



SPECTRUM

Be in the know. Asian Community at Tufts. November 2004. Volume 2, Issue 1.

Through **Spectrum**, Asian Community at Tufts (ACT) brings you news related to issues of race and social justice from on and around campus to promote awareness and understanding.

For more news, info on ACT & how to get involved:

<http://ase.tufts.edu/act>.

Upcoming Events

Expressions of Multiraciality

Nov. 11th @ 7:30pm
Location TBA

Food Fair

Nov. 12th
11:30am – 1:15pm
Mayer Campus Center

Asian American X

Nov. 12th @ 5:30pm
Tisch Library Rm. 316

Hinduism and Hindu Culture: Discussion

Nov. 18th @ 9pm
Eaton 208

For all events go to:
<http://ase.tufts.edu/asi/anam/index.htm>

ACT Executive Board

President - Karen Lin
Vice President - Bic Leu
Secretary - Ivy Cheng
Treasurer - Raph Hui
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PAC Rep - Adrienne Poon

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Tufts University students gather in early morning hours in preparation for BASIC 2004.

Diversity and Unity in Focus.

BASIC Conference 2004 By Adrienne Poon

This year's BASIC (Boston Asian Students Intercollegiate Conference), held on Oct. 2, at MIT, turned out to be a great success with an attendance of about 450 enthusiastic students. Through workshops, panel sessions, and keynote speakers, students who attended the conference left MIT with a greater understanding of Asian American issues ranging from voting rights, to racism and discrimination, and to perceptions of Asian Americans by themselves and by such sources as the media.

This year's keynote speakers were **Krishanti Dharmaraj**, a human rights activist and co-founder of WILD, and **Kevin So**, a recognized Asian American singer and

songwriter. In her opening Speech, Dharmaraj applauded the conference's theme of "*Diversity and Unity*" by stating how we often hear about diversity and often hear about unity, but rarely do we hear about both at the same time. In quoting Dante, "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in time of great moral crises, maintain their neutrality," Dharmaraj also encouraged activism and working towards social change, with efforts made by individuals on grassroots levels. She also discussed her work as a human rights activist in American, "I'm a human rights activist, not because it's the nice thing to do but because my life depends on it, my daughter's life depends on it, my family's life depends on it..." She also points out that America still needs to work towards better human rights for its own citizens socially, such as in education and health care.

Kevin So as the final keynote speaker spoke about his development as a respected Asian-American singer and songwriter. He discussed his development into his Asian-American identity while maintaining a distinct ethnic identity. He states, "You can be 100% Chinese and 100% American at the same time." He also discussed stereotypes that many Asians and Asian Americans face, such as their inability to succeed in the music industry. In discussing the usage of plastic bags as garbage bags by his Chinese family and the ordering of extra rounds of dragon rolls when he goes out for sushi with his friends, So stated, "I'm frugal because I am not wealthy; I'm decadent because I want to have a nice meal every once in a while." So used these examples to show that

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actions may not necessarily be attributed to stereotypes. They may be attributed to other logical and reasonable explanations. In anticipation of the growing number of Asian American musical artists, So encouraged the audience to support struggling Asian American artists now instead of later when they have achieved fame and endorsement. He stressed the importance of putting faith and support in these artists to help them in succeed in their work, even if mainstream America has not accepted these struggling artists yet.

Students attending the conference also had the opportunity to attend two of 38 workshops and one of 8 panels. Workshop topics included, "Secret Asian Man: A Workshop in Race, Comics, and Political Uncorrectness" featuring Tak Toyoshima, creator/illustrator of the weekly comic strip, "The Tao of Yao: Breaking down the Racial Barrier in American Sports," led by Oliver Chin, the novel's author, "The Response of Sikh-Americans to Post 9/11 Racism," led by Navjeet Singh from SMART (Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force), and "Asian American Youth Empowerment and

Activism" led by Sophia Kim, from CAPAY (Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth). Panels included the "Asian American Vote," "People of Color United in Boston," and "Transracial Adoption: Politics and Lived Experiences."

A major theme stressed by conference organizers was the necessity for such a conference to teach local area collegiate students about the importance of understanding Asian American issues and activism, especially in the local community. This conference was designed to teach those who have had little or no previous of knowledge about issues but are interested in learning about them, which provides a stepping stone into learning next what each individual person can do to help Asian-American causes by uniting within their college campus as well as the greater Boston area. In their opening speech, the student directors, Dexter Ang (MIT) and Wei-Ying Wang (Wellesley), also emphasized the need for the conference to establish relationships between students and local resources in terms of professors, scholars, activists, and organizations that are all knowledgeable in many of the issues addressed at the conference.

In addition, there was a noticeable attendance of Tufts students at the event. "BASIC provided a look at the many issues facing Asian Americans today, touching upon areas such as health, international influences, and politics. Just looking at a list of workshops, you can see that there is a lot to be talked about and a lot to learn. It was inspiring to see Asian Americans active in so many fields: politics, non-profits, the arts, health...", stated Junior Lisa Vu. Sophomore Ivy Cheng said, "I had heard great things about it last year, and this year I got to see that they were all true - BASIC was a great chance to meet people, find out what projects other students are working on, and get involved yourself," taking to heart activism, a recurring theme of the conference.

Also, the pre-conference concert, BASIC Noise, was successful as well. Students in attendance were moved by performances by spoken word artists, Angela Makabali (Harvard), and Michelle Kobler (Wellesley), as well as a performance by 5th Street's singer, Vudoo Soul (Chris Vu).

For more information about this year's conference, please visit www.bostonbasic.org.



Welcome Barbeque a Hot Success By Bic Leu

Approximately 50 members of the Tufts community braved the light rain on the afternoon of September 16th to enjoy freshly-grilled hamburgers, hot dogs and cookies at the Annual Welcome Barbeque.

Asian Community at Tufts President Karen Lin enthused: "It was great opportunity to bring students together and get to know what A.C.T. is about. I'm so glad that everyone showed up despite the weather."

Rachel Leven ('07) agreed: "The food was great, everyone was very friendly and welcoming."



A Broken Family: Jack, Casey, Andy, Avita, and Anna Mae in the photo (People Magazine Photo)

Chinese Couple Loses Daughter in Legal Battles By Ivy Cheng

Chinese-American organizations all over the nation are outraged over what they have denounced as a Tennessee judge's biased and racist custody decision.

Judge Childer's decision on May 12, 2004 to give full parental rights of Jack and Casey He's five-year-old Anna Mae, to Jerry and Louise Baker, terminated a four-year long case that has provoked complaints from local Chinese since the beginning.

Although the Bakers maintain that the Hes (who do not speak perfect English) clearly understood from the translator that they were signing away custody, the He's lawyer claims that insufficient or even purposefully misleading translation was provided at the signing of the contract, resulting in the He's belief that they were only placing their daughter in the Bakers' temporary foster

care while the Hes were financially indisposed.

More disturbing, however, were the numerous accusations fired at the court for "disregarding the Constitutional presumption of reunification with biological parents based on inappropriate stereotyping of the Chinese culture," according to the OCA (Organization of Chinese Americans) National President. Among the Bakers' arguments for the fact that it was in Anna Mae's "best interests" to stay with them were their Christian religion – "she could grow up and love the Lord" – and that for Anna Mae to return to China with her natural parents could be harmful to her because of the way females are sometimes treated. But, as Prof. Thomas Berner at Penn State University stated, "the Bakers have projected the fate of babies onto a 5-year-old girl who will not be living in a rural area and whose father has three master's degrees and has studied in the United States."

Reasons Judge Childer cited for his verdict that the Hes were "unfit" parents also included the fact that Anna Mae was born out of wedlock, and that the Hes did not often come to visit their daughter while she was in the Bakers' care, although since the Bakers had taken out a restraining order on the Hes, visiting might have been made slightly more complicated.

The case also went through multiple judges, the first one of which is now under serious investigation by the US judicial system for biased rulings.

With many other such issues raised as to the just nature of this decision, the Hes are currently trying to gather enough funds for an appeal. ACT has met with Professor TitYee Wong of the University of Tennessee in Memphis, a trustee on the board of the He Family Unity Fund who has been involved with the case from the beginning. For more information about the Anna Mae He case, please visit <http://binhan.home.netcom.com/annamae/JackHe.htm>.

National Book Award Nominee Mesmerizes Students By Bic Leu

Over an intimate lunch on Sept. 30th, Jessica Hagedorn regaled students with humorous stories about her early days publishing her own books in San Francisco and inspiration for her works.

Hagedorn, an acclaimed Asian American/Filipino American novelist, won the 1981 American Book Award for *Pet Food and Tropical Apparitions* and was nominated for a 1990 National Book Award for *Dogeaters*.

After reading excerpts from her latest book, *Dream Jungle*, she pushed aspiring writers to "write blindly" and "just do it", referring to her own lack of formal training and early

self-publication initiative.

Audience member Adrienne Poon ('06) responded: "She really encouraged new writers to push to get their work published and to look beyond the institutions set up to define mainstream literature."

Hagedorn ended with a Question & Answer session, where she responded to audience members' queries regarding her dual roles as a novelist/playwright and her entrance into the publishing world as a woman of color.

Hit of Legend

By Rodney Z. Yang

Oct. 1, 2004 – On this eventful Friday night in Seattle, Ichiro Suzuki wrote his name in the record books, and boosted his status from superstar to legendary. Like Barry Bonds a few years back, who broke the record for the highest number of home runs hit in a single season, Ichiro broke a record of his own.

In the extremely competitive stadiums of Major League Baseball, it is rare for a player to obtain 200 hits or more in a season of 162 games. George Sisler, first baseman of the St. Louis Browns, had managed to obtain 257 hits in the year 1920. That's right. 1920! No one since then had come close to challenging this amazing stat. Until this year, 84 years later, by an outfielder from Japan, who is only one of a handful of celebrities in the world whom people can refer to without their surnames. People such as Elvis, Madonna, Cher, Bono, Ronaldo...and Ichiro. On this historical night against the Texas Rangers, Ichiro hit a single during his first at-bat to tie the record of 257 hits. On his next at-bat, he broke the record, and was congratulated with standing ovation from a screaming crowd, hugs, high-fives, and pats from teammates, and an epic display of fireworks. Ichiro eventually ended this season with 262 hits (and also led the Major Leagues in batting average with an amazing .372, followed by none other than the mighty Barry Bonds).

A native of Kasugai, Ichiro spent ten years playing professional baseball with the Orix Blue Wave in Japan before being signed by the Seattle Mariners in 2000. The Mariners were charting the waters

of Japan for potential top talent, and they knew where they were headed, as Ichiro became a sensation right off the bat, no pun intended. The Mariners are a team with somewhat of a tradition of having premier superstars on its roster. Baseball fans can certainly recall Ken Griffey, Jr. and Alex Rodriguez. And it seemed no trouble at all for the fans to accept Ichiro as the new flagship player of Seattle.



During his first season with the Mariners, Ichiro garnered a whopping 242 hits, the American League Rookie of the Year award simultaneously with the American League Most Valuable Player Award (a rare and mighty feat, having accomplished by only a few players in the past), along with Gold Glove, Silver Slugger, and Player's Choice awards.

Though not as big in stature as most other players, Ichiro makes up for it with blazing speed, knowledge of the game, and an incredibly disciplined work ethic. Not only is his batting fantastic, he is one of the best outfielders in the game, as critics described his arm strength as "otherworldly". At 31 years of age and earning a salary of \$6.5 million, Ichiro may not even have reached his prime in terms of performance.

For Asians and Asian Americans, as well as the rest of America, Ichiro is a pioneer. Although not the first Asian player to play on an American team, Ichiro's arrival in the U.S. was what really opened the floodgates for Asian athletes desiring an opportunity to play in America. Ichiro is a contributor to the growing diversity of America, a bridge between two hemispheres, and a great role model. He is also, of course, the first athlete of Asian descent to earn a page in the Major League record book. And what a record it is!

Brad Pitt, as Achilles in the recent blockbuster epic "Troy", barked out to his soldiers "Immortality is yours! Take it!" Well, Ichiro has just done that, and his legend can only grow.