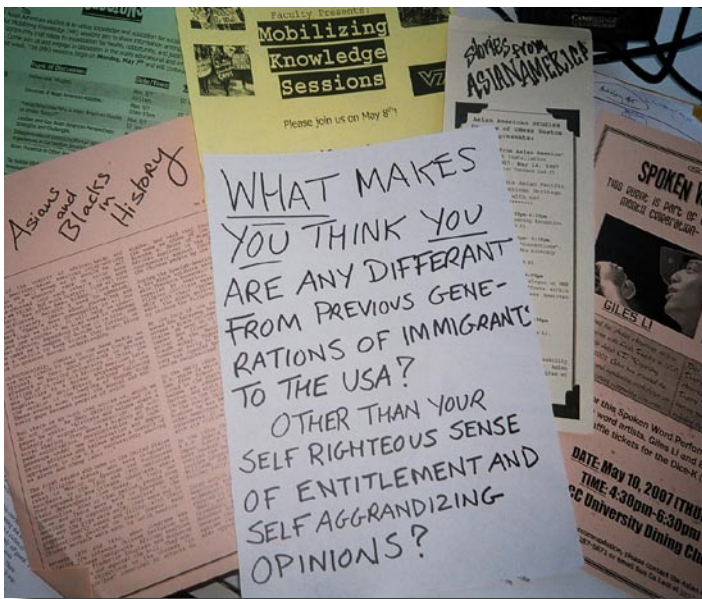


RIPPLES

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

APIA Heritage Month at UMB



“Feel the excitement, taste the culture, know who you are...”

— Wyclef Jean

-by Peter Kiang-

Last May, in the shadow of the VA Tech shootings, students in the AsAmSt Program organized a powerful, month-long program of performances, workshops, lectures, multimedia exhibitions, and an arts installation to recognize Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month at UMass Boston. The scale, sophistication, and reach of the AASO students' programming was remarkable, especially given the other intense demands facing students in May at the end of the semester. Though our Asian American Studies commitments at UMB are year-long and around-the-clock, we do hope the campus community will take a moment in May to appreciate our voices, histories, and visions. This is not always the case, however, as the photo showing one person's



Left: a-APIAH month fliers May 2007, Top Right/Bottom: c, b-Art Installation created by artist Tri Quach. (Photo Credits: Peter Kiang)

response to last year's art installation clearly illustrates (photo a).

As the month of May 2008 is underway, and another masala of events, voices, and images are being presented by the AsAmSt Program and our AASO students, it is no coincidence that Grammy-award winning, world famous musician/producer and philanthropist Wyclef Jean is also performing at UMB. Of Haitian refugee background, Wyclef's creative career has been inspiring for many, including Chinese American rapper, Jin (the emcee), whose breakthrough track, "Learn Chinese," was made possible with Wyclef's backing. The proud, deep, and inviting voice from Wyclef's Carnival cd referenced above is a good intro for AASO's celebrations of our Heritage Month activities, too. Thank you to all of our supporters. Join us.

With RIPPLES, we spread news in continuous movements of circles. We share the same center. All of us. Our work are circles within each other- staff, students, families, and communities. The transformation begins within ourselves, our own center. We make ripples by being fluid like water- as we are touched by, and touch others.

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Umass Boston's Asian American Studies Present:

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration

MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE WORKSHOPS:

*An Asian American Principal's Perspective Implementing 'No Child Left Behind'

by Wesley Manaday

Thursday, 5/1/08 @ 4:00-5:20pm (W-02-097)

*What Does it Mean to Have an Asian American Consciousness?

by Rajini Srikanth

Monday, 5/5/08 @ 2:00-3:30pm (W-02-097)

*Dissecting the Intersection Between Race and Sex in Asian America

by Sam Museus and Josephine Kim

Monday, 5/5/08 @ 3:45-5:00pm (W-02-097)

CONNECTIONS:

"It's not just what you know, it's who you know."

*Make connections with the AsAmSt program's faculty and students.

Tuesday, 5/6/08 @ 2:00-4:30pm (Wheatley 4th Lounge)

Wednesday, 5/7/08 @ 2:00-4:30pm (Wheatley 4th Lounge)

ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA LITERACY:

AsAmSt 370 Exhibition

*Showcasing of personal digital stories and instilling a new perspective on Asian American Media.

Thursday, 5/8/08 @ 12:00-3:00pm (CC 3rd Fl. Ballroom)

For more information or special accommodations, contact Son Ca Lam of Asian American Studies Outreach at sonca_lam@yahoo.com or 617-287-5671.

Students Dig Deep for Roots in the Lands of Ancestors

-by Janet Vo and Son Ca Lam-

When the idea of study abroad programs comes to mind, options to travel to locations as typical as Europe first come to mind. As more college students consider study abroad opportunities, there grows a need for diverse and meaningful programs that meet the needs and backgrounds of a diverse student body. For example, many Asian American students alternatively envision the possibility of gaining personal and educational experiences through homeland heritage study-travel.

In seeking to expand its curriculum and build stronger “transnational cultural community studies,” UMass Boston does not have to look far beyond. The connections needed for these visions already exist within the school’s diverse community-- especially among our students. Though Asian Americans make up 15% of UMass Boston’s student body, the study abroad opportunities at UMass Boston lack deep content and relevancy for many of these students.

On April 9, 2007, Vietnamese American students, Songkhla Nguyen and Son Ca Lam held a panel and video presentation, “Digging Deep for Roots,” bringing attention to the need for UMB to invest in opportunities for Asian American students to pursue their passion and interests in re-connecting with their ancestral homelands through study-travel. The panel presentation consisted of a discussion by current and former Asian American students, who traveled to their ancestral homelands (most for the first time), about their experiences and the impact of their journeys.

Reflections on these ancestral homeland experiences have been recorded in journey blogs, including those from some of the presenters themselves. Here is a glimpse of current and former students from the Asian American Studies Program experiences in Vietnam and Cambodia, offering different perspectives and insight into the layered reality of their trans-national identity and relationships:



Son Ca Lam, excerpts from
<http://digestingvietnam.blogspot.com/>

5/29/07 Just Arrived in Vietnam

Once I got to Hanoi- there are billboards EVERYWHERE in the country side in the rice fields! I heard these boards are really unstable and have fallen and hurt people. But imagine the congestion of New York billboards times 2, in the middle of green rice fields! It’s such a paradox! But the fields are right on the highway where a lot of cars would pass by coming from the airport. There are fields and fields of green rice stocks (which means its not yet harvest season bc it would be golden then). And I saw people,



Angkor Wat, Cambodia (Photo Credit: Rathanak Bobby Pres).



Nha Trang, Vietnam (Photo Credit: Songkhla Nguyen).

women dressed in ao ba ba like my grandmother, pants rolled up to their knees in straw hats, bent over these grains cutting them each handful at a time. During harvest season, these entire fields would be cut meticulously by hand!!!

7/2/07

Even last year when I first came to Vietnam, I came back to the states all confused about where I really belong and seriously considering my place in Vietnam. But after this year’s trip and really accepting the fact that I am a Viet Kieu (foreign Vietnamese), I realize that I don’t belong here. Maybe I still have reservations about claiming the states as home for myself but it’s the closest to being home. I am culturally different from the Vietnamese people in Vietnam- my perspective, my way of living, my understanding of the world, and my interaction with other people. I can come here to learn, connect to roots, visit family, work short term, but I can’t fool myself into thinking that I belong here. The closest thing to home for me is the states, maybe give me some time to think about it before I can claim it confidently.



Former UMB students R. Bobby Pres and Charles Chear who met up in Cambodia in June of 2007 (Photo Credit: Charles Chear).

**Rathanak “Bobby” Pres, excerpts from:
<http://livingoffdurian.blogspot.com>**

Friday, June 8, 2007: Day Three: Catching Zzz’s...
...With having the day free, I decided to visit Charles and Dimple at the Muse Cafe, where they’re holding One World’s training workshops. I didn’t stay long, as Charles and Dimple were more than occupied with their workshops. But being able to talk to them for a little while had this comforting feeling that I especially needed. We talked about the beauty and ugliness of Cambodia and our acceptance of “it is what it is.” Corruption is everywhere and everyone is much apart it. And being here as a tourist, I only feed to it. But what can one person from the United States do? If I keep the righteous mentality, it surely would be a wasted effort, the corruption is too ingrained into the Khmer society.

Sunday, July 8, 2007, Two Days Before I Kiss Cambodia Goodbye: Cambodia Strikes Again!

...This post should have already been posted but as it turns out... “oy dtung srok Khmer.” The literally translation is “to know Cambodia” basically saying whatever goes wrong, that is how Cambodia is. On this day I went to Tuol Sleng, the former high school turned into the most infamous security office for the Angkar. For my entire stay in Phnom Penh I was willing to be but had been putting it off. There was no real reason why I put it off for so long other than the fact that I was busy, but deep down inside, I was scared off how life was for my people during that era.

When I followed the signs to Building A I already knew it was going to be bad as the rain became a massive downpour. As I enter the first entrance to my right, the pictures of starved Khmers chained to the dirt and their beds greeted me. I really thought I could handle it but as I pass each room filled with pictures of victims and Khmer

Rouge soldiers, my stomach started turning. By the time I made it to the second floor of the Building A, where blood stain remains, I was ready to hurl. Many Khmers wonder why this horrific place still remains- it only reminds them of all the bad things of Cambodia. My stay in Cambodia was an enjoyable one, fun to the tenth degree but visiting Tuol Sleng made me very angry. Angry at Angkar, angry at the country, angry at the people who did not prevent all this to happen, angry that Cambodia is a corrupted country. Imagine this is only one building, I had three more to go. And each building was worse than the other.

Charles Chear, e-mail excerpt

Date: Thu, 7 Jun 2007

Subject: Charles in Phnom Penh, Cambodia / June 7th 2007

...In other big news, I met my grandmother for the first time. For years, I’ve only known her through pictures, stories, and video. It wasn’t as highly emotional as I thought it would be (though she cried) but it was a very nice moment nevertheless. She traveled from Kompong Cham to see me along with two of my cousins from the same area. I tried my best to communicate with her but both my Teochew and Khmer speaking abilities are very limited. Due to my schedule, I will be unable to see her again as she had to get back to Kompong Cham because of health reasons. I will be making more rounds during the weekend to meet other family members. As a custom for many Cambodians in the diaspora, visiting means bringing money for family as well as strangers.

The country has a huge disparity between the poor and the rich and it is all too obvious wherever you go in Phnom Penh. Sex workers and bar girls are very public in Phnom Penh. Little children who look as young as two beg on the busiest roads while their parent stands on the side of the road to collect. Everywhere we go, begging children are everywhere. I’ve been able to talk to friends and new friends who are Cambodian and Asian American about the begging children, pedophilia, and general prostitution that plagues the city and what their feelings were. According to all of them, extreme anger and sadness obviously hit them when they first arrived, but because there is so much of it... all of them have learned to bite their tongue and turn away. Corruption is everywhere and it’s going to take a bigger movement to change it.

Interesting enough and not so surprising, foreigners (most of whom are from the U.S., Australia, and Europe) are treated and act like kings and queens. They are the ones who run the NGOs and at the same time, a major consumer of prostitution and pedophilia in the country, and from some instances I’ve witnessed, they’ve thrown out rules of personal/social space they follow in their

respective countries. For example, foreigners think it is okay to run into a Khmer kitchen at a restaurant without permission. Would they ever run into a Chili's kitchen in the U.S. and not expect to be kicked out? They think it is okay to come up to a monk while he is using a computer at the Internet cafe, look through his books and see what he is typing on his computer without his permission. They enjoy and exploit the culture of servitude and the culture of fear poor Cambodians face. Sadly enough, most Cambodians accept the foreign presence as normal. The worship of lighter skin and the worship of the American dollar... IT'S WACK...

Sorry-I'm enjoying my time in Cambodia but at the same time, it's Cambodia and the injustice is too alive to be ignored.

Songkhla Nguyen
excerpt from Xanga.com blog

Friday 07/06/07

So I'm finally realizing something; actually a couple different things. First of all, as for myself I am not as Vietnamese as I thought, for the longest time I thought I **understood** our culture and lifestyle but I was completely wrong. I've learned more about Vietnam in the past 3 weeks that I've been here compared to the past twenty odds years of what I've thought Vietnam was... or would be. Secondly I was totally wrong at the beginning when I said its less organized compared to the U.S. Every place has its own living style and whatever this style is here, it works okay. Not perfect but better than I had understood when I first step foot here. Even though it is not the same as the U.S. but yet there are so many precious things that cannot be found in the U.S.



Current UMB students Songkhla Nguyen and Son Ca Lam, traveled together in Vietnan during summer of 2007 (Photo Credit: S. Nguyen).

Yes it's more contaminated and polluted but yet each place has it's beauty (kinda like the people...I think). Everyone says that the quality of life in the U.S. is much better than Vietnam, I cannot deny that but yet quality is defined differently for each individual and their importance.



For these students "studying abroad" or seeking to "connect to cultural heritage" is more complex than merely gaining new experiences or learning about new cultures. It is about experiences that make one question their place in the world, an ongoing process of personal self-discovery that forces you to continually shape and reshape your own identity. It does not come with clear-cut answers, if any at all. But it is vital to the holism of a student's life and educational experience.

Students from Asian American Studies Outline Potential Projects in Their Quest Toward This Vision:

*Initiate collaborations with institutions and organizations in Asian homeland countries based on existing networks among Asian American faculty and staff at UMB.

* Providing opportunities for semester study-travel in Asian homeland settings in exchange for teaching English, providing community service, or participating in local research.

* Expand courses in Asian heritage language (and culture) instruction, for Vietnamese, Khmer, and other Asian languages, in addition to Chinese and Japanese, for both students and also K-12 language teachers.

* Develop need-based funding resources and advising services for students specifically interested in homeland heritage study-travel.

* Encourage local/global projects that connect students with homeland contexts, Asian American communities, and courses in Asian American Studies or transnational cultural community studies.

Living Memory and the Power of Digital Storytelling



AsAmSt 370's Spring 2007 exhibition had a large number of attendees who came to support (photo credit: Janet Vo)

For the fourth consecutive academic year, AsAmSt Professor Shirley Tang's ASAMST 370 Asian American Studies Media Literacy class will showcase a collection of digital stories created by students for family, friends and the UMB community.

"We need more storytellers to document and effectively convey what is going on in our communities, and we need storytellers who are good at both content and multimedia technology," Professor Tang says. She begins the semester with an analysis of a range of video documentaries and movies, produced by or involving Asian Americans and others involving Asian Americans. Through critiquing visual materials, and a series of writing exercises, Professor Tang hopes that her students learn from example in thinking about their own story-telling process. By not only thinking who Asians Americans are through stereotypes, but who they are in real life and real stories.

Through this approach, Professor Tang encourages students to analyze media and assess the lack of representation of Asian/Asian Americans. Throughout the semester, students work towards creating a final project requiring them to produce their own digital stories that represent their voice, identity, family and community. Each semester, the class has twelve to fifteen core students from diverse backgrounds.

"This class emphasizes living memory," according to Professor Tang. "Classes like these empower students to take

on responsible roles in choosing and conveying meaningful themes and messages that are drawn from personal lived experiences, and encourage them to produce thoughtful and emotionally powerful stories, with the potential to impact, teach and/or connect with their audience."

The basic technical skills students learn include the Mac iMovie software, instructed by award-winning photographer and UMB alumnus Molly Lamb. Workshops allow students to learn the skills of compiling and producing words, images, voice, music, video, transitions and other effects to create a coherent and compelling story.

Important to the process and of this class over the past years is the collective effort that Professor Tang describes as a "teaching team." She sees herself as the one guiding students to consider the importance of content and message, and helping them make critical decisions on what kinds of stories they really want and need to tell. One of the advisors for the class this year, Tri Quach, a local Boston area artist and coordinator of Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY), has helped students with the conception and film-making process. In the past, the alumni of the class have also served as peer mentors for the current students-- assisting students with problems they may have similarly faced. ASAMST 370 alumni, including many who already graduated, typically show up at the exhibit to offer support and feedback for current students.

The purpose of a yearly exhibition of students' work is to build a community resource of digital stories, for and/or by audiences interested in Asian American Studies and/or who identify as Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, hapa, multiracial, Japanese, Egyptian, black, white, and more.



For more info, contact Shirley.Tang@umb.edu

Please support AsAmSt 370 students' exhibition:
Thursday May 8, 2008: 12-3pm
Campus Center, 3rd Fl., Ballroom

REFLECTIONS

PEDRO **M**AGNI:

“I realized that I have the ability to affect the audience with my story.”

Professor Tang's class taught Pedro the basic technical skill to create his first 16 minute digital story on his experience as a Filipino adoptee. The class inspired him to continue telling stories of his adoptee experience. His current video project centers on his recent experience in reconnecting with his birth family in the Philippines.

JASON **C**HOU:

“I had the chance to create my own media with the potential to expunge arrogance, bigotry, and shameful ignorance.”

Jason was both a former student of the class and then a peer mentor in the Spring of 2007. His iMovie aimed to persuade others to strip away stereotypes and media influences and to really understand an individual before passing judgment. He recently applied the skills learned from Professor Tang's class to produce an educational video for the Chinese Historical Society of New England, about the history of Chinese in Boston, through archival photographs, voiceovers and interviews.

MAJORY **G**ABRIEL:

“The class taught me to be open to constructive criticism and to challenge myself on a daily basis, and not let the pressures of our society to encroach the knowledge and principle of treating everyone with dignity and humanity. Since taking Professor Tang's class, I am more empowered to pursue my passion for helping people.”

The impact of the class is not limited solely to Asian or Asian American students. Non-Asian students have created just as powerful digital stories. As a black student Majory was empowered through the interactions and dialogue between her classmates. Her iMovie encouraged individuals to discuss the sensitive issue of AIDS/HIV. She has continued her passion on generating AIDS/HIV awareness in our communities.

AsAmSt Courses in 2008-2009 (tentative)

FALL 2008

AsAmSt 200 (Suyemoto)	Introduction to Asian American Studies TuTh, 9:30-10:45am
AsAmSt 220Z Visions (TBA)	Special Topics: Filipino American Voices and MWF, 12-12:50pm
AsAmSt 221L (Iwanaga)	Intro to Asian American Writing TuTh, 11am-12:15pm
AsAmSt 225L (Kiang)	Southeast Asians in the US Wednesdays, 4:00-6:45pm
AsAmSt 390 (Tang)	Asian American Community Internship MW, 4-5:15pm
AsAmSt 420 (Museus)	Race and Students of Color in Higher Ed. MWF, 2-2:50pm
AsAmSt 478	Independent Study (Kiang - section 1; Suyemoto - section 2; Tang - section 3)

SPRING 2009

AsAmSt 220Z (Tang)	Media, Culture, and the Chinese Diaspora TuTh, 4-5:15pm
AsAmSt 228L (Staff)	Asian Women in the US MWF, 2:00-2:50pm
AsAmSt L-238 (Tawa)	Asian American Psychology TuTh, 11am-12:15pm
AsAmSt 265L (Watanabe)	WWII Internment of Japanese Americans TuTh, 9:30-10:45am
AsAmSt 294 (Staff)	Resources for Vietnamese American Studies MW, 4-5:15pm
AsAmSt 326 (Suyemoto)	Multiracial Experiences TuTh, 2-3:15pm
AsAmSt 345 (Haeok Lee)	AsAm. Cultures and Health Practices Wednesdays, 5-7:30pm
AsAmSt 350L (Suji Kwock Kim)	Asian American Literary Voices TuTh, 2-3:15pm
AsAmSt 370 (Tang)	Asian American Media Literacy TuTh, 12:30-1:45pm
AsAmSt 375L (Lakshmi Srinivas)	Indian Cinema Tuesdays, 4-6:30pm

Minority

within a Minority

-by Richard Truong-

Being Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgendered, Questioning (GLBTQ) and Asian American at the same time is very difficult because one is a minority within a minority. After coming out to my friends and family about my sexuality, I began to realize the importance of claiming my voice and sharing my experience with others.

Coming out to my mom was the hardest day of my life. I was struggling when I actually told her. Tears came down my face. I was

such a mess like I have never been before. I finally got up the courage to tell her about my situation. She didn't agree with it at first. She kept saying "NO NO NO" as she shook her head. "You have to change, you have an illness," "How come you don't like girls?" She told me if I don't date girls, I shouldn't date boys either, but I don't think that's fair. I want to find love too. I want to find that guy that will sweep me off my feet. I want to grow and share memories with a person that I love. I want to find that person that I can feel complete around. I have to follow my heart on this one.

It was a shock to her. She felt as though it's something I have control over but I don't. Let me ask you, if someone asked you to change your sexual orientation and whom you are attracted to just like that, could you? What makes you think I can? I understand where she is coming from, but I can't continue to live a lie anymore. I have to be true to myself.

Most of my life, I have been living a secret. Now, I feel like I have to make up. I want to educate people and make them realize that not all gay people are the same and to challenge the stereotypes. And I want people to see me and other GLBTQ as normal person because we are just people. We bleed the same color.

As a result of my own experience, I have decided to revamp the Minority within a Minority board because it gave me so much assurance and hope when I transferred from Emmanuel College. Seeing that board, I knew I made the right decision in transferring to UMASS Boston. I never heard anyone talk about gay Asian Americans and to see the Minority within a Minority board outside the Asian American Studies Outreach office, I felt there was someone that cared enough about this topic to give it voice and visibility.

"It is up to us to tell our story because no one else will."



Current Minority within a Minority Board located in front of the AsAmSt Outreach office (Photo Credit: J.Vo).

This year I wanted to update the information and stories and share my own because it is outdated; and I express myself best through visual designs. If I can get one thing out of my educational experience at UMB and through Asian American Studies courses, I want to be able to inspire people to be who they are and see that there are other people out there like them. They are not alone, we are in this together, and you will not have to be invisible no more.

The process of interviewing people was a learning experience for me and the people that I interviewed. We have a lot of similarities and a lot of differences in our stories as well. I remember talking with a friend of mine telling me that, his mom told him that if she had known he was gay, she would have killed him at birth or thrown him in the trash. It's so heartbreaking and sad that no one is giving any life to these stories. It is just stories from interviews like this that you really compelled to be able to give a voice to these people.

Being a minority within a minority is real tough. There is a lot of gay versus heterosexual tensions as well as tensions in gay communities. You would think that since we share struggles we would all be in it together, but it's not like not like that at all. It is up to us to tell our story because no one else will. We have to work hard and fight for representation and to not be afraid to stand tall and be who you are.

Richard Truong is a Vietnamese American junior at UMASS Boston, studying Business Management and a program of study in AsAmSt. Please look out for the new Minority Within a Minority Board in late May 2008.

Project Green Tortoise: Where Community Science Meets Culture



It all began out of a garage in 1991. Founder Dan Sudran, an electrical engineer, was initially just experimenting with science projects in his garage, when that piqued the interest of local neighborhood youth, who began joining him in his hands-on endeavor. From these beginnings, the first Community Science Workshop (CSW) was born, supplying informal science education for low-income neighborhood youth. Since then, CSW has become one of the most successful models for science youth programs in the country; especially in urban or underserved areas.

Community Science Workshops (CSW) are non-profit community based programs with bases across the nation. The next site in the CSW line is East Biloxi, Mississippi. East Biloxi is home to a relatively invisible Vietnamese American community, despite making up 20% of the area's 8,500 residents. Following more than two years after Hurricane Katrina, many families still struggle with resources-while the resettlement and rebuilding of their lives are also threatened by expanding casino developments and outside investors. Youth programs in Biloxi are lacking in general, and virtually non-existent within the Vietnamese community.

The overarching goal of the East Biloxi CSW, Project Green Tortoise, is to help the marginalized Katrina-affected families, especially students in grades 5-12, gain access to education that is holistic and empowering. Recognizing traditional cultural relationships that the Vietnamese, immigrant and Gulf Coast communities have with water environments, Project Green Tortoise will provide innovative science experiments that explore the water culture environments in ways that meaningfully engage Vietnamese youth and their families.

In addition to the vision of promoting interest and involvement in science, Project Green Tortoise aims to enhance cultural retention and intergenerational communication by connecting projects and activities with the indigenous cultural knowledge of Vietnamese community elders -including fishermen and farmers as well as local Vietnamese American young adult professionals in the science fields.

Project Green Tortoise ties together a string of people from varying sources. Two students from the Asian American Studies program- Songkhla Nguyen (senior majoring in Biology) and Son Ca Lam (junior majoring in Environmental Science and Ethnic Studies)- will join Mark Tran (Dan Than fellow of the National Alliance of Vietnamese American Service Agencies) in Biloxi to pilot Green Tortoise in the summer of 2008.

The Asian American Studies Program at UMass Boston, NAVASA, and local community organizations and members

Spring 2008



UMB students, Songkhla Nguyen (top photo: far right), Son Ca Lam (bottom photo: far left) and Jane Lee (bottom, 2nd left) leads a group of Biloxi Vietnamese American youth with hands-on science experimentation (Photo credits: Songkhla Nguyen and Son Ca Lam).

will collaborate to make this science workshop readily available for the youths of East Biloxi. Project Green Tortoise is made possible with support from the National Science Foundation funding, and the CSW principal investigator Dr. Paul Fonteyn. Major contributions to this project have been made by Dr. Peter Kiang, Dr. Shirley Tang, James Bui, Jane Lee, and many current CSW directors all of whom have shared their passion, hard work and guidance.

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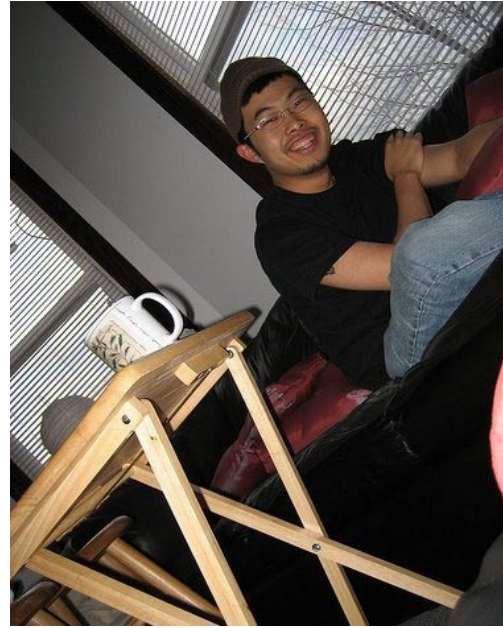
For more info on this project please contact:
Son Ca Lam at sonca_lam@yahoo.com or
Songkhla Nguyen at songkha_nguyen@yahoo.com

Q & A

AsAmSt Alumni: Charles Chear

-by Janet Vo and Chu Huang-

Charles Chear graduated from UMASS Boston in May 2006, with a BA in Sociology and program certificate in Asian American Studies. After graduating, Charles worked in social services for the homeless in Boston. Charles' contributions to AASO/AsAmSt trace back to his efforts to increase student awareness and active participation with Asian American Studies and Asian American communities.



(Photo Credit: Charles Chear)

* *What was your vision for AASO during your time there?*

CC: I wanted to continue and help the growth of its purpose. I especially wanted more members for AASO, whether as “core” representatives who helped sustain AASO or as members of programs and events that we organized. There were a lot of big dreams coming out of the closet that we call the AASO office.

I was also concerned with the lack of political awareness. I want to bring up something as an example but in no way to defame the organization, for whom I respect. Some of the ethnic groups at the student center share a statement of purpose that is duplicated. I don't remember exactly what it contains but I do remember noticing that the word “political” was removed from the statement of the Asian Center. It was the only ethnic student organization to do that. I wanted AASO to fill that “political” void.

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* *What was the first Asian American class that you took?*

CC: Southeast Asians in America with Dr. Shirley Tang. I felt

it was very relevant to my cultural background and desire for self-discovery. I think it was a good introduction to ethnic studies. It helped me develop a different perspective on society and history.

* *How has your experience with AASO/AsAmSt shaped your education and learning experiences as an undergraduate?*

CC: It was a major learning experience as an undergraduate. If I wasn't in class or at home, I was pretty much at AASO. I learned practical skills from organizing and planning events and marketing the program. I learned to work with different communities and how we function independently and together.

* *Has your AsAmSt education background shaped your career choices and/or passions?*

CC: It has. During my last year at UMB, I co-founded the One World Foundation (OWF), a non-profit that provides volunteer opportunities overseas for young people of color. Studying AsAmSt as an independent and interdisciplinary program influenced my desire to build OWF. I learned that while it is important to know your roots, it is just as important to learn about others. We are communities in a community.

I made a lot of connections relevant to my work with the One World Foundation. I am acquainted with people who are interested in the same population we're targeting and that makes marketing easier.

AsAmSt Alumni Network Notes

**What project was the most important to you?*

CC: The most important project was one that never grew and eventually died. I tried to start a program under AASO that would keep a database of Asian international and domestic students with interest in using their language skills for volunteer and job opportunities. We had more volunteer opportunities than paid opportunities and I think most people were pursuing paid opportunities.

**In connection to the Asian American community, what issue or cause would you like to continue to contribute to in the future?*

CC: I've been interested in connecting with the elderly Chinese who collect bottles and cans in Boston for a living. I imagine their jobs are dangerous and unsanitary and I do not know of any initiatives focused on this population. I tried rounding up people who speak different Chinese dialects to outreach but it didn't work out. I hope to pursue this project again. I hope others pursue it, too.

**A recurring theme in many Asian American Studies classes connects to the concept of "Voice, Space and Rights." All of which the local Asian American communities struggle to claim. Which of the three do you think is the most important for the AsAmSt communities to claim?*

CC: Out of the three, I think voice is most important for Asian American communities. The idea of space and community is very organic and I feel unsure about where it ranks in importance, though I am very sure it is important. Some residents of ethnic communities would like to preserve their neighborhoods, while others see it as an ethnic ghetto and temporary home. I'm unsure how to respond to and respect both perspectives. Rights, if we are speaking on legal terms such as civil rights, I feel confident are being provided to Asian Americans. And while there is room for progress, I feel optimistic about future developments in civil rights for Asian Americans and other Americans.

Voice is important because Asian American culture is often misunderstood and the most difficult to understand. It needs constant clarification and re-definition. Immigration continues and that continues to change who we are. Voice defines how we treat ourselves and how others treat us.

Charles hopes to continue his work with the community. He will be studying Social Policy at Boston University's School of Social Work in the Fall of 2008.

For more information on One World Foundation:
<http://www.theoneworldfoundation.org/>

Richard Lee Sheehan, alumnus from the famed graduating class of 1993 and the second student in UMB history to design and complete an individual major in Asian American Studies, recently returned to campus and visited the "Asians in the US" course that he had taken as an undergraduate 18 years ago when some students in the current class were still babies. Students were impressed with how much Richard still remembered from his experiences in the same course. In turn, Richard was inspired to think about opportunities in Asian American Studies now available to this new generation of students. The day after his visit, Richard sent us a generous donation specifically to support AsAmSt student travel for conferences and field trips.

Another prominent AsAmSt alumnus from the class of 1993, **Chheub Bun Heng**, also recently visited the campus. Working closely with fresh AsAmSt alumni, **Rathanak Bobby Pres** (2007) and **Chealyn Tim** (2006), Chheub helped coordinate the successful Khmer Community New Year Celebration in Lynn, a commitment he has made annually for the past several years. Several current AsAmSt students were also organizers or participants. Chheub is Immigrant and Refugee Health Manager for the Massachusetts Asians and Pacific Islanders for Health (www.mapforhealth.org/site/maapp/).

What are some other AsAmSt alumni doing?

Hyun Jung Lee, who completed her Asian American Studies individual major in 1997 is currently a doctoral student at Teachers College – Columbia University in New York. **Lola Tom**, who completed her Asian American Studies individual major in 1998 is currently Director of Admissions for the Braintree Landing Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center, and a leader in several local Chinese community organizations. **Lorial Crowder**, who completed her AsAmSt program-of-study in 2003, finished her Master's Degree in Social Work at Hunter College in New York and recently co-founded the Filipino Adoptees Network (FAN), a cyber community for adult Filipino adoptees (www.filipino-adoptees-network.org).

One of the core assets of the Asian American Studies Program has always been the caring and connections that former students and alumni have continued to share with us. We hope to strengthen the AsAmSt alumni network through print and electronic outreach and web-based tools such as Facebook, as well as projects and programs. Please contact AsianOutreach@gmail.com and Peter.Kiang@umb.edu to stay in touch and be involved.

Asian American Studies Graduation Celebration

Tuesday, May 26, 2008

1:00-3:30pm

Chancellor's Conference Room
Quinn Administration Building, 3rd floor

Come celebrate the work of undergraduate AsAmSt majors and programs-of-study students and other graduating AsAmSt students who have made a difference.

“Feel the excitement, taste the culture, know who you are...”

For more info contact: Peter.Kiang@umb.edu

RIPPLES Asian American Studies Newsletter

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UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program offers culturally-responsive instruction in the classroom with holistic practices of mentoring, community-building, service-learning, and advocacy to address the social and academic needs of students as well as the critical capacity-building needs of local Asian American communities. For more info, questions, comments on the program and/or newsletter please contact us.



Top: AsAmSt 423/390, visiting Mt. Hope Cemetery and mapping Chinese burial grounds in Fall of 2007.

Bottom: AsAmSt 225, visiting the Dorchester Vietnam War Memorial in April of 2008. (photo credits: Peter Kiang)

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