



ORGANIZATION OF CHINESE AMERICANS, INC.
EMBRACING THE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF CHINESE AND ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES



OCA Peninsula Chapter of San Mateo County P.O. Box 218 San Mateo, CA
 94401 (650) 533-3065 www.ocasanmateo.org May, 2009

Speak and Lead with Pride

by Mark Chong

On March 12, 2009, the San Mateo OCA convened the finals of this year's Speak and Lead with Pride program. At around 6 p.m., at the Borel Estate Building in San Mateo, a conference room was instantly filled with great fervor. All four finalists of the program--Meagan Chan, Michael Gao, and Sadaf Malik of Mills High School, and Rebecca Hu of Aragon High School--presented prodigious, heartfelt speeches.

But only one would walk away with the cash prize.

Speech topics ranged from Slumdog Millionaire to personal experiences, but all were delivered with the resounding emotion of this year's theme: Martin Luther King Jr.'s views on silence.

Their presentations were graded and judged by Judge Lucy Koh of the Santa Clara Superior Court; Dr. Kenneth Fong, the Chairman of Kenson Ventures, LLC; and Maggie Mui, Senior VP of Wells Fargo Bank.



Survivor Winner Yul Kwon speaks to the Speak and Lead with Pride class.

In addition to the incredible student speeches, those attending the competition were also graced by an inspirational address from the winner of Survivor: Cook Islands, Yul Kwon.

UC to Reduce Asian Enrollment

by Hayden Lee

OCA Chapters in California are fighting a policy by the University of California that plans to reduce Asian American enrollment by approximately 7% beginning in the year 2012. If your child is in the 9th grade now, UC plans to make it harder for him or her to enter into the UC system.

At the heart of the matter are efforts by UC to attain greater diversity, particularly to increase Black and Latino enrollment, which has decreased since Proposition 209 banned affirmative action in California, including in public schools. However, what many Asian civil rights activists complain about is that the plan effectively gives Caucasian students affirmative action at the cost of Asians.

The UC Board of Regents recently passed the policy that will do away with the SAT 2 tests, which are tests in specific fields such as history and biology, and tests in which Asians tend to excel. By taking out the SAT 2 tests that are now required, UC hopes to increase African American students from 4% currently to possibly 5% and Latino students from 19% up to 22%. However, UC itself is predicting that Asian enrollment will drop up to 7% and White enrollment will increase up to 10%.

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Calendar

Asian Pacific Heritage Celebration (May 9)
 Scholarship Luncheon (May 16)
 Bowling event – to be confirmed (June or July)
 Mixer – date to be determined (June or July)
 National Convention (August 6 -9)
 Annual Picnic - date to be determined (end of August)
 Awards Gala (September 26)
 Second Harvest Food Sort (November)
 Holiday Party (December)
 *Angel Island trip – date to be determined

Celebrating the Year of the Ox

by Chris Bush

OCA San Mateo Chapter welcomed in the Lunar New Year at the Hong Kong Flower Lounge in Millbrae on February 7th, 2009. The Ox, a sign of prosperity through hard work is just what we all need this year to succeed. Add strong logic and original intelligence and we should be able to prosper. Despite the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression,



Chris and Ted Bush

w e celebrated t h e incoming New Year with friends and family over a delicious traditional Chinese New Year dinner of:

Combination BBQ Platter, Supreme Seafood & Bean Curd Soup, Baked Crab with Ginger & Green Onion, Steamed Sole, Walnut Prawns, Peking Duck, Sautéed Shredded Beef with Dried Scallop, Sautéed Black Mushrooms with Baby Bok Choy, Braised E-Fu Noodles and Dessert for adults and a special treat for the kids, thanks to Lisa La.

Highlights of the evening included a brief message of friendship and support from Mark Church, President of the County Board of Supervisors. Other Dignitaries included Steve Okamoto (past President of JACL San Mateo), Mary Griffin (former San Mateo County Board of Supervisors), Rod Hsiao (Board of Trustees, San Mateo County Board of Education), and Liza Normandy (School Board, South San Francisco Unified School District).

Another Chinese New Year tradition is the ubiquitous Red Envelope. A red envelope, known as "Hong Bao" in Mandarin and "Lai See" in Cantonese, is a monetary gift which is given during holidays or special occasions. The red color of the envelope symbolizes good

President's Message

Celebrate Asian Heritage Month

By Martin Jung

May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. It is an opportunity to appreciate and celebrate the diverse culture of Asian Americans.

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month began as Asian Pacific American Heritage Week in May 1979. It was enacted by federal law on Oct. 2, 1978, when President Jimmy Carter signed a Joint Resolution - public law 95-419. It became a permanent month-long event in May 1993.

The purpose of the law was to honor the achievements of Asian/Pacific Americans and to recognize their contributions to the United States.

May was selected for Asian/Pacific Month because of two significant events in history took place in May. On May 7, 1843, Nakahama Manjiro (aka: John Mung or John Manjiro) became the first Japanese immigrant to arrive in the United States and on May 10, 1869 the transcontinental railroad was completed in large measure by Chinese laborers.



luck and is supposed to ward off evil spirits. During the Qing Dynasty, the elderly would thread coins with a red string. The money was called yâsui qián meaning "money warding off evil spirits. Red envelopes replaced the yâsui qián when printing presses became more common. Honoring this tradition, Martin Jung made certain that each guest received just such a gift from OCA. Now we have to decide whether we should spend or save such a beautifully minted dollar. We might need this yâsui qián later this year.

Our History: Angel Island

by Martin Jung

Katherine Toy of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) gave a brief overview of the station's historical significance, the current efforts to save this valuable piece of American history, and plans for the future at the Foster

City Library on April 6th.

The Angel Island Immigration Station processed approximately 175,000 Asian immigrants entering into the U.S. from 1910 to 1940. People came from China, Japan, Russia, and even India, and Central and South America. The detainees were

by themselves away from their families, locked up, and waiting to be interrogated to escape poverty in their homeland. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 placed restrictions on people who wanted to come to this country, which made entry into the U.S. very difficult. Many immigrants waited on the island a few days, weeks, months or even as long as two years. The living conditions of the buildings on Angel Island were poor. Immigrants carved poems in Chinese on the walls of the island's buildings, poems which tell their experience and sights while on the island as people were waiting for their time to be asked personal detailed questions.

The Chinese American community, in the 1970s, lobbied the State of California to save it from destruction and designate the Station as a State Landmark. They wanted to preserve

and restore the carvings of poems, stories, and buildings to be saved for future generations that hold a place in American history. This was the only way immigrants were able to express themselves in a new land. They were held on Angel Island with their countrymen who were waiting to enter the U.S. This is a story to appreciate what people did to get here, what they had to go through, and help people to understand what happened in the past that involved racism and hopefully it doesn't happen again for the next generation.

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UC Enrollment

Ling-chi Wang, a retired UC Berkeley professor of Asian American studies and a founder of Chinese for Affirmative Action, calls it "affirmative action for Whites." Although UC claims that this is not a diversity program, the greatest effects are that it will increase Caucasian students and decrease Asian students.

Efforts such as this have been tried and tested in the past, and history seems to be on the side of Asian Americans. In the 1980s, UC Berkeley required Chinese American students to score higher to get into Berkeley than Caucasian students. After a concerted effort by the Chinese community, UC Berkeley retreated, changed its policy, and its chancellor resigned. Also, the San Francisco school district lost a law suit in the late 1990s that required Chinese American students to score higher to get into Lowell High School than all other groups, including Caucasian and Japanese American students.

Last month, the Asian Caucus in the State legislature held a hearing on this issue and many of the State's Asian legislators are trying to change the policy that UC has already passed. A cursory review of the 24 UC regents showed only one with an Asian surname. Of course, most are Caucasian.



Katherine Toy

JACL/OCA Leadership Conference Will Change Your Life

by Liza Normandy

This annual leadership training conference is a joint program operated by the JACL (Japanese American Citizens League) and OCA, the two largest Asian Pacific American membership-based civil rights organizations in the United States. This 4-day conference gives 30 emerging leaders of the JACL and OCA the opportunity to learn firsthand about the current public policy issues facing our communities. I was selected to represent OCA San Mateo for 2009.

I had the opportunity to meet some incredible individuals during this journey, as well as shake the hands of our honorable congressmen and women. It was exciting to say the least.

I was able to visit places I had only heard of or read about in history books. Well, now I can say that experiencing it “for real” has broadened, not only my perspective of Washington D.C., but of politics as well.

A tour of the Capital was a great way to kick off the conference, followed by a reception at the OCA National Center, which was a nice welcome and ice breaker for many of us who just arrived that evening.

One presentation that captivated us was by Phil Nash, who spoke to us about the History of Asian Americans: From Railroads to the New Millennium. I thought I knew about my own heritage and my parents’ history, but quickly learned that there were some “gaps” that needed “filling”.

I knew that upon my return home, that there was a lot of catching up to do with mom. And when she and I spoke, she described to me her life leading up to my birth. This was one “history lesson” that was long overdue...

Wow! Having heard the details about her struggles and for the generation of struggling APAs before me, left me speechless and impacted me in a way that only

Mom could describe it. What they endured in order for them to come to the U.S. was spellbinding. How fortunate we are to be where we are and to have what we have!

On the first day of our conference, we were all inspired by the energy of Charmaine Manansala and Parag Mehta when they spoke about our Asian American Blueprint of the New Administration, as this was a room full of future leaders and some with the ambition that one day, they too would be in D.C.

In between our day’s panels of presenters, coffee with lots of sugar was normal. We visited famous landmarks such as the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism and had Warren Minami as our tour host. He almost left us in tears as we listened attentively to his story.

Listening to and dining with Bruce Yamashita, Vice Admiral Harry Harris and Congressman Mike Honda were the highlights for many attendees. Hearing about their struggles and accomplishments as well as feeling their passion behind their words left all with a sense of hope. We were inspired by their words of wisdom, and some of us saw opportunities of what our futures could bring.

What resonated loudly at our conference was that the civil rights of ALL groups must be forever protected and that we must move tirelessly in a forward direction of

Unity and Equality together.

I came back a stronger leader with a deeper commitment to create a positive change, rather than sitting back and waiting for it to change on its own. I left on the final day knowing that the conference made a difference for all of us, not just within our related chapters, but, within ourselves.



Liza Normandy with Bruce I Yamashita, a third generation Japanese-American with a story about racial taunts, unfair treatment and physical abuse he experienced in his nine weeks of military training. He fought a five year long legal, political and media battle and because of him Marine Corps policy and procedures were changed forever.

OCA National Convention in San Francisco in August

The OCA National Convention will be held from August 6-9 this summer at the Westin St. Francis in downtown San Francisco. The theme this year is A Call to Action: Empowering Asian Pacific American Voices.

The Convention will begin Thurs., Aug. 6 with a welcome reception. Various workshops, luncheons, and events will be held through Saturday. There will be youth activities. The Chapter Awards Luncheon and the Gala Dinner will be held on Saturday and a trip to Angel Island will be on Sunday. If you would like to volunteer, contact Hayden at haydenjlee@yahoo.com. For more information or registration, go to www.ocanational.org.

OCA Outraged at Call for "Easier" Names

National OCA, the Asian American Justice Center and the Asian American Legal Defense Fund expressed disappointment over Texas Representative Betty Brown's suggestion at a hearing on April 7 that Asian Americans adopt "names that are easier for Americans to deal with."

"Representative Brown's comments made clear that she lacks an understanding of Asian Americans and that she in fact undervalues other cultures," said OCA Executive Director George Wu.

The hearing was being held on a bill in Texas for stricter voter identification requirements.

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Peninsula Chapter of San Mateo County
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San Mateo, CA 94401**

TO:

OCA 2009 National Convention
in San Francisco
August 6-9

Westin St. Francis Hotel
Sign up at www.ocanational.org!
volunteers needed too!