Spring 2003 No. 14

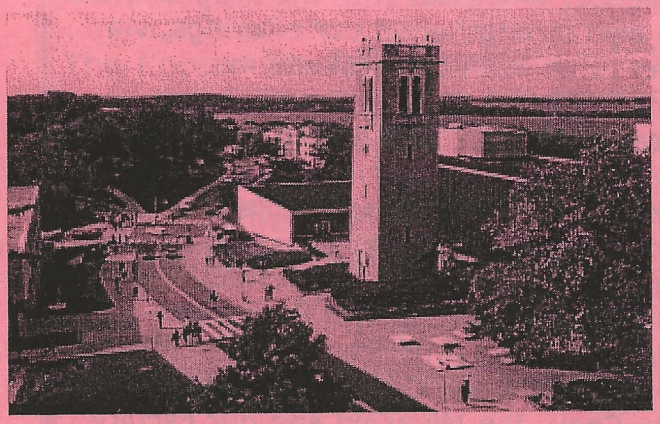
Asian American Studies Program
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Bridges

New Faces on Observatory

by Khamphian Vang

The Asian American Studies Program welcomes four professors to the University community this school year. All teach in the Asian American Studies Program as well as in their respective fields. Professors Victor Bascara, Leslie Bow, and Grace Hong have appointments in the English Department. Professor Lisa Nakamura teaches in the Communication Arts Department. Their presence on campus is part of a new effort to revitalize the Asian American Studies Program.



AASP is fortunate to have all four professors because of their extensive work in Asian American issues. Professor Bascara earned his doctorate degree from Columbia in Comparative Literature. He focuses on late 19th to 20th century Asian American Literature. He is working on his first book, currently titled "Unburdening Empire: Asian American Cultural Politics and the Emergence of United States Imperialism." Professor Bow's

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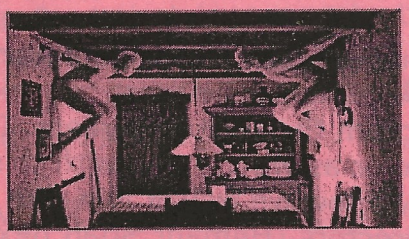
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Bridges is a newsletter of the University of Wisconsin Asian American Studies Program. Correspondence should be directed to:

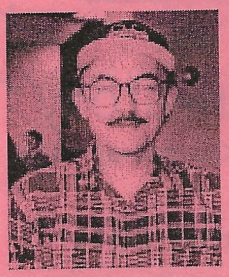
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Bridges

Spring 2003

From the Director



While our newsletter has been on hiatus for some time now, don't assume the Program has remained stagnant. Let me describe the state of Asian American Studies at the UW. The most important development these past 2 years has been the addition of 3 new faculty to the Program. Victor Bascara comes to us via Georgia State University, Grace Hong from Princeton, and Leslie Bow from the University of Miami (Florida). They each hold an appointment with English and us. Along with Rhacel Parrenas (Asian American Studies and Women's Studies), we now have an excellent contingent upon which we can continue to build a reputation of excellence. While not with the Program, we have also strengthened our offerings, via cluster hires, with Lisa Nakamura (Communication Arts), who will teach courses of direct relevance to Asian Americans. What is particularly exciting to me is that these faculty bring scholarship and community together. For those of us who have been trying to create a critical mass of faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Asian American Studies, these are truly exciting days. Of course, others like Peggy Choy, Jan Miyasaki and our Faculty Advisory Committee have continued to fight the good fight for Asian American Studies and Asian American communities.

During the period since the last newsletter, we have also added other key components to the Program staff. Kathleen Oriedo ("Katie"), our Program Assistant, and the person who really runs the office, has worked with us for almost two years now, coming over from the other side of the tracks, from state employment. She has breathed new life into how things are done here. I am sorry to report, however, that she may not be with the program after this year. Sooil Kim (better known as Pascal) has been our Project Assistant these past two years, and he is responsible for outreach with Asian American student and community organizations, the annual film festival as well as other projects. Pascal just recently passed his pre-lims in the field of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies. CONGRATS Pascal.

While the remainder of the newsletter will highlight some of the Program participants, I wanted to close by noting that Asian American Studies at the UW-Madison, is alive and well, despite what naysayers (at times including myself) have said about our survival. The next stage of our progression may be as part of an entity, which should include us, Chicano Studies and Native American Studies. Whether it is called Comparative Ethnic Studies, Comparative American Studies or some other title, we need to consider our role in it. Until we can achieve a measure of autonomy, especially in terms of hiring on our own, the Program will lack true self-determination. This new entity will be perhaps the most critical issue for the Program the next few years. I won't be the Director as we grapple with this future. But I know we will all join with our next two directors (Hemant Shah next year and most probably Leslie Bow the year after) in setting things up for an even brighter future.
Thanks.

Michael Thornton
Professor,
African American Studies Department

Director,
Asian American Studies Program

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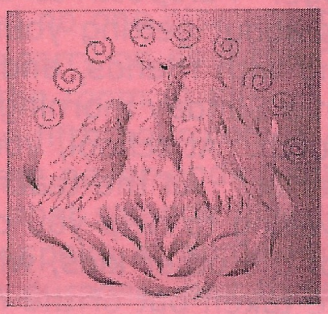
interests lie in Asian American literature, ethnic American literature, feminist theory, interethnic relations and segregation. Professor Hong specializes in women of color literature. She is also working on a book, centering on race, gender, and American modernity issues. Professor Nakamura finished her dissertation at the University of New York. Her focus is in American media, primarily the internet, and the effects of it on the Asian American community.

Professor Hong expressed her respect for her fellow colleagues. Professor Bascara is eager about developing programs such as the Asian American Studies Program and hopes to make a positive change in the University. Professor Nakamura aims to enroll more Asian American students into her courses. In the Fall of 2003, she will be offering a course on Asian Americans in the Media (Film and Television). Professor Bow hopes to add courses that incorporate the analysis of sexuality and gender in addition to exploring a cross-racial focus for courses offered in the program.

On diversity, all have expressed their excitement about working with faculty and students to further educate the University campus on issues facing the Asian American community. "With the faculty of Asian American Studies, I'm looking forward to reinvigorating and expanding the course offerings in Asian American Studies and the critical race studies on the UW campus," says Professor Bow.

NEWS & UPDATES:

Check out our newly updated website:
http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/aasp/
Webmaster: Dan Kaneshiro



The Korean Student Association (KSA) will be holding a soccer tournament.
**Date is subject to change.

When: May 3, 2003
Where: Natatorium Field
Time: TBA
Contact: Daniel H. Jun,
dhjun@students.wisc.edu





Salt Bread

by Khamphian Vang

You grow up in this land called American—"land of the free" and "land of opportunity." But you don't really know or understand what that means. The ways of life in America seem familiar to you and you go with the flow of things. As a child growing into adulthood, things change. Perspectives change.

Life is about getting your clothes dirty, playing with friends, and eating cupcakes on a Sunday morning before going to church. At school, you are treated "special." All the teachers are eager and willing to help you out. You and some of the other kids, who are just like you, are taken out of the regular classroom for two hours every day. At one o'clock in the afternoon, after recess, you and the other kids, who are just like you, line up in the hallway with books under one arm. The kid behind you always tries to push you off the black line in the tile floor pattern. Rocking back and forth, you try your hardest not to let your feet slip off the black line.

"Stop!" You shout at him, wrinkling your brows. Then you snicker and giggle along with the rest of the kids. When the teacher comes out, everyone falls silent. The teacher looks at you, turns her back, and then starts walking down the hallway. That is your cue to follow.

Trailing the footsteps of the giant, you all walk quietly with your heads down. The pattern of the waxed floors doesn't interest you anymore. There are ten of you in the stale room. "ESL" is what they call it. You don't know what it means. The teacher is nice; she shows you a few pictures, and you're supposed to recite words after her. You roll your tongue flawlessly. Only the perfect English pronunciation is allowed. You don't dream of speaking it any other way.

At home, Mom and Dad talk in a strange language, and you respond back to them in that same strange language, stumbling on some of the words. It starts to feel weird to speak that strange language. Thank heavens they don't make you talk like that at school.

Your grandma sits by the window. She is sewing. You silently laugh at her for wearing those big pink bifocals. You'll never know just how she makes such beautiful artwork from pieces of colored thread and white cloth. Looking at them always makes you smile.

"I'll teach you someday when you get older," she says, pinching your cheeks.

You take a moment to gaze at the piece of cloth in her delicate hands. It feels like magic. Then you take off your backpack, throw it on the couch, and run off to play with the other kids. For dinner you scarf a bowl of rice with a side dish of greens and fried pork skins.

Suddenly things around you start to change once again. The kids at your new school are strangers. Everything and everyone is different. In the hallway, a kid at your school calls you a "chink." You glance in his direction, but you don't say anything. You just keep walking to class.

You find out that chink means something horrible, something you don't

continued on next page

like. When you get home, you look in the mirror, and suddenly, you notice something different about yourself. Your skin is tinted yellow, your hair is jet black, and extremely straight, your eyes are smaller than the other kids' eyes, and you nose is flat. The other kids at school don't look like you. Some are brown and others are white. But they don't talk like you talk to your parents in that strange language. All of these things are confusing, but you keep quiet.

During lunchtime, you hold your books under your left arm while trying to balance the lunch tray with your right hand. Your black eyes search the lunchroom for an empty seat. Smiling, you walk to the table where your friends are sitting. Is the last seat taken? You glance down and see someone's feet reaching from the other side, resting on it. You don't understand. It feels like someone is squeezing your little heart so tight you can't breathe. You walk up the crowded aisle to the last table and sit down. With your feet barely touching the floor, you sit there and stare straight ahead. You try not to look at the table where the other girls are sitting. They're talking and laughing together. At that moment, you wish you were like them. You hate yourself. Grabbing a piece of bread, you slowly nibble the crust. A tear falls down your cheek and soaks the bread. The salt stain stays on your lips, but the rest seems to fade like a dream.

These days you wake up extra early to iron your clothes and pike on makeup. And when your mother sees you, she yells (in that strange language), "You're wearing too much makeup."

Humming to the new Jewel song playing on the radio, you pretend not to hear her. When everything seems just right, you quickly run up the street waving your arms to catch the yellow school bus before it turns the corner. You sink into the plastic dark green seats, relieved that it didn't leave without you. Once inside the yellow-tinted rooms of the tall brick building, you walk straight to your group. You talk in that strange language, while catching up on the latest gossip. You laugh and giggle at what they are saying and no one else around knows why. You carry on as if the other kids aren't in the room at all.

When fifth hour comes along, you stand in the never-ending lunch line talking in that strange language you once only spoke at home—sometimes loudly, on purpose, just to see how others react. You laugh when they give weird looks to the person standing next to them. Looking across the room, you glare at those like you who refuse to acknowledge your similarity or are afraid to. They are always working a little bit harder to be accepted, and to fit in, but even they are never really accepted.

All the while, you're wrapped up in your little world. It's all you have and everything you know. It never occurs to you to think about your future. You realize that there will always be people who will judge you based on your appearance. This realization has changed your forever.

Every day is a struggle and it never seems to end. Ever day is a constant battle to find out who you are. Your voice is the only thing you have.

continued on next page

Graduate Student Speaks On First Year in Program

by Dan Kaneshiro

The Robert M. Lafollette School of Public Affairs sits on top of Observatory Hill, overlooking Lake Mendota and most of the UW campus. Lafollette offers Master degrees both in domestic (MPA) and International public affairs (MIPA), as well as a concentration option in either Public Administration or Policy Analysis. As a first year student at Lafollette, I have benefited from a mix of both academic and real life training that the program offers toward an eventual career in public service.

The MPA degree has sometimes been referred to as a "public oriented MBA", being that many MPA students are interested in working for non-profits and government work, as opposed to working solely in the private business sector. Lafollette provides a challenging and reputable domestic program in public affairs based in the capitol city of the State of Wisconsin.

Appealing to the "Wisconsin Idea" and in the spirit of "Fighting Bob" Lafollette, the school encourages students to complement the academic side of public policy with actual field experiences through internships and projects with local, state and federal government agencies.

For Workshop in Public Policy Analysis with Professor Andrew Reschovsky, I am participating with a group assigned to the Legislative Council in Madison to do consulting work on research on future open records policy in Wisconsin.

Another group project has been in a research seminar in health policies in Wisconsin's communities with Professor Dennis Dresang. For this course we have been investigating health issues affecting the Hmong community in Wausau, WI.

My future plans include a public policy executive internship either in Washington D.C. or in Honolulu this upcoming summer, and Law school, through the dual degree program in Lafollette and the UW Law school.

Website link:
http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu

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Sometimes it's not always heard, but you learn to deal with it.

Once in a while, you sit at home gazing into the mirror at your reflection. And you give yourself a smirk and wonder how the hell they came up with such a thing. You sit there for hours just thinking about how cool it is that this silver piece of glass can reflect the smallest detail. You wish it didn't because you are trying to hide that zit on your chin. You make funny faces at yourself and stretch your face every which way. You wonder, what do people see when they look at you? Who do they think you are? Who do they think they are—those people who stare at you and speak to you in that tone? You grow sad thinking about those whom you will never know, and those who can never know you.

First printed in "Yell-Oh! Girls," an young Asian American women anthology, copyright 2001. Reprinted with the permission of the author. For more information, visit http://www.yellohgirls.com.

Restaurant Review

Sa-Bai Thong,
A Thai Treat Close to Home

by Khamphian Vang & Dan Kaneshiro

Host: Arom Wichitchu

Central Location:
2840 University Ave., Madison, WI 53705
Tel: 608-238-3100
Hours: M-S, 11:00am-10:00pm

West Location:
6802 Odana Road, Madison, WI 53719
Tel: 608-828-9565
Hours: M-F 11:00am-2:30pm, 4:30pm-9:00pm, Sat 11:00pm-10:00pm, Sun 5:00pm-9:00pm

Sa-Bai Thong offers a real taste of Thailand in our small town of Madison. It offers a variety of authentic Thai dishes, using old family recipes, to satisfy every palette. Since they opened over 11 years ago, they have a build-up of faithful customers who return for the quality of cooking and friendly atmosphere.



The menu is overwhelming. For appetizers, there is a diversity of flavors. *Satay*, a skewered marinated chicken complemented with a peanut sauce and cucumber salad,leaves you asking for more. Other starters include, *Mieng Sabai*, long rice,shrimp, chicken and peanuts wrapped in lettuce leaf and house sauce, *Nuah Dad Deaw*, marinated beef with red house sauce, and *Toong Thong*, fried specialty dumplings served with fresh pineapple and house sauce. Also try *Tom Ka,* a flavorful soup with a coconut milk base, with shrimp.

For entrées, the *Banana Salmon* is an excellent choice. The salmon is seasoned and marinated in exotic spices and steamed wrapped in a banana leaf. It is served with Sabai green sauce. I preferred to have it without the sauce. Another entrée to try is the *Crispy Duck*. Fried pieces of duck are served with a range of vegetables in a sweet and sour sauce.

Drinks and dessert finish off the long menu. Thai Iced Coffee and Thai Iced Tea are thirst quenching. Bananas in a soft, rice wrapping are fried and served with a chocolate sauce, whipped cream, and cherries.

All dishes are prepared fresh daily. Customers have a choice of heat level. "Tiny," "Careful," "Adventure", or "Fire." Prices range from $6 to $8 for lunch and $6 to $15 for Dinner. It is a small price to pay for a big taste. Take out, deliveries, and catering services are available at both locations. Check out the Odana Road location to sample some of Sa-Bai Thong's specialty dishes that are not available at the restaurant on University. For more information, go to: www.sabaithong.com or www.foodspot.comsabaithonguniversity.

Spring 2003

11th Annual Asian American Film Festival, February 28 - March 1

All events are free and open to the public. Seating is limited. Screenings take place in 4070 Vilas Hall, 821 University Avenue. No food or drink is permitted in the theatre. For more information, call (608) 262-3627, email Katherine, *kaspring@wisc.edu* or Pascal, *skim23@wisc.edu*, or visit http://cinema.wisc.edu.

PLEASE NOTE: The screening of *Amazonia,* which appeared on the Cinematheque Spring 2003 poster, has been cancelled.

Friday, February 28, 7:30 p.m.
Director's Spotlight: Anita Chang in Person

Anita Chang is both a filmmaker and videographer based in San Francisco, she has worked as a youth counselor and civil rights investigator/ activist in New York City. Her films and videos are both politically motivated and aesthetically innovative. She currently guest lectures, curates and writes on film, and teaches video and film production, as well as courses on alternative documentary and experimental filmmaking.

She Wants to Talk to You
(Nepal/US, 2001, BetaSP, 29 min.)
Three 13-year-old Nepali girls bravely take the unique opportunity to share with the filmmaker their ideas on marriage, friendship, love, loneliness, dreams, and God. Their insights provide a complex and poignant framework for three Nepali women living in the U.S. to reflect on their own struggle, exile, and quest for liberation.





An elegy to our small selves
(US, 2002,16mm, 10 min.)
Chang attempts to re-forge the links between humans and animals. The beautifully juxtaposed images remind us of the fragility of beauty, nature, and humanity.

Mommy, What's Wrong?
(US, 1997, 16mm, 14 min.)
"A young woman's relationship to her mother and sense of personal history is revealed in an evocative docu-memoir composition of home movie footage, recordings and the subconscious thread of a recurring dream..." (NAATA)

Saturday, March 1, 4:30 p.m.
Interactive Discussion with Grace Poore

Personal experience drives the focus of her documentaries and the passion for her work as an activist who produces and uses videos to advocate for an end to violence against women and girls. Her award-wining videos blur the line between those who are survivors of violence and those who are traditionally thought of as "experts" on violence, and much of her work looks at how mainstreaming the movement to stop domestic violence and incestuous sexual assault.

Saturday, March 1, 7:30 p.m.
Director's Spotlight: Grace Poore in Person

The Children We Sacrifice
(India/Sri Lanka/Canada/ US, 2000, BetaSP, 61 min.)
Shot in India, Sri Lanka, Canada, and the U.S., this award-winning and widely screened documentary explores the universal crime of incestuous sexual abuse through the prism of the South Asian experience.



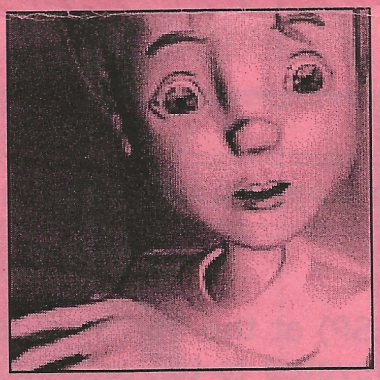
Excerpt from *Voices Heard, Sisters Unseen*
(BetaSP, 15 min.)
This powerful and inspirational work weaves perspectives of battered women in the United States who are frequently overlooked and ignored because they are deaf, sex workers, undocumented ("illegal aliens"), lesbians, have disabilities, or live with HIV/AIDS.

Sunday, March 2, 7:30 p.m.

Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet
(USA/Tibet, 1998, VHS, 50 min.)
Directed and Produced by Tenzing Sonam and Rita Sarin. Written by Tenzing Sonam.
This superbly shot film documents a rarely acknowledged chapter of Tibetan history: between 1957 and 1969, the CIA armed, financed, and helped train Tibetan guerillas.

Sunday, March 2, 8:30 p.m.
Animated Shorts Showcase
From stop-motion to claymation, the Festival presents the best recent animated works.

Little Red Plane
(US, 2002, VHS, 8 min.)
Directed by Wira Winata.
In a tree house, safe from the world around him, a little boy immerses himself in dreams of flying.



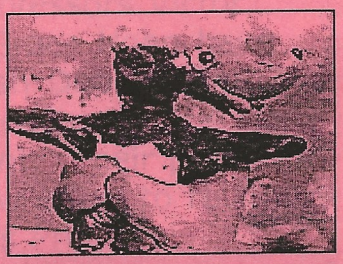
***Manhang* (Ephemeral Epiphany)**
(US, 2002, VHS, 5 min.)
Directed by Hyungsuk Kim.
ManHang means "the way to reach true knowledge", and this animated short explores the themes of suffering after birth and salvation after death.

***Pedro and Tony?* (US, 2001, VHS, 19 min.)**
Directed by Don Thomas.
In this claymated shorted, melodrama ensues when a rooster and dog engage in a kind of love you don't see on *Sesame Street*.

***Vision Test* (US, 2001, VHS, 6 min.)**
Directed by Wes Kim.
What begins as a routine eye exam turns into a chilling dramatization of attitudes towards minorities in the United States.

Vessel Wrestling
(US, 2001, 16mm, 13 min.)
Directed by Lisa Yu.
Hairy, blood-sugar-sex-magic happens around dinnertime in this sensual claymation household. Winner, 2002 Slamdance: Best Experimental Short.

Iceberg
(US, 1999, VHS, 6 min.)
Directed by Aaron Yamasato.



This hilarious, award-winning claymation parody is told through the eyes of the innocent wildlife inhabitants floating on the doomed iceberg that fateful night it collided with the Titanic.

Sunday, March 2, 9:30 p.m.
Political Shorts Showcase

***Death Threat* (Canada, 1998, VHS, 19 min.)**

Directed by Zarqa Nawaz.
Death Threat tells the charming story of a young Muslim woman who has written an appallingly bad Harlequin-type novel and is struggling to find a publisher. After receiving her fifty-ninth rejection, she decides that controversy is the only way to catch a publisher's eye; but her exploitation of cultural stereotypes eventually backfires on her.

The Frog in the Well
(USA, 2001, VHS, 29 min.)
Directed by Cervando David Martinez.
Hoh-Kun Yuen came from Hong Kong to the U.S. to study physics in 1949, but he became a passionate observer and recorder of many social upheavals between 1963 and 1997, including the Free Speech Movement, the rise of the Black Panthers, the anti-war and anti-apartheid movements, and the Gulf Wars.

Spring 2003

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Madison, WI 53706

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM MISSION

The Asian American Studies Program (AASP) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is an interdisciplinary program devoted to the teaching, research, and cultural activities of Americans of Asian ancestry. The Program serves as a teaching and resource center not only for Asian Americans but for the University community as a whole.

AASP seeks to educate the University community on Asian American issues in a variety of ways. It offers an array of courses devoted to the historical, political, literary, sociological, psychological, and educational concerns of Asian Americans. To supplement course work and to introduce the community to the creative achievements of Asian Americans, the Program also sponsors many events from film and video festivals to lectures and readings by emerging and prominent Asian American writers and scholars.