

**Statement from the AAS Interim Chair**

**Dear Students, Alumni, Family, Friends and Community Supporters of CSUN's AAS Department,**

We had a successful, event-filled academic year 2016-17, thanks to the dedication of Asian American Studies faculty, staff, student assistants and students. As a department, we prioritized "Student Engagement" and "Community-Building" this year. And despite being short of faculty both semesters, our collaborative efforts paid off. We were able to provide social and educational opportunities for students, alumni, faculty and staff to connect and reconnect.

We have started a New Lecture Section on our website (<http://www.csun.edu/aas>) where we highlight and feature our faculty and their work. Currently, there is a short clip of Dr. Phil Hutchison giving a lecture on the People v. Hall Case. Stay tuned for more faculty lectures and interviews to come!

We kicked off the Fall 2016 semester with our Welcome Back event in September, which consisted of a panel of faculty and students discussing the 2016 elections. In order to create space and nurture a sense of community for our students, the department established a Student Engagement Committee and held monthly hang-outs where students, alumni, and faculty could spend time and mingle. The department pitched in for pizza, Banh Mi, and snacks and provided various venues for these hang-outs to take place. Of course, we utilized the newly furnished Omatsu House for some of these events. The hang-outs included a discussion on the cultural appropriation of Halloween costumes, Donuts with the Department, Movie Night, and an Open Mic & Open Performance. Each hang-out was well-attended. We plan to continue creating space both literally and figuratively where students, faculty, and alumni can continue hanging out.

For our annual Distinguished Lecture and Student Awards this year, we were excited to have **Ms. Lisa Hasegawa**, UCLA AAS Center's Activist-in-Residence and Director of Federal Relations. Thanks to the generous gift from **Ms. Prosy de la Cruz**, we added a new award, The Abarquez and Alcantara Outstanding Essay Award to our annual Student Awards Celebration. We are grateful to the generosity and continued contributions of all of our donors who help to make the annual Student Awards possible. The department sends our congratulations this year's awardees.

Our faculty members actively worked on organizing several campus-wide events. Dr. Tracy Buenavista co-organized "Born Out of Struggle," a lecture by Dr. David Stovall, a nationally renowned education and ethnic studies scholar and activist. Dr. Edith Chen led a Walking Tour with her AAS 497 class, inviting the greater CSUN community to uncover the hidden contributions of Asian Americans to the San Fernando Valley. Dr. Tomo Hattori co-organized and participated in an all-day visit to the Manzanar Japanese American Internment Camp with former incarcerated, their families, and AAS students and alumni. Dr. Williams-Leon celebrated Asian Pacific Heritage Month by organizing and hosting award-winning actor-writer-producer Maria Costa's one-woman show, "Macho Men and the Women Who Love Them."

Finally, we celebrated the AAS graduates at the 2017 Commencement. The AAS Department is your "forever home." We are proud of your accomplishments and look forward to your frequent return home as you continue to bridge the AAS Department with the various communities from which you come in your professional work and social activism. Spread your wings and soar!

It was a privilege and an honor to serve as acting chair while **Dr. Gina Masequesmay** was on sabbatical. I enjoyed working with and learning from all of our faculty in the department and fellow department chairs across the university. We could not have had such an amazing and productive year without the assistance, efficiency, and hard work of our staff, **Janaki Bowerman** and **Cecilia Lu**, our student office workers and our student assistants, **Arturo Aseo** and **Von Bondoc**. Thank you all for your teamwork and commitment to a greater cause.

Please enjoy the newsletter, which is a year-in-review of 2016-2017 from the perspectives of students and faculty,  
Eunai Shrake, Interim AAS Chair (2016-2017)

## Student Involvement and Advocacy by Bhernard Tila

During the 2016-2017 academic year, Bhernard Tila was elected as the student representative for the Student Government division of Associated Students (A.S.). AS is the primary advocate for students at California State University, Northridge that provides excellent, meaningful programs, and services designed to enhance and create a spirited learning-focused campus environment. Tila served as the Senator for the College of Humanities where he was able to advocate for the needs and defend the interests of students at the local, State, and Federal Level. As a Senator, he serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the AS Corporation and advocates for students in variety of other capacities within the campus community. He was able to represent and advocate in variety of committees within the campus communities such as, University Affairs Committee, Internal Affairs committee, Educational Policies Committee (EPC) and the MataCare Grant Selection Committee.

Being a part of AS and serving as a Senator comes with many opportunities and responsibilities that impact student life at CSUN. As an example, one of the responsibilities as a senator is to review and critically analyze student organizations funding



Bhernard Tila,  
Kenyon Chan Leadership Award Recipient

requests or constitutional approval for new clubs and organizations. He specifically approved various supplemental funding for organizations such as, Project D.A.T.E SAAFE Week, MEChA de CSUN Raza Youth Conference, FASA Pilipino Cultural Night and many more. As a member of the Senate he had the opportunity to learn and develop skills in parliamentary procedures, group processing, fiscal issues, as well as gaining valuable life-learning skills in leadership, communication, decision making and critical analysis. One of his accomplished achievements serving as a senator is being able to pass multiple Resolutions and Recommendations in the Senate floor. For instance, in University Affairs Committee he was able to pass the “Associated Students in Support of the Establishment of a Study Abroad Program for Undocumented Students”, as well as passing in both Internal Affairs Committee and Senate floor the “Associated Students Scholarship in Honor of José Luis Vargas” that will provide scholarship opportunities to students who are coming from low-income and educationally disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, being apart of AS allowed him to be appointed as a member of the MataCare Grant Selection Committee. Where the MataCare Grant has been established to help students with unexpected urgent financial needs. This Grant was established through contributions from alumni, faculty, staff and students who wants to assist in removing unanticipated financial barriers that impacts students well-being and educational retention at CSUN. While there are some financial need that are not considered for eligibility such as tuition fee or books, others such as housing, utilities, food, medical bills and transportation are considered for the Grant. As a member of the committee he was responsible for screening applications and determining recipients of the MataCare Grant. He believes that being apart of this committee has been the most rewarding and fulfilling opportunity AS has given him because not only he was able to provide financial funding for many students in need for financial assistance but it was in this committee where it reminded him the reason to why he got involved with AS in the first place. He joined AS with the intention and motivation to advocate, empower, and defend other students who are institutionally marginalized and disenfranchised by campus administration and government officials.

We Need to Talk:

My Experience Attending the “Born Out of Struggle” Lecture by Dr. David Stovall

by Tammy Rassamekiarttisak

On Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I attended Dr. David Omotoso Stovall’s “Born Out of Struggle: Critical Race Theory, School Creation & the Politics of Interruption” lecture. The information presented in the lecture Stovall gave isn’t often discussed at all, although it’s one that everyone should be able to talk about. I was fortunate enough to be taking Professor Tracy Buenavista’s Asian American Studies 201 class to find out about this lecture. This opportunity was one that could not be missed because the topic being discussed is one that society often ignores and tries to hide.

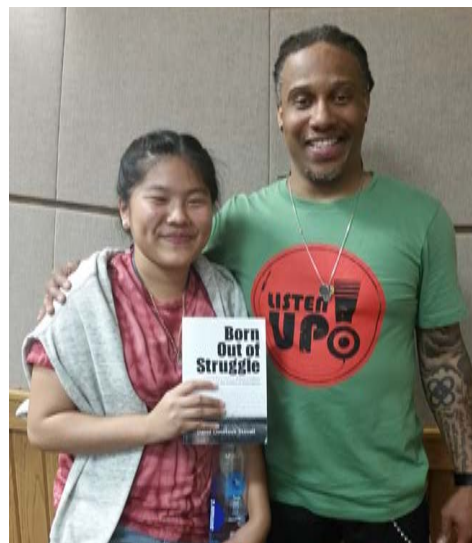
Dr. Stovall starts off his lecture in a very interesting way. We would usually view schools as a “safe space” to learn and at first Dr. Stovall questions the audience whether we agreed or not. Most of us did, but then he asked, “What if we thought of schools as someplace...violent instead? Then doesn’t that change the whole narrative?” With this thought provoking question, the audience fell silent. It was a notion not many people would challenge since schools should be a safe place where all students can get an education, right? Dr. Stovall furthers this mindset by giving a brief history about the schools in Chicago and how people of color, more specifically Latinos and Blacks, are targeted by people in higher positions through his novel. He talks about how the students had to fight, with protests and rallies, in order to keep their school open. People in a place of privilege would not be able to see the cause or the struggle that this community had to endure because society often spends lots of time with abstract thinking, but we need to spend more time with the people who experience those things.

We need to think about why things happen in the first place, what factors contribute to the vicious cycle of oppression, and how we can start to dissolve the problem. One message Dr. Stovall gave that I took to heart was, “When you label a group as ‘disposables,’ you do certain things to them. You deny them certain things.” Honestly, these words made my heart ache because it’s the horrible truth. When society decides to brush off a group of people, it dehumanizes them and this leads to people being treated inhumanely. These issues are never really addressed anywhere, especially not in education, and sometimes never even thought about. There are strengths in numbers and it is extremely important to be able to talk about such topics and issues. If there is never a single discussion about this, then we can’t even begin to scratch the surface of the problem. Yet, starting such a conversation is always difficult when the topic is hard to bring up and talk about without a fight ensuing. However difficult it may be, we must start a conversation and one possible solution is to start with family members since they will still be there to support you, even if an argument were to start. The first step is always the hardest, but for the better, that step must be taken.

This lecture by Dr. Stovall taught me that we need to think critically and that the conversation starts with us. We go through lots of information daily, but we need to be able to think for ourselves without taking everything word by word from others. By critically thinking for ourselves, we are able to see things from a different perspective and by communicating with others, we are able to share those perspectives that others might not see. In this sense, we can spread awareness about what happens around us and how one can help support one another. Personally, I think being informed is really important and in order to do that, we need to start talking about the struggles that people of color are facing. Once we start to realize the people we are talking to are human, maybe even then, the world will start to treat these individuals as humans and we will begin to cut the problem at the roots. We will then be able to stop with the abstract thinking and start spending time with those who actually go through such problems.

Therefore, I especially think that lectures like the one that Dr. Stovall gave is really important for students to attend because it will help to open endless possibilities in how one thinks. These types of lectures are often overlooked by students, yet they are the ones that need to be paid attention to because they give insights to things that aren’t often discussing in society, nor in education. I truly believe that there is a lot to gain by attending one of these lectures and it will be an experience that students wouldn’t want to miss. I’m grateful to have the opportunity to attend this lecture and meet Dr. David Omotoso Stovall since this valuable experience has given me the chance to expand my perspectives.

Tammy Rassamekiarttisak  
Promising Freshman Award Recipient,  
with Dr. David Stovall





Project DATE,  
Asian American Studies,  
and Building Community  
by Eryn Aquino

“The only way to do great work is to love what you do.” –Steve Jobs.

Throughout my childhood and early teen years I was constantly searching for my purpose in life. Although I was not doing it consciously, I was also searching for somewhere to belong. It seemed as though everyone around me knew what they loved doing while I was lost in a daze. I found myself trying out all these different hobbies to figure out what I was passionate about. I tried ice-skating, hula dancing, volleyball, softball, tennis, photography, and competitive dancing; nothing seemed to fit. No matter how successful I was and no matter what position I held in those teams, I always felt like the outsider. I also felt like what I was doing was pointless. It wasn't until Spring 2015 when I accidentally stumbled upon Asian American Studies (AAS) 201, that I actually found a sense of belonging. I always say that it was one of the best mistakes that I have ever made. It was in Professor Lai's AAS 201 class that I felt my mind began to open up to the reality of the world, to the possibilities of change, and to the sense that we are the future. After that class I started enrolling in more AAS classes and eventually became an Asian American Studies Double Major, along with my major in Gender & Women's Studies (GWS).

After my first few semesters as an AAS & GWS double major, I was curious about what I could do within our own CSUN community to make a difference. At that time, I was studying the history of the AA Movement, the struggles and triumphs of those times, and all the heart and soul that was going into it. I was motivated to find an outlet of my own to make a difference. That was when I found Project DATE (Discovering Alternatives to Today's Encounters). Project DATE is a peer education program that is sponsored by the University Counseling Services and Strength United. Strength United is a non-profit organization located in the San Fernando Valley that caters to the population of sexual abuse survivors and victims. I was drawn to this organization because I myself am a survivor and I wanted to help others become more informed. Little did I know, this program was going to do so much more for me than I had ever realized. Through this program, I not only made amazing lifelong

friends, but I found out that individuals could make a difference, no matter how slight. I started off as a peer educator, worked my way up to being part of the executive board as the public relations chair, and I am now currently the student coordinator for the entire program. Through this program we are able to carry out presentations for thousands of students each semester, organize two weeklong events each year, and create a community that has a better understanding of sexual assault and rape occurrences. One of our biggest events is SAAFE Week (Sexual Assault Awareness for Everyone Week), which is held every April during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This last month we reached about 2,000 students with our 13 events throughout the week. Our theme for this year was “Activism & Awareness” and all of our workshops focused on communities that were marginalized in relation to sexual assault. It took months of planning, but the end result was better than I could have ever imagined. It fills my heart with so much joy whenever I see the change and the passion to learn, not only in my peer educators, but also the students that they encounter. The more people that are educated about this subject, the better we can fight against it. Sexual assault is such a huge issue, but people are too scared to talk about it. Now more than ever, we need to stand up and fight for what is right, especially in our current political state.

I have truly found where my heart and soul belongs by being a part of both Project DATE and the Asian American Studies community at CSUN. It amazes me how much I can implement what I have learned within this department into what I do for work and I can sincerely say that these experiences have changed my life for the better. I believe that it is important for Asian Americans to get involved with organizations like this because most of the time our voices are not heard even within our own communities. The more of us that venture out and try to make an impact, the louder our voices will echo.

Eryn Aquino,  
Community Builder  
Award Recipient



The AAS 497 Walk It Out Tour  
by Karl Pascacio, Von Bondoc,  
with Edith Wen-Chu Chen

On Tuesday, April 11, 2017, students from the Asian American Studies 497 Senior Seminar Class organized and led a walking tour which highlighted the contributions of Asian Americans to California State University, Northridge (CSUN) and its surrounding neighborhoods. The AAS 497 "Walk it Out," tour also had another objective-to promote the physical activity among our Asian American peers. Professor Edith Chen, who taught the class, pointed out that young Asian American adults have some of the lowest physical activity levels among all racial/ethnic groups in California.

The one-mile walking tour began at Bayramian Hall where class members, Kenny Pelaez and Kenny Joo, recounted the campus' Japanese American roots to the Muranaka family who previously owned parts of the land that CSUN stands on before they were forced to sell after World War II for cheap to the city due to eminent domain. Additionally, participants learned about the rich history of student activism in the 1960s that led to the establishment of various Ethnic Studies Departments on campus.

The tour then proceeded to Jerome Richfield – the location of the Asian American Studies Department – where Professor Chen, briefly spoke about the founding of the Asian American Studies Department. Having just recently celebrated their 25th anniversary, the CSUN AAS department is the first AAS department to be founded in Southern California, the second in California after San Francisco State University.

Several tour group leaders – Karl Pascacio, Von Bondoc, Tandy Lau, David Lim, Justine Carandang, Mark Llavore shared their own personal experiences and insights as majors or minors. Several recall discovering Asian American Studies while taking AAS 100 (Intro to Asian American Studies), AAS 201 (Race, Racism, and Critical Thinking) which led them to take more classes because of how the material helped them make sense of their own experiences. They also spoke about the sense of community found among other majors/minors and faculty. Other tour group leaders- Brittany Parris and Jann Guevara-helped guide participants to the different stops along the tour. Student Assistant Arturo Aseo aided us in making wonderful flyers and taking photos of the event.



AAS 497 students Jessica Ang and Alice Tran explain about the significance of Bun Me! and other Asian American-run businesses that have grown in Northridge area since the 1980s.

The next destination was the Reseda Blvd Bike Path, which is part of the LA Great Streets project. Toby Mech and Yoo Jin Lee talked about the importance and origin of the bike-protected path-one of 15 Los Angeles county corridors identified by Mayor Eric Garcetti's Great Streets projects to receive upgrades. The path provides safety for those who commute via bicycle while also enhancing walkability and supporting local businesses. Lee and Mech spoke about the important role that Seme Park - a CSUN MPA alumna – played in implementing the bike path during her time as Legislative Deputy for Councilman Mitchell Englander, who represents the Northridge area. Park was responsible in gathering input and consent from the small businesses along the Reseda Boulevard, which was incorporated into the design and implementation of the bike path. Park represents the increasing presence of Asian Americans in formal politics, and the role they play in helping to shape policy.

The tour groups then headed towards Bun Me!, an Asian American owned small-family business, located in a strip mall along Reseda Blvd and Plummer St. Alice Tran and Jessica Hazel Ang noted that Bun Me! is just one of a number of Asian-owned family businesses that have emerged in the San Fernando Valley in the last twenty years. While San Gabriel Valley are the better known Asian American enclaves, Northridge and its surrounding areas have a robust and growing Asian American population. Having grown up in San Gabriel Valley, Alice Tran says that the pork-deli bahn mi is her personal favorite sandwich, and one of her family's favorite picnic foods. For many CSUN Asian American students and having access to ethnic foods may encourage preservation of ethnic identity.

## The AAS 497 Walk It Out Tour cont'd

The tour then concluded at the Glenn Omatsu House where participants were greeted by CJ Berina, an Asian American Studies alumna and founder of Collective Lifestyle Store, who shared his experience engaging with the local community through fashion, music, and art. Participants of the walking tour enjoyed Vietnamese sandwiches and spring rolls catered by Bun Me! while Ritter Grauert and Jumel Sulabo provided a brief history of the Glenn Omatsu house and Professor Omatsu's contributions to the field of Asian American studies. The Glenn Omatsu House also serves a place for AAS Tutors to help students in AAS classes as well as a gathering place for Asian American student groups and students.

Graduating AAS Seniors, Sara Gibbons and Kegan Durrance helped set up the Omatsu house making sure there was enough food and drink for everyone. Nutritional flyers created by Gibbons provided information about the high sugar content on some very popular drinks among college students such as soda, fruit juice and boba. Gibbons and Durrance prepared Barley tea, a traditional and refreshing beverage in Korea, for students as an alternative drink to the sugary counterparts. Professor Chen provided some comments about the lower physical activity of young Asian American adults and the higher risk of diabetes in Asian American populations. In the AAS 497 class, almost every single student has a family who has diabetes. The Chair of the AAS department, Eunai Shrake helped providing was on hand to assist with serving sandwiches to the unexpected large crowd, as well as provide some welcoming remarks.

The success of the walking tour would not have been possible without the guidance of Scott Chan, Program Director of API Forward Movement, who provided invaluable insight and tools throughout the entire semester. He trained the class how to effectively work together as future community organizers.

This event was not only a means to build community, but a way for students to take concepts learned in the classroom and begin their exploration toward community organizing work. The walking tour paid homage to the hard work of previous generations in shaping the urban environment around CSUN that exists today. This tour was sponsored by the Asian American Studies Department, National Institute of Health BUILD PODER, and the College of Humanities Academic Programming Fund.



Karl Pascasio,  
Laura Uba Academic Achievement Award Recipient

*This walking tour was an eye opening experience that allowed me to witness how concepts that I have learned in my classes may culminate in community organizing. I was also surprised with the health outcomes for Asian Americans, and being able to address these health issues - through an enjoyable and engaging activity - is something I think will be beneficial to my future as a community organizer. Being able to research pressing issues in our community and devising creative ways to address it is a skill that I think will assist me in my future endeavors past CSUN. Lastly, the relationships and sense of community that were built through this event were all very inspiring, and has made me feel more committed to activism and advocacy work. -Karl Pascasio*

*I had a great experience with the actual execution of the Walking Tour. I was a little overwhelmed with how many participants showed up. Scott Chan, had said from his experience with organizing community events, realistically half the people who RSVP do not show up. This was not the case for our event, we had over 60 participants show up. I was excited to get constant emails and text messages about the event and how to RSVP for it. I felt all the groups-Outreach, Logistics, and Research-pulled through in the end. Our stops were great and informative. Participants seemed to genuinely enjoy learning about our stops, and logistics did a great job with the food! -Von Bondoc*





AAS & CAS hosts Maria Costa's "Macho Men and the Women Who Love Them."



Advisor & Associate Chair Dr. Teresa Williams-Leon with Acting Chair Dr. Eunai Shrake. (May 2, 2017 Photograph by Arturo Aseo Jr.)

## Maria Costa at CSUN by Teresa Williams-Leon

Asian American Studies and Central American Studies departments collaborated to bring multiracial Afro-Cuban/Hungarian artist, writer, producer, actor, and comedian, **Maria Costa**, to the CSUN campus on May 2nd. The two departments seized the opportunity to work together and host the hilariously mega-talented Costa to CSUN. The show opened with remarks by AAS Professor Teresa Williams-Leon & GWS Professor Sheena Maholtra who spoke on behalf of the College of Humanities, in which both expressed the urgent need more than ever to embrace the arts, humanities and social sciences in this difficult and challenging age of Trump.

Costa who has won many awards (including being an Imagen award nominee), has been referred to by critics as the "Latina Lucille Ball" and "the Female John Leguizamo." She has shared the screen with the likes of Annie Potts, Morris Chestnut, & Garth Brooks in shows such as *Strong Medicine*, *Soul Train*, *VH1 Music Documentary*, *Dangerous Minds*, etc. She is the first Latina to star in the Kodak Theater. Maria Costa has toured over 80 college campuses with her show, "Macho Men and The Women Who Love Them," but CSUN was her first west coast university presentation.

Costa's "Macho Men and the Women Who Love Them" (a fictional autobiographical work) is about the loves and struggles of a strong, professional African-descent Latina woman who is attracted to "traditional Latino Macho Men." She also shares a bit of what it's like to be an African-descent Latina who was raised by her Hungarian immigrant grandmother in Detroit, Michigan. In her show, she plays characters that cross racial, ethnic, gender, class, age and generational boundaries, taking the audience through an array of stereotypes. At times, Costa seems to embrace and even internalize these stereotypes while simultaneously contesting and defying them. Her edgy, provocative, explicit and seductive one-woman show examines the intersectionality of an African-descent multiracial woman and humorously navigates race, class, gender, language, culture, family, sexuality, colorism, and identity. As a classically trained actor, she incorporates music, dance, drama, performance and physical comedy, drawing audience participation throughout the show. At times, she interacts improvisationally with the audience, stage crew and her cast using her quick wit and comedic skills, bringing roaring laughter from the audience. Students, faculty, staff, and community were kept at the edge of their seats throughout the hour and a half performance, not knowing what to expect next.

Being that Asian Pacific Islanders and Latinos are the two fastest growing groups in the United States and that the Asian diaspora includes Latin America (and the Caribbean) and Latino pan-ethnic experiences, one "blind area" of Costa's performance was that she does not address the Asian-Latino connections or the Asian-Latino experiences in the U.S. or abroad.

The event was a huge success with about 375 people in attendance from CSUN and from the larger southern California community. The audience was a diverse crowd from 18 - 80 of various racial/ethnic backgrounds. Before the show started, there was a reception with Cuban pastries from Porto's Bakery.

In addition to the hard work of the staff of AAS (Janaki Bowerman, Cecilia Lu), staff of CAS (Donald Lily), student assistants (Arturo Aseo, Von Bondoc) and Professor Allan Aquino's student volunteers, the AAS Interim Chair, Dr. Eunai Shrake & CAS Interim Chair, Dr. Beatriz Cortez, the following programs and departments also provided their generous support: Educational Opportunity Programs, CARPI, MMAMC, WRRC, Queer Studies, English, Liberal Studies Department, Chicana/o Studies, CoH Academic Programming Fund.

## AAS 325B: The Querencia Effect by Allan Aquino

This spring's AAS 325B Creative Studies Workshop emphasized, per its syllabus, "four-plus-one" elements of literary and performance arts: oral tradition (incorporating storytelling and theatrical performance), classical poetry, spoken word poetry, and songwriting. For the fifth "plus-one" element, the classroom community was called to organize a public arts showcase featuring original work grounded in said disciplines. The final showcase, entitled *The Querencia Effect*, was featured in the Whitsett Room on May 12<sup>th</sup> for an audience of nearly fifty people.

During the weeks prior to *The Querencia Effect* the members of the AAS 325B community engaged a series of peer-moderated workshops in addition to guest activities presented by professional artist from our community at-large. The semester's earliest exercises were based upon personal storytelling. By way of self-introduction, community members naturally shared their names and personal factoids, then addressed the following questions: "What was something you once feared?", and "How did you overcome that fear?"

Through this initial activity community members established a great rapport, a safe space for free creative expression. Most people are naturally afraid of expressing themselves openly to an audience, whether through public speaking, performing, or singing. By understanding the reasons for this mindset (self-consciousness, fear of judgment), it was the task for community members to support one another and, thereby, uplift their individual selves. They key to an ensemble effort, as often espoused in theatre, is not to stand out individually, but for everyone to make one another stand out.



AAS 325B Students,  
Spring 2017

Community members, eighteen in total, grouped into three workshop moderation teams, incorporating activities providing hands-on experience with classical poetry, spoken word poetry, and songwriting. Each moderating team incorporated prior knowledge and personal expertise in said disciplines, sharing their creative processes. At the end of each workshop, participants wrote personal letters to one another as a means of evaluation – not to mention to express praise and thanks for a fun class session.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, Alison De La Cruz, Director of Performing Arts at the JACCC, led the first of three community workshops. With Kat Carrido-Bonds of the CSUN Theatre Department, Alison led community members through her process of writing and mapping out details of one's personal stories before adapting those stories into a theatrical performance.

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, Domingo Magwili – a professor and longtime director and actor in film and theatre – guided community members through the next levels of performance, incorporating improvisation, movement, and "self-declaration". His words at the conclusion of his session were taken to heart: "Your voice is your most precious instrument. To be able to say who you are is priceless."

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, Eddy M. Gana, Jr., one half of the WriteSteady spoken word duo and co-founder of the *Sunday Jump* arts series in Historic Filipinotown, moderated the third and final guest workshop. Eddy focused upon a combination of creative tactics pertaining to delivering spoken word poems as well as organizing one's personal literary *zine* or chapbook. He moderated the final workshop of our semester, leaving community members only two weeks to plan and launch new, original material for *The Querencia Effect*. Nonetheless, every detail of the show was completely and solely organized by our 325B community members: the performance lineup, the chapbooks, and the refreshments presented on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

*Querencia*, per the show's title, initially proposed by Jacqueline "Jackie" Syers, a Spanish mystical concept pertaining to a deeply personal sense of home, strength, and safety. The show was hosted by Nat Booncherm and Ritter Grauert. Featured performers included Abigail Aseo and Abigail Garcia, who performed poems and monologues. Mark Llavore shared a powerful improvised spoken word



## AAS 325B: The Querencia Effect cont'd

performance. Jackie Syers, accompanied by guitarist Marilyn Hightower, sang a song composed weeks prior. Voncarl Bondoc and Gio Viray, respectively known as emcees Vonaizen and Zuko, performed solo and collaborative raps. The show was capped by an open mic performance and a music video directed by Brian Chow entitled "325B", featuring original vocals and visual cameos by 325B community members. Behind the scenes, other students providing logistical, catering, and hosting duties, in addition to publishing and distributing an official *Querencia Effect* chapbook, which featured original writing and art work: Sharifah

Alattar, Michelle Bac, Kegan Durrance, Sara Gibbons, Jann Guevara, Alex Han, Julia Lee, Brittany Parris, and Jasmin Retumban.

The Creative Studies Workshop enables its community members to develop their sense of personal and collective empowerment and social justice. As Mark Llavore declares during the introduction of the "325B" music video: "Over the course of three-and-a-half months [we've seen ourselves] grow, cultivating seeds of friendship and watching them bear fruit. [We learned] how to face our fears, how to fight for ourselves and for each other... that growing old is a choice, and we should never lose that youthful spark that drives us to inspire, to create, to dream."

## The APAHM Open Mic AAS Hangout by Von Bondoc

May is Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, which acknowledges and celebrates the cultures, customs and traditions of AAPI communities. The department decided to throw an Open Mic Hangout at the Glenn Omatsu House for the students and faculty on May 9th in honor of AAPI Heritage Month. The AAS Open Mic hangout was inspired by Allan Aquino's AAS 325-B Performance class. AAS 325-B was a seminar class where students researched and taught each other about songwriting and poetry. Students were able to share our creative work with the class. The sharing process formed bond with among our classmates. The Open Mic began at 6pm. For one hour, students were able to eat Urbane Cafe food provided by the department, mingle with each other along with faculty members Professor Eunai Shrake and Professor Edith Chen. At 7pm the show began with Professor Shrake giving a brief history and the importance of AAPI Heritage Month.

The Open Mic showcased creativity of some Asian Americans students, which is often overlooked due to the perception of Model Minority Myth. The Model Minority Myth is a stereotype that Asian Americans are more better off than the rest of the minorities- economically, academically and socially. Some Asian Americans may be dismissed as creative individuals because many are perceived to possess mainly left brain tendencies (good at math, reasoning, analytics) with little to no room for express yourself creatively through various forms of art. The intention of this hang out was to give a platform for students to share their talents with the audience. We listened refreshing spoken word poetry from Karl Pascassio, a heartfelt song sung in Hmong by Thunder Vang, a beautiful cover of Maroon 5's "This Love" from Jackie Syers (Jaemz) and some thought provoking raps by Geo Viray. Student Assistant Arturo Aseo along with his friend Martin Matreo played some EDM (Electronic Dance Music) sets. AAS student assistant/VSA member Von Bondoc (Von Aizen) got the crowd hyped with his parody song, "Dat Wand." Student Daniel in an AAS class also performed a rap over a traditional hip hop beat. Cedric Eusantos displayed some amazing talent with yo-yo tricks. PCN actor Jaysen Garces sang a lovely song in Spanish. Up and coming Korean-American hip hop artist Metaphaurus Raps rapped an original song, "Kimchi". We were also fortunate to have nationally ranked Filipino-American Beatboxer EVMB drop by and amaze the crowd with his phenomenal beatboxing. Our AAS hangout was also an opportunity for students to interact with one another outside of classes.

With finals around the corner, we provided a space for students to take a break, catch up eat and watch talented individuals perform. The event was a huge success, we had a bigger turnout than expected. Fifteen people RSVP'd for the event on the Facebook Event page and twice as many people showed up. At one point of the evening, we were running out space for the audience at the Glenn Omatsu House. The AAS Open Mic hangout was a great way to end the semester before tackling finals.

Von Bondoc,  
Community Builder  
Award Recipient



## Distinguished Speaker and Student Awards by Abigail Garcia

It was a windy Thursday night when the Asian American Studies department held its annual student awards ceremony. The Grand Salon provided immediate shelter from the blistering winds outside as my family and I were greeted with familiar welcoming faces. As my family and I settled in with food in hand, an overwhelming sense of anxiety hit me like a train. I had to share a small speech. I found myself very fidgety and my eyes were always glued to the clock on my phone. I couldn't understand why I was so nervous and anxious since I knew about 70% of the people in the room.

After Dr. Shrake welcomed the room to the awards ceremony, Dr. Watkins and Professor Say showed their appreciation and gratitude for the department with some kind words to our professors and students. But something they reminded me was to always come back to visit your roots.

The Asian American Studies department has provided me support and resources I never could have achieved



Professor Phil Hutchison and Abigail Garcia, Special Achievement Award Recipient

on my own. From the faculty to the student assistants to even my own colleagues, I've never felt more welcomed or in a space of people who cared about my own well being as a friend and student. I never had to worry about not knowing anyone or feeling alone in my classes because I always had a familiar face somewhere. My professors and colleagues became my family. My second family away from home.

As Lisa Hasegawa took the stage, I was reminded of why I was here. Lisa showed us that our lives here has an impact and a purpose. We all come to this department specifically to reach some sort of goal whether it be professional, academic, or personal. We are here for something much larger than ourselves. She also taught us to not be in a rush to get to where we want to be. She recommended that we don't rush into grad school right after undergrad, in order for us to get some more life experience under our belts.

To some, that would resonate with them to not rush the process of education. For others like me if there's nothing standing in my way, I'm not stopping. I've realized that there is more to this life than just myself and my experiences. As a survivor, I have a duty to not only myself but the community of survivors who stand in the shadows within the Asian American population. There are not many women who are able to speak on behalf of survivors, as a survivor themselves. I'd like to think that I was given this award for not only myself but on behalf of survivors everywhere.

As the awards were given out, a slow buzz of anxiety that came over me. When I saw Professor Hutchison stand up and walked towards the stage my anxiety accelerated through the roof. Now is my time.

In academia, it isn't a space to thrive if you are struggling with anything personal. I was awarded the Donna Kawamoto Special Achievement Award as a survivor who struggled to succeed in academia while my personal life and mental state were in turmoil. It's even harder when your perpetrator is also a student at school. But this award is much bigger than me. It's about student survivor success and having the means to survive. And I wouldn't have survived in academia if it weren't for my professors who provided a space for me to openly express my feelings as a survivor and gave me the tools to help other survivors in academia in the future.

This award tells me and survivors that there are spaces that enable success. There is a large group of people who will catch me if I fall and push me back up.



The Experiences of Being  
an AAS Student Assistant  
by Arturo Adriano Aseo, Jr.

Congratulations to everyone for a productive 2016-2017 academic year! My name is Arturo and I currently work for the Asian American Studies Department as a student assistant. You may be asking, what does a student assistant necessarily do? A student assistant is the liaison between faculty and students. In my case, I was the liaison between the Asian American Studies faculty and the Asian American Studies majors, double majors, minors, and students. Student assistants contribute to the department by helping execute any events that are held during their academic semester.



Arturo Aseo,  
AAS Student Assistant

I was fortunate to have worked with Von Bondoc, my co-student assistant throughout this journey. We were both accepted to the department at the beginning of the spring 2017 semester. Our responsibilities included opening and closing the Asian American Studies Activities Center (formally known as the Glenn Omatsu House). The AAS Activities Center is a house located in the northwest corner of CSUN in which students can come to hangout or get tutoring from professional student tutors hired by the department. Other responsibilities included documenting events hosted by the AAS department as well as publicizing them by creating digital or physical flyers and sharing them on social media sites and on campus. We were also given opportunities to work at JR 340, the AAS department office, in which we experienced what it was like to work in an on-campus office environment.

As an Asian American Studies and Philosophy double major finishing my 6<sup>th</sup> semester at CSUN, I can honestly say this semester was one for the books. I was honestly intimidated at first having to balance responsibilities such as being a student, being an active member in CSUN's Filipino American Student Association, my friends and family, and my role as a student assistant. As time progressed, I began to gain a stronger sense of my own potential and apply it to the greater good. My job as a student assistant taught me skills on how to be the backbone of AAS. Facing obstacles were a given, but with the likeminded faculty and students that I had the pleasure of working with, I was able to finely execute them all. The following is a photograph set of my journey as a student assistant; check them out!

*AAS Distinguished Lecture & Student Awards Ceremony.*  
Student volunteers and award candidates hang out in the  
back of the USU Grand Salon.  
(April 27, 2017 Photography by Arturo Aseo Jr.)



CSUN AAS students and faculty outside the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center after their trip to Manzanar, a Japanese internment camp.  
(April 29, 2017 Photograph by Cielito Thea)





AAS 453 hosts their "Walk It Out Tour." Professor and event organizer Dr. Edith Chen strikes a killer pose as the "Walk It Out" participants watch to enjoy the moment. (April 11, 2017 Photograph by Arturo Aseo Jr.)



CSUN AAS students and faculty with the JAACL at the Manzanar War Relocation Center for the 48<sup>th</sup> annual pilgrimage. (April 29, 2017)



CSUN AAS students and faculty during the 2017 Commencement ceremony (May 20, 2017)