



## Director's Welcome



**DR. ANNA PEGLER-GORDON**  
APA STUDIES DIRECTOR

Writing this during the 2016 presidential election, I am excited about how elections can engender political engagement. But I am also concerned about the ways that, during elections, Asian American voices are often marginalized, overlooked and even silenced.

Voter turnout for Asian Americans is lower than for other groups. Only 57 percent of eligible Asian Americans voted in the last two presidential elections, much lower than the 75 percent of African Americans and non-Hispanic Whites who turned out. In most communities, as education and earning increase, so do voting rates, but we don't see the same pick up among Asian Americans. In fact, the gap in voter turnout between non-Hispanic whites and Asian Americans is greater at higher levels of education and earning.

Why is this? First, little attention is paid to Asian Americans and the issues that concern them. Less than 20 percent of Asian Americans live in competitive presidential battlegrounds (such as Michigan), so they are much less likely to gain the attention of presidential candidates and

their campaigns. Second, and related, is the issue of eligibility. Fewer Asian Americans than other groups are eligible to vote. Three-quarters of Asian American adults were born outside the United States and only 60 percent of them have become naturalized U.S. citizens. Finally, there is a problem of access. The complex and often convoluted language on many ballots means that, if naturalized citizens don't live in an area where they can secure voting materials in their home language or don't know that they can bring an assistant into the voting booth, they may be less likely to vote.

However, throughout the last year, the MSU APA Studies Program and our students have been actively involved in addressing these problems. In November 2015, APIA-Vote-MI came to MSU to kick off a non-partisan voter registration drive by APA Student Groups. In February 2016, the APA Studies program mounted a summit on "Asian American Activism, Politics and Social Media." And reflecting the success of Asian Americans in running for elected office, we were joined at the Summit by State Representatives Sam Singh—an MSU grad from East Lansing—and Stephanie Chang—a Detroit Representative who is the first Asian American woman to serve in the Michigan State Legislature. This fall, we are planning a session on the significance of the 2016 election for Asian Americans!

## Graduate Spotlight—Rachel Huang

**What major and specializations did you graduate with?**

**RH:** I graduated with a BA in Psychology, Minor in Asian Studies and Asian Pacific American Studies.

**What are your plans now that you have graduated?**

**RH:** My plans for the future are to gain experience and get ready for graduate school within the next year or so.

**What are the benefits of being part of APA Studies?**

**RH:** The benefits of being in APA Studies is the journey of finding your own identity through the stories and history of others of all back-grounds. This field of study goes beyond papers, readings, and discussions: it broadens the scope of our understanding of the world. You begin to see the larger picture of our society in which we are tiny, insignificant pieces. As a Chinese American, I believe that APA

Studies is intrinsically a part of forming the Asian American identity. For me, APA Studies was the answer to the questions I never even knew I had about who I was in this world. Every

lesson resonates far beyond the classroom; after most classes, I would walk across campus in a pensive daze, widening the awareness I had of the world and my own identity. For once, I felt my heart afire with passion in the classroom setting. To become engrossed to the core about the pursuit of knowledge: that is a not a just a benefit but truly a treasure.



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## Activism, Politics, and Social Media Summit

On Saturday, February 27th, 2016 at the East Lansing Kellogg Center, the APA Studies Program hosted the *Activism, Politics, and Social Media Summit*. The Summit aimed to raise Asian American awareness by thinking through the linkages between activism and politics with social media. It was a full day packed with understanding the key issues that face the APA community.

The summit began with an opening address by Anna Pegler-Gordon, APA Studies Director. Anna outlined the significance voting has within the APA community while highlighting some current issues including the Peter Liang case in which protests erupted amongst various Asian American communities (predominantly among Chinese Americans) who were protesting the disciplinary action taken against Peter Liang, a Chinese American officer who murdered Akai Gurley, a black American. The controversy centered on Akai's murder and the punishment directed toward this officer in lieu of the consistent pattern of acquittals given to many white police officers who have been similarly involved in the murders of many black Americans.

Following Anna's opening, APIAVote-Michigan facilitated a workshop centered on the importance of voting. Brendan Wu - the Community Organizer, and Sarah Vang - the Civic Engagement Intern and MSU undergraduate student minoring in APA Studies helped summit attendees utilize personal stories as the impetus in finding issues that mattered to them. As participants identified their values, they then were encouraged to translate these values into how they can be understood as public policies.

Immediately after the APIA-Vote workshop, Michigan State Representatives Mrs. Stephanie Chang and Mr. Sam Singh served on a panel sharing their journey towards becoming politicians. This panel was moderated by Maggie Chen Hernandez, Associate Director of OCAT who was among the first MSU staff to support the development of the APA Studies Program.

The highlight of the summit was our keynote speaker, Phil Yu better known for his internet blogging pseudonym, "Angry Asian Man." His talk centered on his journey towards becoming politically conscious of issues within the Asian American community, which then transformed into his current work as an internet blogger on Asian American news, media, and politics. Through his ability to navigate social media, he has been able to empower Asian Americans by challenging racist and demeaning characterizations of Asian Americans for over 15 years! Understanding his journey towards self-discovery is critical towards understanding the passion behind what he does. As Yu explains, his awakening happened during an Asian American Studies class and underlined how critically important ethnic studies courses are toward marginalized communities. Yu described how proud he was of his alma mater, Northwestern, for recently establishing an Asian American Studies undergraduate major.

Closing out the summit, Phil facilitated a workshop entitled, "Creating an Online Movement." After walking participants through the impact of social media, Yu had us think through the significance of newer forms of social media such as "snapchat."



Participants worked to think through the power of social media to mobilize people into action by coming up with a plan to utilize snapchat for this year's presidential election.

The summit was an excellent beginning motivation for the urgency in the upcoming elections. The audience was a diverse mixture of MSU students, faculty and staff. In addition to members within the MSU community, several people drove from Grand Rapids and the greater Detroit area. The APA Studies Program looks forward to continuing the dialogue on the impact of the elections on the APA community post-election. Stay tuned.

## Student Leadership! Asian American Graduate Association

The involvement of student leadership within the APA Studies Program this past year was thrilling! With the help of some motivated MSU graduate students, we were able to support the beginnings of the Asian Pacific American Graduate Association. These graduate students (both Master's and PhDs) ranged from various disciplines including Student Affairs, HALE (Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Learning), Rhetoric & Writing and more.

Our graduate students have been very involved through their support of the APA Studies Program and have contributed in numerous ways. Stephanie Mahnke, a PhD student in Rhetoric & Writing co-presented a session during SSC 293 "Intro. to APA Studies" with Dr. Terese Monberg helping students learn about Filipino American colonization and decolonization histories. The photo in the upper right features several graduate students introducing themselves at the *Activism, Politics, and Social Media Summit* on February 27th. The group was also very active in helping coordinate this past year's Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month Kick-Off that took place on April 22, 2016 and featured Frances Kai-Hwa Wang, a contributor and columnist for NBCNews.com Asian America. At the event, these graduate students showcased their

research and areas of interest through poster board displays. Our student leadership also took shape as several of our students from SSC 293 were motivated to serve on the Asian Pacific American Student Organization (APASO) eboard for the 2016-2017 academic year. From left to right are Emily-Brielle Verzosa Liebau (Co-President), Sarah Vang (Co-President) and Quyen Hoang (Vice President). Emily was also instrumental in suggesting and coordinating bringing Frances Kai-Hwa Wang to campus for the kick-off.



## Open House/Photo Exhibit Kick-Off!

APA Studies began the 2015-2016 year with an open house and Photography exhibit featuring John Ra, an MSU alum and former Program Assistant for APA Studies. The title of his work "Peace Love Empathy: Follow The Sound" was a beautiful display of John's brilliant artistic vision. The images were diverse capturing the diversity of John's experiences around the world. Currently John is working in Boston as a UX designer for a startup business. To view more work by Genre, visit: <http://genre.me/>.



The photo exhibit was an exciting and creative way to kick-off the MSU school year and functioned as both a welcome for the APA Studies Program and APASO (Asian Pacific American Student Organization). APASO incorporated the photo exhibit opening with their Kick-Off event called "Break. Create. Innovate."

## Programming for 2016-2017 Academic Year "EmPOWERing Asian America"

Now more than ever, it is imperative for Asian Americans to vocalize how policies locally, nationally and globally will have an impact on our communities. How can we help shape our programming efforts to both support and centralize invaluable work about, for and from the Asian American community? How can we debunk the perception of Asian American passiveness and apathy? How can our programming efforts empower our current work while inspiring those to continue all the work that needs to be done?

By utilizing the theme "EmPOWERing Asian America," the Asian Pacific American Studies Program aims to strengthen the ongoing efforts of those currently working within the Asian Pacific American Studies fields and related fields, while motivating leaders and

future leaders to pursue scholarship, resources, and policies that focus on the value of our communities. We are actively seeking programming efforts that empower Asian America whether this is through the sharing of research and scholarship, leadership development, mentorship, arts, community outreach, activism and more. Through an intentional celebration of our accomplishments and struggles, we hope to define innovative ways of shaping how we are included within our American society.

Do you know of any speakers or events taking place at MSU that fit within this programming vision? The APA Studies Program would like to collaborate with other departments or organizations to create further awareness. If you want to get involved, please contact us at [apaspec@msu.edu](mailto:apaspec@msu.edu) or call (517) 353-9140.



## Thank you John Lee!

Dr. D. John Lee, who recently retired from MSU, was instrumental in the development of the university's Asian Pacific American Studies Program, Asian Pacific American Faculty and Staff Association (APAFSA) and was a founding APA Studies Program Board Member. Starting work at the MSU Counseling Center in 1999, his service, support and advocacy for the APA community will surely be missed. In addition, John's daughter, Kristen Lee, majored in journalism at MSU and was one of the APA Studies program's early graduates, earning a specialization in 2008. Be on the lookout for Dr. D. John Lee this year as a guest speaker in various upcoming APA Studies programs.

*(A few words from John Lee):*

Some of you may have wondered what happened to Dr. John Lee? To make a long story short, I celebrated my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday this year and decided to take a leave to retirement. I am sorry for my quick departure but there were some circumstances that were out of my control.

I am currently teaching two graduate courses at Western Michigan University and doing two days of clinical work at an outpatient clinic. (Some of you know that I live in Grand Rapids). It is has been fun to return the classroom and I am enjoying the students who are motivated and eager to learn about multicultural counseling and psychology.

## Film Screening of *TESTED* with Director, Curtis Chin and distinguished MSU Faculty

On February 8, 2016, the APA Studies program in collaboration with the Julian Samora Research Institute, and the Department of Teacher Education, hosted a film screening and panel discussion of *TESTED*. This film was named one of the best films at 2015 Doc NYC film festival. Following the lives of several students, the film explores the pressures of studying for the standardized test that serves as the primary determinant for entrance into these elite high schools. As the film producers explain, "The gap in opportunities for different races in America remains extreme. Nowhere is this more evident than our nation's top public schools. In New York City, where blacks and Hispanics make up 70% of the city's school-aged population, they represent less than 5% at the city's most elite public high schools. Meanwhile Asian Americans make up as much as 73%. This documentary follows a dozen racially and socio-economically diverse 8<sup>th</sup> graders as they fight for a seat at one of these schools. Their only way in: to ace a single standardized test. *Tested* includes the voices of such education experts as Pedro Noguera and Diane Ravitch as it explores such issues as access to a high-quality public education, affirmative action, and the model-minority myth."

Following the film screening, Curtis Chin, the Director and one of the film's writers and producers spoke about his work with the film. Chin

I understand that the theme for this academic year's Asian Pacific American Studies Program is "empowerment."

As I enter this phrase of my career, I am reminded of what has empowered our APA community. First off, we keep our past alive by telling our individual and collective stories of survival and perseverance. Second, we pay close attention to our circumstances and discern our present challenges. And, thirdly, we recognize how far we still have to go to secure peace and justice in the future.

I intend to stay in touch and participate in any APA programs and events when possible. Thanks for all you have done for me and my family (Kristen says "Hi!").

I can be reached at [DJHNLEE@aol.com](mailto:DJHNLEE@aol.com) (yea, old school). Please stay in touch!



was the Director of the documentary *Vincent Who?* that explored the impact of the Vincent Chin murder case within the present. Chin was able to screen the documentary at MSU several years ago.

Joining Curtis Chin on the panel, Terah Venzant-Chambers, an Associate Professor of K-12 educational administration and Desiree Qin, an Associate Professor in Human Development & Family Studies. The panel was an engaging discussion about race, privilege, immigration, intersectionality that encompassed a range of perspectives.

## Publications and Awards

APA Studies professors and staff have been very active over the last year, earning accolades and reshaping the field of Asian American Studies. Due to limited space, here is a partial listing of some of their accomplishments.

### Naoko Wake, Ph.D.

Award: Honorary Faculty Certificate (for teaching excellence), Lyman Briggs College, Michigan State University, 2015. Forthcoming article: "Surviving the Bomb in America: Silent Memories and the Rise of Cross-national Identity," *Pacific Historical Review*, 2016.

### Sheng-Mei Ma, Ph.D.

Published- Single Author: *The Last Isle: Contemporary Film, Culture and Trauma in Global Taiwan*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015.

Co-editor with Patricia Haseltine: *Doing English in Asia: Global Literature and Culture*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2016

### Joseph M. Cousins, Ph. D

Working part-time with Meiji University—Michigan State University's new exchange partner—in the Center for Global Connections

### Steve Gold, Ph.D.

"Ethnic Economies" in John Stone, Rutledge Dennis, Polly Rizova, Anthony D. Smith, and Xiaoshuo Hou (eds.). *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, First Edition. Oxford and Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd. 2016.

"Race and Ethnic Consciousness," (with Paula Miller), George Ritzer (ed.), *Wiley/Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, Second Edition*, Malden MA, John Wiley and Sons, 2015.

### Anna Pegler-Gordon

Forthcoming article, "Debating the Racial Turn in U.S. Ethnic and Immigration History," in the *Journal of American Ethnic History*. She is also working with Dr. Madeline Hsu to establish a section for historians within the Association for Asian American Studies.

## Congratulations Mina Shin on her promotion as Assistant Director of Communications, Marketing and Outreach

"The Visiting International Professional Program (VIIP) is pleased to announce that Dr. Mina Shin has been appointed as Assistant Director of Communications, Marketing and Outreach, effective Sep 1, 2016. In this capacity, she will be responsible for developing and managing the strategic communications, marketing, branding, and outreach initiatives for VIIP. Shin will lead efforts to promote VIIP's mission and vision, build VIIP's reputation at MSU and beyond, and assist in recruiting efforts to attract more business opportunities." (taken from VIIP newsletter)



## Multi-Layered and Multi-Dimensional Identities—Andrea Louie

The APA Studies is excited to recognize the recently published book by Andrea Louie, Associate Professor of Anthropology at MSU and former Director of the APA Studies Program. Her second book *How Chinese Are You? The Complexity of Chinese Adoptee Identities* is a "comparative ethnographic study of white and Asian American adoptive parents over an eight year period."

*How Chinese Are You* has been critically acclaimed described by Sara K. Dorow, author of *Transnational Adoption* as "Louie breathes new life into the study of transnational Chinese adoption using a personal touch, a sympathetic critique, and a very readable ethnographic narrative. As the first large cohort of people adopted from China enters their twenties, Louie's work provides a welcome look at the multiple and innovative potentialities of constructing selves."

She has presented on her book at Pomona College Dennison University, Columbia University, for community groups in Boston and will now share her work on Michigan State University's campus on Wednesday, **November 2, 6:30PM** (International Center, Room 303). Light refreshments will be provided.



## Teaching the Movement in Michigan: A Civil Rights Initiative

As most Michiganders know from their own experience, there is limited coverage of civil rights in general and Asian American civil rights in particular in Michigan's K-12 social studies classrooms. In summer 2016, MSU APA Studies faculty Terese Guinsatao Monberg and Anna Pegler-Gordon started work supporting a new initiative, "Teaching the Movement in Michigan," coordinated by the Michigan Department of Education and community groups such as APIAVote-MI. The Asian American section of this initiative aims to strengthen the teaching of civil rights and Asian Americans across Michigan,

MSU faculty will help develop educational units relevant to Michigan Social Studies standards and will work on new teacher training initiatives. Students in fall 2016's Asian American History class are also writing document summaries to assist K-12 teachers as they integrate more Asian American materials into their social studies units. If you are a teacher or have an interest in this area, please get in touch with Anna Pegler-Gordon at [gordonap@msu.edu](mailto:gordonap@msu.edu) or Brendan Wu, community organizer at APIAVote-MI, [bwu@apiavotemi.org](mailto:bwu@apiavotemi.org).

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