

# MAASU NEWSLETTER

MIDWEST ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS UNION

2014 DECEMBER ISSUE 3

## EXECUTIVE COORDINATING COMMITTEE



TOP: G. EDA WANG (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR), DAPHNE YU (COMMUNICATIONS), VICTORIA YU (CHAIR), DREI PHA (PUBLIC RELATIONS), HOMELLE TADRY (TECHNICAL NETWORKING), STEPHANIE WANG (SECRETARY)

BOTTOM: CHRIS VO (PUBLIC RELATIONS), KENNY MOK (MEMBER OUTREACH), PETER LIMTHONGWIRATH (GRADUATE ADVISORY COUNCIL), JAMES YOUNG (COMMUNICATIONS), BEN NGUYEN (MEMBER OUTREACH), CRAIG BYLL (ADVOCACY), SCHYLER D'SOUZA (PROGRAMMING), KEVIN DAO (PROGRAMMING)

Dear MAASU Community,

A lot has happened in the past two months. The cases of Michael Brown and Eric Garner have set off waves of frustration across the country. People of all identities and backgrounds across the entire world, have been watching and demanding justice. Cases like Ferguson are not just simply a black versus white issue – it's a matter pertaining to all Americans. To Asian Americans. To you.

Why should this matter to us, you might ask. There are two crucial reasons. First, our communities understand and experience systemic violence and unjustified death very well. In 2003, Cau Bich Tran, a Vietnamese American, was killed by police officers. Fong Lee, a Hmong American, died after being shot eight times by the police in 2006. In both cases, there were no punishments at all. Thus, it is important for Asian Americans to stand up against police brutality. Second, although we suffer from systemic violence, this does not mean we are not complicit in reinforcing antiblack violence. As Asian Americans, we occupy a complex political space as the "model minority." The very essence of the model minority conigrates the Black community as the "problem minority." Thus, we cannot be complacent and need to work against antiblackness to demonstrate solidarity.

This is not just a moment, it is a movement. It is a time to critically think about how current institutions and systems lead to injustice. A time to engage in conversations and build coalitions to fight for change. These issues are by no means easy to grapple with but these are conversations that need to happen. This is not a time to be silent, rather it is a time to rise up and stand in solidarity with the Black community. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Two ways you can serve as allies in this movement are to (1) listen, educate yourself and actively engage on what is happening and (2) be a true ally – you cannot just call yourself an ally. It is not a sticker you can put on. Being an ally means taking action and being vocal about injustice.

We now encourage and challenge you. How will you, your campus or community approach these issues as this movement grows? As this critical point in history continues to unfold, what kind of legacy and impact do you want to leave behind?

Lastly, we leave you with this quote by Lesley McSpadden and Michael Brown, Sr., "...channel your frustration in ways that will make a positive change. We need to work together to fix the system that allowed this to happen."

Best Regards,

Victoria Yu, Chairwoman of MAASU

Peter Limthongvitain, Graduate Advisory Council of MAASU

## MEMBER SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT:

# UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

### DESCRIBE THE SPACE THAT THE ASIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OCCUPIES ON U OF M'S CAMPUS

Asian American Association at The University of Michigan is set, at its core, to be a social organization. We hope that through our events, activities, and collaborations we can provide a space where everyone can have a fun time and meet new people from all over campus. From this social foundation, what we think makes AAA unique and its own niche on campus is our cultural and service events. We incorporate social, cultural, and service events equally into our yearly calendar. From this, AAA is able to find a good middle ground between the three branches and our own niche on campus.

### WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC OR OVERALL GOALS FOR THE ORGANIZATION AS A WHOLE?

First and foremost, as a social organization, we primarily want our members to come to our events to make new friends and establish some new connections within the Asian American community. Furthermore, in addition to the social aspect, we hope that we are able to be as inclusive as possible when it comes to the many cultures that are present in our community. There are many A/PIA-interest organizations on campus but one of our main goals for AAA is to create a space that welcomes, ideally, all of those cultures and groups in our community. Lastly, another big AAA goal for this year is to just leave campus a little better than it was before. Whether that is creating a great event for the community to have for years to come or maybe just helping underclassmen transition smoothly into college life. We hope that AAA is able to build a tradition and legacy on campus so that future students are able to have the same great experiences and opportunities that we all have had.

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FACING AAA THIS YEAR?

One of the main challenges for AAA this year is the continuing process of molding and retooling who we are as an organization; this in large part has to do with our events. The foundation of AAA is our membership and the way that members are generally retained is through providing new and enjoyable events for which they can partake in. It is always a fun challenge to be innovative and build something fresh each year with the goal that hopefully we can create something that we become a AAA staple.

## ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC ISSUES (I.E. IMMIGRATION, IDENTITY) THAT AAA WANTS TO FOCUS MORE ON?

Identity is a very important topic on our campus. From the organization's point of view, identity is an important part of AAA because of the fact that we have so many different variations. Although our scope as an organization is focused more on cultural identity and bringing people together in that sense, we understand that the idea of identity is very fluid. What AAA tries to do is to create the space that welcomes any and all identities, which hopefully in turn makes our members more comfortable in their own identity, whether it be culturally related or not.

## WHAT ARE SOME FAVORITE EVENTS THAT AAA HAS DONE IN THE PAST?

One of our favorite events is the Multicultural Olympics. In this event, AAA invites many of the other Asian-interest organizations on campus to compete in a weeklong series of relays and events. At the end of the week, we tally up and calculate each organization's scores from each day to determine our winner! The Multicultural Olympics is an event that AAA hosts every year and we feel like it is an event that really brings our community together and allows for us to connect to students from other organizations through the spirit of friendly competition.

## IS THERE ANYTHING AAA HOPESTO GET MORE OUT OF FROM MAASU?

Many members of AAA have attended at least one MAASU event and we have heard nothing but great things. We would just hope that MAASU and the board continue to have great events and be a part of the Midwest A/PIA community.

# LEADERSHIP RETREAT REFLECTION

STEPHANIE WANG, SECRETARY

MAASU fall leadership retreat took place 8 weeks, bringing together 168 attendees from 20 schools all across the midwest. If you went, hopefully you saw some old faces and made friends with some new ones. If you didn't go, or want to hear someone else's perspective on the retreat, I have included a personal recap of the conference for your reading pleasure!

The format of the retreat was very similar to previous conferences, although I would characterize this year's as having a very casual atmosphere. The actual conference started at the very reasonable hour of 10:00 AM on Saturday morning. There was no big variety show during Friday night check-in, but a much more relaxed mixer full of jenga, karaoke, and good old-fashioned organic conversation. I'm not going to lie, I spent the majority of my MAASU LR experience engaged in debate and discussion with the people around me, picking their brains about the problems our campus and organizations face, and just the role of advocacy in the AAPI community in general. If anything, MAASU conferences always leave me with a lot to think about.

I was only able to attend one workshop out of the 16 that were offered this year due to my involvement on the Executive Coordinating Committee, but in general, you saw the usual fare of MAASU celebrities and scholars, as well as new young and bright faces that put on some truly interactive and engaging workshops. More than once I heard about people being their soul to the crowd about themes of failure, frustration, stress and love that interact as part of our identities and influence our leadership styles. The number one complaint about this year's workshops were that there just wasn't enough time in any of them to engage at the level of discussion people were hoping for.

The highlight of this year's retreat, however, was the banquet. Elegantly put on with amazing food (and delicious dessert), it had a great balance of short but meaningful speakers and a truly powerful entertainment component. The HereAndNow Theatre Company put on a riveting show that broke down all facets of "identity" in the Asian American context: from Hawaiian folklore and Asian American sexual education, to AAPI historical

conflicts and the power of family, they had the crowd eating out of their hands. I know that after watching the show I feel incredibly inspired to bring the company to my own campus so that I can share this experience with everyone there.

In the closing remarks at banquet, the head of the LR planning committee and EOC chairperson Victoria Yu spoke about the vision that inspired her to bring LR back to Mizzou before she graduated. She had this vision two years ago as she was talking with friends on the bus back from Spring Conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For me, this impressed upon me the difference between feeling action and sustainable impact. It's easy to have a fun weekend and to feel energized or passionate about the issues and discussions you had, only to come back to school and fall back into the same patterns of inertia and burnout that leads to sluggish or non-existent change. It's having the ability to translate these emotions over time and channel the energy you felt that leads to real impact. Major props to the LR planning committee, and

*I look forward to seeing everyone at the Spring Conference at University of Wisconsin-Madison on April 10-11th!*





# WISCONSIN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



## Announcing the 2015 MAASU Spring Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

April 10-11th at Madison, WI

Registration Dates and Prices:

Early Registration (March 1st-March 7th): \$65/\$60

Regular Registration (March 8th-29th): \$80/\$65

Late Registration (March 30th-April 9th): \$95/\$70

For a full list of MAASU member schools, please visit our website: <http://www.maasu.org>