

 **OCA News**



San Mateo Chapter

Summer 2001

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Christine Chen is Named New OCA National Executive Director

Washington, DC - The Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) named Christine Chen as its new Executive Director. Christine has served as the Director of Programs for OCA for the past six years.

For the past two years, Christine has run the OCA College Leadership Program that has trained over 1,200 Asian Pacific American (APA) students nationwide.

In addition to her duties for OCA, Christine currently serves as Chair of the Asian Pacific Islander American Vote campaign

(APIAVote) and sits on the boards of the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL), Youth Vote 2000, and the Midwest Asian American Students Union (MAASU). She was featured in *Newsweek* magazine this past January as one of 15 “women who will shape America’s new century.”

“When we started the nationwide search for our Executive Director, we wanted to find the best and brightest individual for that position,” said George M. Ong, OCA National President. “We are confident and very pleased that

Christine Chen is that person for OCA during these exciting and challenging times for Asian Pacific Americans.”

Christine’s work at the grassroots and national levels has established her as one of the strongest voices in the APA community. She is well known by local activists across the country and by the civil rights community in Washington, DC.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to take on this responsibility for an organization as large and respected as OCA,” said Christine. “I will try to follow the example that Daphne Kwok set in her ten years in the position and continue to bring OCA to new and greater heights.”

Bay Area Chapters Host Hate Crimes Workshop

by Yvonne Chen

OCA San Mateo collaborated with OCA National and the Silicon Valley OCA Chapter on March 17 to present a local Hate Crimes Workshop.

This event was an opportunity for attendees to learn about hate crimes laws and the history of hate crimes in the Asian American community. It also pointed out what to do if a hate crime victim requests your help, as an individual of the community or as part of an organization like OCA.

Held in the AACI Building in San Jose, the workshop was co-hosted by the Asian Law Alliance, the JACL Chapter of Gilroy and NCWD districts, the Vietnam Heritage Cultural Center, Network for a Hate-free Community and the

County of Santa Clara Human Relations Department. The Bay Area workshop is part of a series of hate crime workshops being conducted throughout the U.S. by National OCA in association with local chapters. The workshops are funded by Allstate Insurance Company.

National OCA representatives, Giles Li and Cindy Tong, introduced the workshop and showed a powerful new video on the history of hate crimes against Asian Americans in recent years.

San Jose Police Department Officer Ken Ferguson described their efforts to carry out a zero-tolerance policy towards hate crimes. San Mateo County Sheriff Don Horsley joined the discussion and pointed out the difficulty in dis-

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A Message from the President

As the weather begins to warm up, so is the second quarter of 2001. OCA San Mateo is also heating up with many upcoming activities.

April was an especially busy month for the San Mateo Chapter. OCA members from the San Francisco and Sacramento chapters joined us to enjoy a wonderful trip to the historic trip of Locke.

Thanks to the hard work of our Scholarship Chair Alden Soohoo and his committee, this year's Scholarship Luncheon in April was again a huge success. The caliber of the winners this year was tremendous and their essays were touching.

At the April National OCA Board Meeting in Phoenix, Salt Lake City edged out Hawaii as the host of the 2002 OCA National Convention. It looks to be an exciting time to be in Salt Lake City just as the city will be enjoying the afterglow of the 2002 Winter Olympics. For many of us, it will probably be the first opportunity to visit this beautiful Utah city.

We are hard at work for our upcoming Asian American Achievement Awards Gala, scheduled for September 15. We will need a lot of help from members for this event, which raises funds to support our Scholarship Program and the National Internship Program. If you can help, please let us know.

~ Johnny Ng

OCA San Mateo President 2001

Organization of Chinese Americans - San Mateo -

Established in 1987, the OCA San Mateo Chapter is one of four chapters in the San Francisco Bay Area and one of seven chapters in California.

Every year, OCA San Mateo sponsors scholarships for high school seniors and holds the Asian American Achievement Awards Gala.

Board of Directors

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OCA San Mateo News is published quarterly.

For more information on OCA, please call **650/341.6036** or visit us at www.ocasanmateo.org.

Organization of Chinese Americans

The Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan civil rights advocacy organization comprised of concerned Americans. OCA is dedicated to securing the rights of Chinese American and Asian American citizens and permanent residents through legislative and policy initiatives at all levels of government.

OCA's aim is to embrace the hopes and aspirations of the nearly two million citizens and residents of Chinese ancestry in the United States, as well as to better the lives of the nearly 10 million Asian Americans across the country.

Award-Winning Author Helen Zia Speaks On the Asian American Experience

by Dora Wong

In conjunction with the Redwood City Public Library, OCA San Mateo sponsored a reading by award-winning journalist and author Helen Zia, author of "Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People."

Held at the Redwood City Public Library on the evening of June 13, Zia read excerpts from her books, including highlights from her upcoming book on Wen Ho Lee, and shared her thoughts on what it is to be Asian American in today's society.

Zia spoke thoughtfully and knowledgeably of the many different problems all Asian American groups face: past and present media portrayals of Asian Americans as alien spies and political corruptors versus stereotypes of Asian Americans being the model minority. She wanted to give some "texture and richness" to the Asian American experience and she called upon all Asian Americans to tell our stories, with all our hopes and fears, in the dawn of the new century.

She talked about how the Vincent Chin murder was the beginning of a movement against racism. She also pointed out how very recent and brief the history has been of the phrase "Asian American," which was created by a graduate student at UC Berkeley in 1968.

Zia shared humorous and poignant stories from her youth growing up "invisible" in New Jersey in the 1950s, where it was a "vast sea of white and black" with the sole exception of New York's Chinatown. At that time there were only about 400,000 Asian Americans in the entire U.S. Today, San Jose has a population of about 250,000 Asian Americans.

One touching story came from her "Pen Pals" book about how, as a 12-year old, she had a Scottish pen pal that she loved to communicate with, until the pen pal sent her a picture and asked for one from her in return. Zia explained how she had never told her friend that she was Chinese American, and because she was not a "typical" American (i.e., Caucasian), she never answered her pen pal. She felt certain she would be rejected and felt cowardly



Author Helen Zia reads from her books and recalls her experiences.

and ashamed. At the time, she knew nothing about internalized racism.

Zia reminded us that the Asian American community has grown. Today, there are approximately 12 million Asian Americans and 3.5 million are Chinese Americans. We now have a political presence but there still remain problems with racial profiling and none of us is free from some prejudice. A recent *San Francisco Chronicle* national poll of 1,000 people

(before the spy plane incident in China) showed that 68 percent of respondents felt some degree of negativity towards Chinese Americans. Thirty three percent were strongly negative and 32 percent felt Chinese Americans were more likely to be loyal to China than the U.S. As Zia pointed out, it is really the responsibility of each one of us to work against the popular stereotypes of Asian Americans and we do not have to accept being categorized.

Salt Lake City Chosen for the 2002 OCA National Convention

by Johnny Ng

The OCA National Board of Directors selected Salt Lake City as the site for the next National Convention at its quarterly meeting held on April 21-22 in Phoenix.

After two impressive presentations, Salt Lake City edged out Hawaii as the host of the 2002 National Convention. Salt Lake City Chapter Board Member Michael Kwan made the bid for the convention with an interactive presentation featuring the sights and activities offered by the Utah city, which will be the host of the 2002 Winter Olympics next year.

Hawaii Chapter Board President Wallace

Ching also made an impressive bid for the next convention. He countered with a video presentation highlighting the beauty and offerings of Honolulu.

Although Hawaii did not receive the bid for next year, it will probably be the front-runner for the 2003 Convention.

The Phoenix OCA Chapter hosted the National Board Meeting and generously treated the entire National Board to a special dinner at the China Doll Restaurant. Board members enjoyed a sumptuous 10-course Chinese banquet and then were treated to a cello and singing performances. The evening was capped by a raucous Karaoke session.

Dr. Yee Fung Cheung, A Visitor from the Past

by *Dora Wong*

OCA San Mateo, the Archives Committee and the Friends of the Library sponsored a Chautauqua Program on Yee Fung Cheung, a famous herb doctor who came from China in 1850 to care for the miners. Local scholar and performer Charlie Chin portrayed Dr. Yee in a very entertaining and informative performance held on April 4 at the Redwood City Library.

In his very realistic persona of Dr. Yee, Chin wore traditional robes and spoke in "pidgin" English with a strong Chinese accent and mannerisms. Dr. Yee drew the audience in with his story of how and why a young man from Guandong, Toisan Province, China would leave his home and family for the famous "Golden Mountain." Many people were lured to California by stories of how the "Mountain of Gold" was so rich that one could find "gold like pebbles on ground." Although he came from a well-to-do family of herbalists,

Dr. Yee sought adventure and wanted a chance to make a fortune in California, just like many others before and after him.

Chin helped the audience to visualize how it might have been for Dr. Yee to experience new things like seeing the ocean for the first time, being at sea for the three to four months long sea voyage while being seasick, gazing at the gigantic redwood trees, being bitten by mosquitoes and learning how to live in the snow, all the while learning how to speak English.

It was hard labor for the miners in the gold fields and there were no medical doctors up at the mining camps. Dr. Yee explained how he was recognized by some fellow villagers as a doctor and he discovered that it was much more rewarding for him to practice medicine and open his own store. He did well and later opened two more stores, and sent for his second son and his son's wife to help him run his prospering businesses.

At the time, a lot of people were afraid of

Chinese but Dr. Yee gained a good reputation and treated everyone, Chinese and non-Chinese. One of his more famous clients was Leland Stanford's wife. However, Dr. Yee could not understand people like Stanford who called Chinese "dregs" but still kept a Chinese cook and sent for a Chinese doctor to cure his wife.

Despite legislative racism and restrictions against the Chinese, Dr. Yee spent many successful years in the U.S. He did not return home to China until 1904, where he lived until his death three years later.

Towards the end of the event, there were two distinct Question and Answer sessions by Dr. Yee and by Chin as himself. In a few short hours, Chin was able to fully engage, entertain and educate the audience by sharing the life of Dr. Yee and also discussing some historical facts of U.S. racism against the Chinese (and other groups). It was a very rewarding, fun and interesting experience to step back in time and share in the life of the famous Chinese herb doctor Yee Fung Cheung.

The
Organization of Chinese Americans
San Mateo County Chapter

~ thanks ~

Scholarship Sponsors
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Founders Investment Group

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Philip & Louise Wang

for their generous contribution
to the

Asian American Achievement Awards Gala 2000

Hate Crimes Workshop

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tinguishing altercations resulting from racism from other causes.

Li presented some steps to take when a hate crime occurs, beginning with reporting the incident. Attorney Larry Rosen talked about the legal definitions of what constitutes a hate crime, and the difficulty in criminalizing hate speech. Attorney Minh Do Vanh told a very moving story about a hate crime incident in court, the prolonged litigation, and the eventual victory due to his perseverance.

Asian Law Alliance attorney Ken Kamei and San Mateo OCA Board Member and past president Yvonne Chen spoke about the proliferation of hate forums on the Internet, and difficulty of curbing them due to first amendment rights.

All of the workshop speakers urged the community to report hate crimes to the police. Only then can effective action begin. Many thanks to OCA National, Allstate Insurance Company, and all the speakers and sponsors for their contributions to a valuable educational workshop.

Save the Date

Asian American
Achievement Awards Gala

Saturday, September 15, 2001

South San Francisco
Convention Center

6 p.m.

You Can Make A Difference

We are constantly striving to improve and we need your help! Currently, we have an immediate need for assistance with our Web site, newsletter and fundraising efforts. If you have skills and experience in graphic and/or Web site design, photography, and/or writing, we would really love to hear from you.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact our Membership Chair Wade Loo at (650) 341-6036. Thank you!

Congrats to the 2001 OCA Scholarship Winners!



The 12 recipients of the 2001 OCA San Mateo Scholarship Awards at the special ceremony held on May 6 at the Foster City Public Library.

Membership Application/Renewal

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

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Membership (check all that apply)

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Please make your checks payable to "OCA San Mateo" and send with this form to:

OCA San Mateo
P.O. Box 218
San Mateo, CA 94401

- www.ocasanmateo.org -
- 650/341.6036 -

Events Calendar

September 15

OCA San Mateo Asian American Achievement Awards Gala

Honoring Asian American leaders and visionaries. This year's honorees include award-winning author Helen Zia, KRON-TV reporter Vic Lee, Gary Masada of Chevron and community leader Maylee Tom.
South San Francisco Convention Center,
5 p.m.

For info, please call Wade Loo at 650/341-6036 or visit our Web site at: www.ocasanmateo.org

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