

California State University
Northridge

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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Welcome!

This issue took a while to produce but we are excited that our fifth issue of our CSUN AAS Newsletter is out for viewing. We had another full academic year (2012-2013) beginning with a welcoming BBQ and ending with the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month celebration. In between, we had an alumnus return to give a workshop on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy. Graphic novel author Gene Yang graced and amused us as our Distinguished Lecturer. That same night we congratulated our students for their achievements at the Student Award Night and one of such achievements is reflected in a student essay about students' community engagement work. In May we celebrated the class of 2013 graduation and Dr. Tracy Lachica Buenavista earning tenure!

In this Issue:

[2013 Asian American Studies Distinguished Lecture and Asian American Studies/Educational Opportunity Program Student Awards Ceremony--Page 2](#)

[Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\) Information Session and Dinner with CSUN Alumna Sharlene Bagon—Page 3](#)

[Asian American Studies Welcome Back Barbeque and Orientation—Page 4](#)

[Dr. Tracy Lachica Buenavista Gets Tenure—Page 6](#)

[In Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, Students Find Community and Place—Page 7](#)

[Alumni and Student News Corner—Page 9](#)

2013 Asian American Studies Distinguished Lecture and Asian American Studies/Educational Opportunity Program Student Awards Ceremony

The 2013 Asian American Studies Distinguished Lecture and Asian American Studies/ Educational Opportunity Program Student Awards Ceremony took place in the Grand Salon of the University Student Union on April 2, 2013. The ceremony began with a speech by master of ceremonies Professor Allan Aquino about the benefits of Asian American Studies. Then there was a reception and a book signing by graphic novelist Gene Yang, author of *American Born Chinese*, *Prime Baby*, *Level Up*, and *The Eternal Smile*. Following the reception and book signing was a welcome by Asian American Studies Department Chair, Professor Gina Masequesmay. Dr. Harry Hellenbrand, Provost, and Dr. Elizabeth Say, Dean of Humanities also delivered opening remarks. Professor Tomo Hattori then introduced the distinguished speaker.

Mr. Yang gave a lecture called “*American Born-Chinese--Special Features.*” Mr. Yang has been drawing comic books since he was in 5th grade and began publishing them under the label Humble Comics in 1996. His talk was based on one of his most notable works, *American Born Chinese*, which draws from Mr. Yang’s personal heritage. Mr. Yang told the audience that he was a huge fan of the 2005-2008 Nickelodeon television series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and that he was thrilled when Dark Horse Comics contacted him about writing the graphic novels that connect the end of the Last Airbender series to the beginning of its distant sequel *The Legend of Korra*. Mr. Yang is a great speaker to whom one cannot help but pay attention. He is very funny and incorporates a lot of humor into his presentation. Mr. Yang’s talk was followed by an audience Q & A. Someone asked him about his new novels, and he announced that *Boxers and Saints* would be released this Fall.

After the Q & A Shiva Parsa, Director of EOP Transitional Programs, EOP Staff, along with AAS Faculty presented the AAS/EOP Student Awards. The Promising Freshman/ Sophomore Awards recipients included: Betty Asmerom, Lesley Barajas, Leslie Clarkson, Jeffrey Corey Del Castillo, Janel Delavin Eisma, Monae Garrett, Theresa Henry, Daniel Hernandez, Angel Jimenez, Cinthia Jimenez, Yoo Jin Lee, Danielle Limbo, Christylyn Locke, Erik Lopez, Marvin Mendez, Lorenzo Roca Mutia, Ulma Romero, and Roxxette Zepeda. The Promising Transfer Student Award went to Jonathan Bue. Ilaisaane Fonua and Fatima Orcin took home the Promising Future Teacher Awards. The Community Builders Awards went to Louise Fonua, Kevin Guzman, Hansook Oh, Amber Rivero, Nathan Tuvalu and Loraine Zapata. Presley Kann and Tawny Lynne Ferraro were recognized with the Special Achievement Awards. Meryllia Luavasa received the Academic Achievement Award and Dong Hee Han, Lawrence Lan, and Lorraine Zapata were acknowledged as the recipients of the inaugural AAS Social Justice Funds. Seokwon (Jason) Yoon was rewarded the Enrique De La Cruz Social Justice Award and the final honor of the evening, the Kenyon Chan Outstanding Leadership Award, went to Lawrence Lan.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE AWARD RECIPIENTS!

By Alina Nguyen

[**\[Return to Top\]**](#)

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Information Session and Dinner with CSUN Alumna Sharlene Bagon

Although the afternoon of Thursday, October 18, 2012 was uncharacteristically warm, the Whitsett Room of the hidden fourth floor of Sierra Hall was cool and ready for CSUN alumna Sharlene Bagon's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) presentation. Ms. Bagon is a lawyer and graduated from CSUN with a B.A. in Political Science and Asian American Studies in 2006. She was pleased to be back on campus to inform the community about DACA, a program that would grant undocumented immigrants prosecutorial discretion in the U.S. for a two-year period.

The event, which was hosted by the Asian American Department, had a good turnout of students and faculty from across the College of Humanities, as well as students hoping to learn about and qualify for DACA. Ms. Bagon began with a PowerPoint presentation detailing the eligibility requirements for DACA. Ms. Bagon stressed June 15, 2012 as the day that the executive order was passed and the importance of potential DACA recipients to have evidence they were present in the U.S. at the time. Ms. Bagon went on to explain that the entire process is discretionary and that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) would only employ the rules described in her presentation as major guidelines. In particular, she noted that USCIS sees DACA as an investment in future citizens for the United States, especially for people who have gone through the American school system and plan to become workers here. As such, Ms. Bagon helped the audience better understand how undocumented immigrants could demonstrate good moral character – a major criteria of DACA.

The presentation ended with a quick Q&A and an explanation by Ms. Bagon of the importance of the 2012 approval of DACA. According to her, DACA is a temporary solution and at the time of its introduction, was in limbo because as an executive order and not a law, the program could be disbanded at any time. However, while there was much concern with the limitations of DACA, it was estimated that over 1.5 million undocumented immigrants could potentially benefit from the program; although Ms. Bagon explained that the numbers are much lower. She shared that as of October 10, 2012, the USCIS had accepted 179,794 applications for processing with only 4,591 requests actually approved. Bagon believed that the low numbers were due to a number of factors, but mostly that the program was only a few months old. She estimated that the processing time might range from two to three months. Among the audience was a student named Ana Miriam Barragan, a member of Dreams to be Heard, a campus-based organization for undocumented students and allies. She expressed how such information sessions were necessary, especially for undocumented students at CSUN. Barragan also announced additional information sessions that would take place within the community.

Following the workshop, Professors Gina Masequesmay and Edith Chen, and graduate Tran Le hosted the guest of honor for dinner at the Mandarin Deli. This small dinner party allowed for a much more personal mentoring session between an alum and AAS student. Ms. Bagon explained how she attributes most of her business success to her postgraduate education at Western State University College of Law, but credits her Asian American Studies degree from CSUN as a determining factor for getting into law school. She explained that AAS made her a competitive candidate over other law students within her specialty. She said she was very content with opening her own law firm instead of working for a larger corporate firm because of her ability to personally help individuals and she expressed interests in moving beyond law, including moving back to the Philippines, her birth country, to practice politics or opening her own business with her experience in law. She is currently a partner at Vesagas and Bagon, the former having been her mentor who had taken her on as an intern while she was still studying law. The firm specializes in immigration law and looks forward to hearing how their own applicants to DACA fare at the USCIS hearings.

By Colin Herrera

[**\[Return to Top\]**](#)

Asian American Studies Welcome Back Barbeque and Orientation

On Wednesday, September 26, 2012, the Asian American Studies Department held a Welcome Back Barbeque and Orientation for the new academic year. The event included helpful information and great food. CSUN AAS Department Chair Professor Masequesmay introduced the courses that were available for students interested in an Asian American Studies major. The event was primarily for students to meet the professors and to learn more about what the Asian American Studies Department has to offer. In addition, some of the Asian American clubs on campus came to introduce their activities.



Professor Masequesmay asked the AAS professors to talk about their courses. Professor Shrake talked about a new class called Directed Research in Contemporary Korean-American Community. It is an upper division course that involves intensive study of the contemporary experiences of the Korean American community. Students who take this course have a chance to select their own field of study of Koreatown community agencies, churches, media outlets, popular culture sites, and youth hangouts.

Professor Turnmeyer talked about her courses on pop culture, fiction, performance art and creative writing. The focus of her pedagogy is on a whole-class presentation. Last year, they made a documentary called *To The White House* about Asian American politicians and the idea of an Asian American President. The year before that, they put on a play called *Sole Survivor* about people's last wishes. The play had an audience of 250 people at the Grand Salon. This year, her class put on a musical about what people learn in Asian American Studies.

Professor Chen teaches introduction to Asian American Studies in traditional, online, and hybrid formats. Her Fall 2013 course was on Asian American Women. She has further interests in Asian American health, specifically Type 2 Diabetes and obesity. She explained that reasons why she has such an interest in health include her father having diabetes and both of her parents having to deal with obesity. She says that health is a personal issue within her family but also an important Asian American community issue. Professor Chen is also interested in immigration, assimilation, and culture.

[\[Return to Top\]](#)



Professor Lai focuses on race, geography, political and social movements in Los Angeles, and critical thinking. He is interested in the development of Los Angeles and San Francisco in terms of Asian American urbanization. Professor Lai looks at how Chinatown and Korea Town are victims of gentrification. An example is the Wal-Mart that will possibly be created near Los Angeles' Chinatown.



Professor Tang talked about his educational journey through CSUN and the classes that he teaches: writing composition for freshmen, speech/public communication, and introduction to Asian American Studies. He has an interest in cooking as well as multi-ethnic, bi-racial, and mixed-ethnic relations because he himself is mixed-race (Japanese and Chinese).

Professor Hattori explained that the newsletter is distributed once a year to cover the events of each academic year. In addition, he mentioned the Asian American Studies Facebook group that allows AAS students and faculty to connect with one another. Students and faculty are invited to contribute to the newsletter.

Three clubs were present to introduce themselves. The Filipino-American Student Association (FASA) is a social and cultural club that is open also to people who do not identify as Filipino. Throughout the year, they have multiple events to spread the word about Filipino culture. Students for Pilipino American History Month (SPAHM) is an event for Filipino artists, spoken word, singers, and dancers of Filipino tradition. Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN) is an event every spring where the members rehearse dances and put on a play to showcase Filipino culture.

[\[Return to Top\]](#)

The Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) is another cultural club open for anyone who wants to join. Their main purpose is to meet great people from other schools in Southern California, and to reach out to the Vietnamese community. Also, to learn Vietnamese, and most importantly have fun as a whole.

Culturally Innovative Talented Youth (C.I.T.Y.) promotes arts and community service that employ the artistic talents of students. They welcome anyone to their meetings and they reach out to diverse populations to learn more about different cultures and to implement learning. Their continuing focus is on education. They want to help promote awareness and educate people on the state of Ethnic Studies. Last year the club was able to participate with Save Ethnic Studies (S.E.S) organization with a performance related to the removal of Mexican-American studies in Arizona. The group was also able to participate in other events like making an altar for Dia De Los Muertos and teaching an Obon dance with Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA). They have also gone to Arizona with S.E.S. to show their support for the students there.



By Alina Nguyen

Dr. Tracy Lachica Buenavista Gets Tenure

We are very pleased to announce that Dr. Tracy Lachica Buenavista has received tenure. Dr. Buenavista received a Ph.D. and M.A. in Education at University of California, Los Angeles; M.A. in Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University; and B.A. in Integrative Biology and minor in Ethnic Studies at University of California, Berkeley.

Since she has been at CSUN, Dr. Buenavista has helped to develop new AAS course offerings, including AAS 311: Research Methods in Asian American Studies and AAS 495ES: Comparative Ethnic Studies – Pilipina/os, Chicana/os, and Mexipina/o Experiences. She has published articles on education, immigration, and militarization in various journals including *AAPI Nexus*, *Amerasia*, and *Asian American Policy Review*; contributed to several book projects focused on Asian American and Filipina/o American educational experiences; and co-edited with her AAS and Chicana/o Studies colleagues, *Navigating the Great Recession: Immigrant Families' Stories of Resilience*.

[\[Return to Top\]](#)

Professor Buenavista was the Michael D. Eisner College of Education Scholar in Residence (2012-13); and has been the recipient of the College of Humanities Faculty Fellowship; Probationary Faculty Support Program Grant; Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Award; and the Judge Julian Beck Learning-Centered Instructional Projects Grant. She has served on various campus committees, including the Educational Equity Committee and Faculty Senate. Additionally, Dr. Buenavista has mentored students in the CSUN McNair Research Scholars Program, advised students in the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership, and has received the Polished Apple Teaching Award. Nationally she is a Research Fellow with the Asian American and Pacific Islander Research Coalition (ARC); is involved with the Research on the Education of Asian and Pacific Americans (REAPA) Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association; and has served as a reader for the Gates Millennium Scholars/ Asian Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Tracy Lachica Buenavista!

[\[Return to Top\]](#)

In Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, Students Find Community and Place

On April 12th, 2013 during the university's spring break, students who enrolled in Prof. Clem Lai's course, AAS 440: Urbanization and Asian American Communities, enjoyed an in-depth walking tour of Los Angeles' Little Tokyo community. Guiding the afternoon tour were local community leaders Alan Nishio and Kristin Fukushima.

Nishio—a longtime community leader and current president of the Little Tokyo Service Center board of directors—and Fukushima—a UCLA graduate student and board member at local nonprofit, Kizuna—took students to various sites in the roughly four square blocks that make up present-day Little Tokyo and explained their significance. They paid close attention to the various waves of redevelopment that have shaped the Little Tokyo community over the years, as well as the community resistance and collaboration that emerged as a response.

Having learned about Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Prof. Lai's course, students were delighted to have the opportunity to learn about one from longtime community activists like Fukushima and Nishio.

"I definitely appreciated learning about the spaces and places that have been here for so many decades," Emilyn Vallega '13 said. "Fugetsu-do is a prime example of that. It's a family-owned *manju* shop that's been around Little Tokyo since 1903."

Gerita White '14 agreed, voicing her own appreciation and also explaining that the importance of the history of Little Tokyo created a sense of community among Japanese Americans—regardless of whether they were still living in the downtown area.

"These small businesses and other places—Fugetsu-do, Anzen Hardware, and the like—they create a sense of community and place for Japanese Americans who grew up in Little Tokyo and younger generations of Japanese Americans who may have grown up in the suburbs but still come to visit," White said.

[\[Return to Top\]](#)

Little Tokyo—one of three remaining, officially-designated Japantowns in the country—is home to many Japanese American community organizations, including the three-year-old Kizuna and the Little Tokyo Service Center, a social service agency that has served the Little Tokyo community since the 1970s. In the 1970s, state-sanctioned urban renewal and redevelopment threatened the needs of Japanese American residents who were living in single resident occupancy buildings in Little Tokyo at the time, according to Nishio. In opposition, workers, residents, and supporters formed the Little Tokyo People’s Rights Organization (LTPRO) to protest evictions and challenge the destruction of important historic spaces in Little Tokyo.

Throughout the tour, Nishio and Fukushima emphasized the very real need for community organizing and work around the Little Tokyo community, especially among young Japanese Americans. They drew connections to similar issues that historic Asian American communities are facing, now that younger generations are growing up in suburbs that may be removed from these historically significant urban enclaves.

Fukushima also discussed the gentrification that Little Tokyo must continue to address. Several luxury condominiums have come into the neighborhood in recent years, and there are more on their way. This trend has been followed by an influx of young professionals who may not understand the historical and contemporary significance of Little Tokyo to Japanese Americans throughout southern California. But Fukushima remains optimistic.

“We welcome all of these people into the neighborhood,” Fukushima said. “We just hope that they take the time to understand that this is a community that they are moving into and becoming a part of.”

The tour’s central focus on community resonated with students, who had been learning about the significance of space and place as they relate to historic and contemporary Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

“It’s one thing to learn about space and Asian Americans in the classroom, but it’s a totally different experience actually being in the community and interacting with people who care so much about it,” Seokwon Jason Yoon ’13 said. “It’s nice to be part of a department [Asian American studies] that supplements this classroom learning with different avenues for getting out into the community and actually seeing and doing what we might read about in books.”

Presley Kann ’14 echoed these sentiments and reflected further on the importance of becoming actively involved in fighting for a community voice.

“A lot of folks will throw around words and phrases like ‘power to the people’ without really reflecting on the true meaning,” Kann said. “This marvelous tour by Alan and Kristin really emphasized how folks in the Little Tokyo community fought for their community to have power—to have a voice—in the redevelopment process. And I learned that it’s a struggle that hasn’t ended yet. It’s still being waged today by actively involved folks like them.”

The tour concluded with a visit to Kizuna, a nonprofit organization geared toward getting young people involved in the Little Tokyo community. Students got a chance to speak with program coordinator Paul Matsushima who briefly described the mission and programs of Kizuna.

Even students who did not go expressed interest in the tour of Little Tokyo. Fatima Orcino ’13, who had been working on a class project profiling the Little Tokyo community, expressed her regrets for not being able to participate in the walking tour.

“This was clearly a community-minded tour of Little Tokyo,” Orcino said. “It actually dovetails quite nicely with the research project in Professor Lai’s class that I am doing on Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo. In my conversations with Alan [Nishio], I’ve come to understand Little Tokyo as a community that is not just rooted in historical meaning but also has strong connections to Japanese American communities throughout southern California.”

By Lawrence Lan

[\[Return to Top\]](#)

Alumni and Student News Corner

- **Jean-Paul deGuzman '04** recently earned a UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award from the UCLA Academic Senate and the Minoru Yasui Memorial Fellowship from the National Japanese American Citizens League. His forthcoming publications will appear in *The Nation and Its Peoples* (Routledge) and *Asian American Society* (Sage).
- **Lawrence Lan '13, Meryllia Luavasa '13, and Carolina Quintanilla '13** successfully presented their independent research projects for the CSUN McNair Undergraduate Research Scholars program in Spring 2013. The McNair program prepares first-generation, low-income, and/ or underrepresented students to enter doctoral education.
- **Kevin Guzman '13, Presley Kann '14, Lawrence Lan '13, and Emi Vallega '13** were accepted and participated in the 2013 Summer Activist Training (SAT). SAT is a Los Angeles-based community leadership program that has cultivated and nurtured Asian and Pacific Islander activists since 1993.
- **Dan Le '05 has a message to current students:** Hey friends. Many people may say or tell you that "college is not the 'real world'" or "wait until you graduate and you'll see how things are." However, these words keep us from fully experiencing our time in the present moment. We must enjoy and be present in all moments as they are all "real". (These are not my original ideas, I adopted them from bell hooks' Teaching Community).
- This summer **Amber Rivero '13** and **Nathan Tuvalu '15** welcomed their son, Noah, into their family and the AAS community. The AAS Department congratulates the new parents!
- **Fatima Orcino '13** was accepted to the Master's in Asian American Studies program at San Francisco State University and began her program this Fall semester. She was also selected to work with the Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP) program, which provides Pilipina/o American Studies course offerings throughout K-12 public schools in San Francisco Unified School District.
- **Wanda Pathomrit '11** was accepted into the UCLA Master's in Social Work program. Already a student in the UCLA Master's in Asian American Studies program, Wanda will now pursue dual degrees.
- **Carolina Quintanilla '13** was accepted to the Master's in Ethnic Studies program at San Francisco State University and began her program this Fall semester.

[\[Return to Top\]](#)