information.

## **The Destruction of Diversity: CSUN's Impaction and the People at Risk** by Lorenzo Mutia

When I enrolled at Cal State Northridge, one of my concerns was whether or not I could adjust to the new environment.

While I struggled and stumbled in some areas, there was one aspect of CSUN that appealed to me and eased my transition: the diverse student body.

The student population also represented the surroundings that I had grown up in, a mostly Latino neighborhood among Filipino Americans. CSUN is a community-serving institution. For the most part, the majority of the student body is from the Greater L.A. area.

On the flip side, I am also able to interact with groups of people that I never get to see in my own community such as whites and African-Americans.

Unfortunately, all of this could change with the implementation of CSUN's impaction plan in Fall 2016.

Impaction is a practice by the CSUs to decrease the number of new students to their campuses. A campus can decrease students' access by increasing the requirements (e.g., GPA) for students from certain geographic areas and in impacted (high demand) majors.

The impaction plan is another nail in the coffin for public education in California as well as Los Angeles. CSUN and other colleges in the CSU system are typically regarded as "People's Universities." They are not and should not be "ivory towers" that only a select few are able to scale or enter.

The precipitous decline of educational spending in California has created an artificial problem for which impaction is its artificial solution.

To date, seventeen CSU campuses have implemented impaction policies. For some of them, impaction is campus-wide for freshmen and transfers. Departments

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on campus have also been seemingly empowered to do whatever they see fit to meet "proper" enrollment levels. The overall result of impaction has thus been the denial of a person's right to be educated.

When it comes to campus diversity, the people most affected are students of color and/or of low income. This is the result of an undoubtedly racist system.

While the people in control may not be overtly racially prejudiced (an important distinction), their inability to understand the struggles of low income students and student of color is supported by a racist system that is structured to ignore these demographics.

### **Mixed Messages**

CSUN's administration has said that its impaction plan is a worst-case scenario decision and that maintaining the diversity of the campus is one of their top priorities. In comparison to how they act, however, all of their talk is cheap and on some points hypocritical.

At an apparent community forum held at on-campus at the Little Theatre, CSU and CSUN administrators seemingly had every answer to every question posed. Some questions were deftly deflected.

To many people at the meeting, including myself, this was not the opportunity to discuss alternatives to impaction that we had hoped.

What I found most incredulous was the emotional appeals President Dianne Harrison made at the end of the meeting.

Harrison said we can support the student population we have now and even more people if need be. She also says the problem largely comes down to money and she blames Governor Brown for not giving it to us.

"The Legislature approved additional funding and the governor vetoed it!" Harrison said at the public meeting.

She ended by asking those in the audience to please help the school.

I saw it as more emotional appeal amidst passing the buck.

Her other administrators aren't immune from doing so themselves.

She concluded by pleading the audience to help CSUN, particularly by lobbying the governor and further deflecting blame.

I cite the attitude of one of these CSUN's administrators, whose name I will not disclose out of concern for his/her privacy. What he/she told several students, a professor, and me came across as one of the more genuine voices of concern yet just as confusing as what we've been told.

The administrator says much of what Harrison said at the community forum but goes one step ahead in saying that

we actually have the money. Yes, the governor refuses to give it to us, but it's definitely there!

And what's his take on impaction?

Politics. Plain and simple politics.

Apparently, our school's high acceptance rate flies in the face of other campuses that have to cut back. It doesn't look good politically for campuses to get along with the money they have while CSUN goes "beyond" its means.

But he goes down Harrison's route in blaming someone else, namely CSU Chancellor Timothy White.

Chancellor White has been telling CSUN to lower its enrollment rates but according to the administrator, our campus keeps going over target significantly.

With these diverging opinions, I find it difficult to know if the administration is really on the side of the people caught in the middle of this: the students and faculty.

The obfuscation and political maneuvering, with innocent actors caught in the crossfire, is nothing short of shameful.

All of this, I fear, will lead to impaction being implemented. But more than that, I fear impaction becoming the new normal.

Seventeen CSUs are impacted and, to my knowledge, there are no plans that envision the end of impaction.

It is also up to us to minimize the effects of impaction as much as possible and make it clear that we will not stand idly by and accept fellow human beings denied their right to knowledge and personal empowerment.

Lastly, should administrators put some of their skin into this messed up game. I want to see what they can do to make sure the people they ultimately are hired and paid to serve are affected by impaction as little as possible. I refuse to accept the marginalization of lower income students and students of color. Our rights to an education are being put at risk by impaction.

### **The Conversation Needs to Be Changed**

In a perfect world, I wouldn't be writing this article and impaction would never be a possibility. However, for all the times I've railed against impaction in this article, I have to be practical.

So impaction will be implemented. Unlike the administrators across the CSU, it does come down to the students, faculty, and the greater community to fight tooth and nail to make sure impaction is TEMPORARY.

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## **AAS Distinguished Speaker Event** *by Raymond Lee Bacsal, Paul Chua, Mario Iglesias*

Traditionally, Asian American immigrant parents want their children to pursue careers that will establish financial stability in their lives such as becoming a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer.

They do not want their children to become artists. This was not the case for aspiring Asian American filmmaker Renee Tajima-Peña, known for her Academy Award nominated 1987 documentary, "Who Killed Vincent Chin?" The documentary has been used to educate college students about the events surrounding the racially charged murder of Vincent Chin.

Tajima-Peña was one of three featured Asian American artists for the CSUN Asian American Studies Department's Annual Distinguished Speaker Series, "Asian Americans in the Media," on April 30, 2015. The three-and-a-half hour long event focused on the dedication and devotion that these Asian American artists put into their work in media and the experiences they had exhibiting their talents to the world.

Sri Lankan transgender male actor and comedian D'Lo and CSUN alum "Jazzipino" singer Charmaine Clamor joined Tajima-Peña as speakers at the event.

The event began with a stand-up routine by D'Lo. D'Lo finds inspiration in his work in a variety of platforms and continues to develop as an artist. His topics in his poetry range from the social justice issues in the world to growing up in an immigrant household.

Though now a grown up, D'Lo reports that his family has not always been okay with his life as a transgendered person. Growing up, his family did not believe that he was transgender at first but later learned to accept his lifestyle.

He has found that his work has helped him immensely in his life. "I don't know if I would be alive if I didn't have this work, if I didn't have one place in this world where I feel safe." His work has given him a safe place to be himself and to share with the world.

D'Lo is working on a workshop that he started a few years ago entitled "Coming out

*Photo credit: Kelly Fong*



Coming Home" which is a workshop for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) kids to guide them in writing their coming out story.

Charmaine Clamor then sang a series of amazing songs. One song she sang was an acoustic version of John Lennon's "Imagine."

Charmaine was born in Subic-Zambales, Philippines and her parents worked in the U.S. army bases there. Her parents wanted her to pursue a career health care. She obtained a Bachelors degree in Health with a minor in Asian American Studies from California State University Northridge. She then became a physical therapist at Northridge Hospital but eventually decided to follow her dream in music.

"Trust yourself embrace what is unique about you and use that to drive yourself" is a piece of advice she delivered at her talk that has clearly worked for herself.

While D-Lo and Ms. Clamor had similar obstacles in pursuing their careers, Tajima-Peña admitted that her parents were supportive of her choice to pursue filmmaking, stating that she was lucky to have been born at the right time in the right generation.

Tajima-Peña gave a few words of encouragement to those who wanted to pursue filmmaking.

"Don't play by the book," Tajima- Peña said, because the rules of institutions limit what individual can do. She closed by advising if someone is talented in something, it's just too good to waste by not using it for promoting change.

The event ended after an hour-long Q&A session with questions from Professor Aquino and students in the audience.

## Journey to Success

by Kimberly Khieu

Asian American and Pacific Islander students and their families learned firsthand about the Asian American Studies (AAS) major from professors and students during a workshop at the “Journey to Success” event at CSUN on March 7, 2015.

The workshop, entitled “Why Asian American Studies Matter: Our Past, Present and Future,” was hosted by AAS Department Chair Gina Masequesmay and Professors Tomo Hattori, Clement Lai and Maria Turnmeyer. The workshop was split into three sessions, with various AAS students and alumni speaking and offering advice to students.

As students entered, they were presented with different colored beads and pipe cleaners to create unique bracelets. Different colors of beads symbolized family, goals, obstacles, achievements and support. The bracelets promoted discussion among students and parents about why they chose their specific beads.

Students shared why they decided to major in AAS and how it connected them to their family and identity. They also discussed their experiences in internships and community engagements. Consistent themes were to develop critical thinking and to make a difference.

Many of the speakers were unaware of AAS when they arrived at CSUN and did not declare it as a major until they took an AAS course. Students Julie Mac and Karl Pascasio spoke of how AAS 201: Race Racism and Critical Thinking motivated them to become AAS majors.

Alumna Tran Le spoke of her own story about learning about her background through AAS as she didn't understand her ethnic identity as the daughter of immigrants. Le also talked about her journey from an organic chemistry class to AAS, her current work at the non-profit Coro organization, and how she learned how to become a better leader through AAS.

Students and professors spoke of the various benefits of the AAS major such as the smaller size of the department that allows professors to work closer with individual students. Along with tutoring and internship experience opportunities, professors emphasized their desire to connect with students.

The workshop revealed to students and parents the combined enthusiasm of faculty and students for the department and for each other.

## AAS & EOP Awards

by Justin Fang



Photo credit: Charlie Kaijo

Frank Ocean and “If I Ain’t Got You” by Alicia Keys.

Shiva Parsa, EOP transition program director, spoke about EOP and thanked the AAS department for helping with EOP. Parsa then invited professor Glenn Omatsu to come up and help present the first winners of the student awards.

Eight EOP freshmen who have taken an AAS or ethnic studies course and have demonstrated promise in context or community involvement were recognized with the EOP Promising Freshmen award. Omatsu presented Jennifer Flores, Kim Huy, Desiree Luna, Andrea Martin, Carlos Monjaras, Stephany Roque, Daniel Saravia, and Daniel Suarez with the award.

The Asian American Studies (AAS) Department and the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) honored twenty-eight professors and students in an awards ceremony in the Whitsett Room of Sierra Hall on May 7, 2015.

Following opening remarks by Gina Masequesmay, department chair of AAS, and professor Allan Aquino, students Karl Kevin Pascasio and Cielito Thea Fernandez opened the night with a musical performance of “We All Try” by

*Awards continues next page...*

Ten students received the Promising Freshmen and Promising Sophomore awards in the AAS department for demonstrating promise in the context of academic and community involvement. Jennifer Joan Behimino, Sandy Diep, Guillermo Galeas, Julia Lee and Tinn Ou were presented with the Promising Freshman award. Dylan Hoang, David Lim, Alexander Nguyen Tran, Ayyaz Khan and Karl Kevin Pascasio received the sophomore award.

Professor Eunai Shrake presented the Promising Future Teacher award to students George Lee and Michael Prince. The award recognized students who would excel in a career in education and have demonstrated experience as an educator.

Lee talked about how he wanted to give back to his community of Koreatown by teaching there one day. Professor Shrake announced that Prince is a Japanese major and that he wants to teach English in Japan after he graduates.

The Donna Kawamoto Special Achievement award is presented to students who have demonstrated resilience and a strong ability to overcome hardships and life circumstances while pursuing higher education.

John Chan, Elijah Kang, Alina Nguyen and Loren Townsley were presented the award by Professors Tomo Hattori and Eunai Shrake.

Student Lorenzo Mutia was the winner of the Academic Achievement Award, dubbed by the evening's master of ceremonies, Professor Allan Aquino, as the "Model Minority Award." Mutia, who has a 3.95 GPA, said professors encouraged him to apply.

"I am thankful," Mutia said about receiving the award. "I honestly didn't know my GPA was that high."

Cielito Thea Fernandez and Carl Gio Viray were the recipients of the Enrique de la Cruz Social Justice Awards, presented to students who demonstrated a commitment to ending social oppression, who had an impact on Asian Pacific Islander American who were involved in social justice organizations or projects.

Julie Mac received the final award of the night with the Kenyon Chan Leadership award. The award is presented to an AAS student who demonstrates the goals and values of the department and exemplifies leadership on campus. The recipient is engaged in practices that bridge the university and Asian Pacific Islander American communities and who has advanced Ethnic Studies through research and activism.

Mac, a Chinese-Vietnamese American, addressed her parents in Cantonese. She said she told her parents that it was a hard road to reach where she is now. She also thanked her sister for providing her with transportation when she was involved with various projects.

Following the awards ceremony, students spoke highly of the event.

"It was great," Mutia said. "People's speeches, like the promising teacher, and [Fernandez] with her social justice award, my goodness, it was good."

Pascasio said the night was a good way to showcase the department's successful students.

"It's a great way for us to combine and get recognized as future scholars," Pascasio said about the awards ceremony. "It just shows the progress of Asian American Studies and the people who make it happen."

## **2015 AAS Student Awardees** *by Clement Lai*

After careful consideration of student applications, resumes, academic performance, statements of purpose, and faculty feedback, the AAS Department presents the following students with this year's departmental honors and scholarships:

### **EOP Promising Freshman Award**

Jennifer Flores, Desiree Luna, Carlos Monjaras, Daniel Saravia, Kim Huy, Andrea Martin, Stephany Roque, Daniel Suarez

### **AAS Promising Freshman Award**

Jennifer Joan Behimino, Sandy Diep, Guillermo Galeas, Julia Lee, Tinn Ou

### **Promising Future Teacher Award**

George Lee, Michael Prince

### **Academic Achievement Award**

Lorenzo Mutia

### **Donna Kawamoto Special Achievement Award**

John Chan, Elijah Kang, Alina Nguyen, Loren Townsley

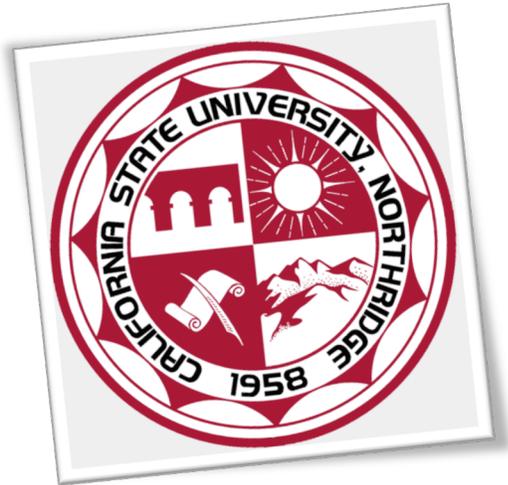
### **Enrique de la Cruz Social Justice Award**

Carl Gio Viray, Cielito Thea Fernandez

### **Kenyon Chan Outstanding Leadership Award**

Julie Mac

## Donor Acknowledgements



AAS would like to thank our generous donors, whose financial contributions have supported departmental scholarships, activities, and student work:

- **Sharlene Bagon**
- **Kenyon Chan**
- **Enrique de la Cruz**
- **Bob Suzuki**
- **Glenn Omatsu**
- **Helen Beltran Gonzales**
- **Glen Kitayoma**
- **Tony Osumi**
- **Bette Y. Tang**

## Alumni & Student News Corner

**Sharlene Bagon '05** will be opening a franchise food outlet in the Philippines in September 2015 while still managing her immigration law office in West Hills.

**Isa Fonua '13** is currently working as a Lead Mentor at Coastline Community College for the Asian American Pacific Islander Program for Advancing Completion and Transfer (APACT) helping students meet their academic and personal goals.

**Julie Mac '15** is starting her year with the JET Program! She will be teaching English in one junior high school and two elementary schools at the Ehime Prefecture in Japan!

**Gregory Poncho '14** is starting his second year in the MA program at San Francisco State University. He also teaches with Pin@oy Educational Partnership (PEP) at Burton HS in the Excelsior neighborhood of San Francisco.

**Emi Vallega '13** is the Communications and Resource Development Staff at the Pilipino Workers Center, a non-profit organization located in Historic Pilipinotown that is dedicated to improving the lives of low-wage immigrant workers and their families, with a special focus on serving Filipino caregivers. She is also the Executive Secretary for the Los Angeles Chapter of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA). In addition to being APALA-LA's Executive Secretary, she is also the Los Angeles representative for APALA's National Young Leader's Council.

**Gerita White '14** was working as a Nursing Staffing Clerk and was recently promoted to a Bed Board Coordinator at Kaiser Permanente. She still volunteers at the Center of Pacific American Family as a crisis hotline counselor and also helps in other data entry and organizational duties. She will be studying for the MCAT in 2016!