

The InformAsian

Asian Pacific American Program

December 2008

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Holiday Greetings!

Before the hectic holiday season gets into high gear, we'd like to take a moment to wish you a joyful holiday season. Whether you'll be traveling far away or staying close to home, we hope you'll all be warm, contented, and always safe!

We thank you for all your support during our first decade at the Smithsonian and look forward to seeing you in our audiences in the near future!

Happy, happy and all best wishes for 2009!

How Do You Celebrate the Holidays?

Every Christmas, we wake up really early to open presents, and then go out to brunch at a hotel in downtown Houston. My mom's sister and her family live about a minute away from us, but now that my brother and I are both out of the house, it's one of the few times of the year that our whole extended family gets together.

*Rajiv Menon
Indian American
APAP intern*

My family begins putting up Christmas decorations during Thanksgiving week and we keep them up until Three Kings' Day on January 6. For Christmas, we prepare traditional Filipino and American dishes such as *lechon* roasted pork and honey-baked ham. For New Year's, we prepare *palutang*, a coined-shaped dessert that symbolizes good luck and prosperity.

*Krishna Aniel
Filipino American
APAP Office Assistant*

My brothers and I spend Christmas morning opening gifts over a standard breakfast of eggs, ham, and toast with our Dad's side of the family. By around noon, we drive over to our Mother's house, where our Taiwanese family gathers to exchange gifts and snack on foods like preserved tofu, dried squid, boiled peanuts, and mochi.

*Faith Macauley
Half Taiwanese, Half Scottish
Fall 2008 Sogi Fellow*



Rajiv Menon

Krishna Aniel

Faith Macauley

SALTAF Success

The fifth annual South Asian Theater and Literary Arts Festival [SALTAF] occurred on November 15th, and was a great success for the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program and the Network of South Asian Professionals. The event opened with a screening of *AMAL*, a film about a rickshaw driver in Delhi who unknowingly receives a huge fortune, and was followed by a lively talkback with director Richie Mehta. Anna John, co-founder of Sepia Mutiny, a blog that focuses on issues of the South Asian Diaspora, moderated.

Two literary panels followed the morning screening. The first panel featured Tahmima Anam, author of *A Golden Age*, and Manil Suri, author of *The Age of Shiva*. The panel was moderated by Supriya Goswami, Professor of English at The George Washington University. The panel touched on interesting themes from both books, and the audience had an opportunity to ask questions of both authors. The second panel featured V.V. Ganeshananthan, author of *Love Marriage*, and Naeem Murr, author of *The Perfect Man*. This panel was moderated by Tamara Bhalla of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and also shed light on probing aspects of both novels.

The festival ended with a screening of *Little Zizou*, a film about two warring families from Bombay's Parsi minority. The film was a huge hit with the audience! After the screening, director Sooni Taraporevala, producer Dinaz Stafford, and the film's star, Boman Irani, all sat down for a discussion with Terry Hong, the Smithsonian APA Program's Media Arts Consultant. It was a truly amazing opportunity to witness a discussion between so many integral members of the film's production!

Once again, SALTAF proved a great success and we hope to follow with an even better event next year. Plans are already being made for SALTAF 2009, so keep checking our website for updates as they become available!

Masarap! It's Delicious! Filipino American History Month Celebrated at the Smithsonian

In celebration of Filipino American History Month, a hundred intent listeners gathered for an evening discussion on "Filipino American Culture and Cuisine" at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's Ring Auditorium on October 30, 2008.

Moderating the discussion was Martin F. Manalansan IV, an associate professor of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America* and is currently writing a book entitled *Altered Tastes: Beyond a Palatable Multiculturalism*, an ethnography of Asian American immigrant spaces, fusion and ethnic cuisines, and olfaction in New York City.

Manalansan began the discussion with *almusal*, or the first meal of the day. His PowerPoint presentation on "Searching for Filipino Cuisine or, 'Where is my *almusal*?'" highlighted the characteristics and influences within Filipino cuisine. As a former colony, the Philippines endured "300 years in a convent" under the Spanish and spent another "50 years in Hollywood" under the Americans. This blend of tastes and flavors has created a unique Philippine cuisine filled with *pan de sal* bread, chorizo sausages, and other breakfast foods.

Manalansan also noted that the Philippine diaspora has made significant contributions to the U.S. agriculture and economy. In the early 1900s, the *manong* generation tilled the asparagus fields of California and worked seasonally in the salmon fisheries of Alaska.

Joining Manalansan were Amy Besa and Romy Dorotan, owners of Cendrillon, an acclaimed restaurant in Manhattan's Soho district since 1995. Chef Dorotan's cooking has been featured in and praised by *Gourmet*, *New York Magazine*, *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. The husband and wife team are the authors of *Memories of Philippine Kitchens*, an award-winning cookbook.

Besa explained that cooking Filipino food in the U.S. is like cooking from memories of the homeland. She noted that Filipino American cooking is "authentic" because the older generations in the States have preserved the traditional recipes. In contrast, the contemporary population in the Philippines has transformed the local cuisine into something different over the last half-century.

Dorotan discussed his experience as a French cuisine chef before tackling the restaurant

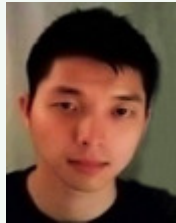
business. When Cendrillon first opened, Besa and Dorotan were hesitant to market it as a Filipino restaurant because of the lack of mainstream visibility. They have expanded the typical menu of *pancit* and *lumpia* to fine dining Filipino cuisine. As forerunners in the chic restaurant business, they have helped Filipino food become more visible in the U.S.

Jennifer Aranas added her perspective on Filipino American cuisine as an accomplished chef, teacher, and writer of *The Filipino-American Kitchen: Traditional Recipes, Contemporary Flavors*. After years of cooking in restaurants in Chicago and Napa Valley, she opened the critically acclaimed Rambutan restaurant in 1998 and later sold it in 2002. She currently works as a Corporate Chef for Sysco Foods in Chicago and is a culinary instructor at Kendall College.

Aranas' parents immigrated from the Philippines to Chicago where she was born. Her experience in preparing Filipino American cuisine is a little different because fresh Philippine ingredients are not readily available in American supermarkets. Although some of the ingredients may not be as "authentic," the Filipino dishes she prepares are still "genuine."

Aranas also cited some challenges on why fine Filipino dining has not broken into the mainstream. When most Filipinos think of Filipino food, they think of it as homestyle or how their *nanay* or *lola* has prepared it. Aranas also explained that most Filipino parents think of the restaurant business as being "blue collar" and do not encourage it as a career for their children. Our palates are thankful that this image is changing with stalwart restaurateurs who are paving the way for Filipino restaurants.

The night ended with a lively talkback session with the audience and book signings with the authors. Check out their cookbooks – you too can make these fabulous Filipino dishes at home!



Staff Profile: Ricky Leung Multimedia Specialist

Maybe it has something to do with the fact that a show like *ER* features no APA doctors, but whatever the reason, Ricky Leung Wai Ki decided that he wanted to be a journalist instead of a medical doctor...at least for now.

The loss to the medical world is a sure gain for the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program. Since Ricky became the fulltime multimedia specialist of the APA Program last November, he has been rather busy introducing a bunch of Generation X-ers and self-confessed Luddite staffers to the wonderful world of blogging, Facebook, Twitter, and maybe even iPod broadcasting in the future. As the fearless (and innovative) leader for the Program's multimedia initiatives, Ricky is now tackling the glorious prospect of redesigning the APAP website and creating a new website for the upcoming "HomeSpun: Made in the USA" Indian American project.

Ricky was born in Hong Kong and came to America when he was eight years old. His family – parents and big brother – settled in Greensboro, North Carolina. While in high school, he thought he wanted to be a doctor so he took up preparatory subjects for medical school. He also volunteered at the local hospital and took prep classes for a healthcare profession. But he discovered and fell in love with photography via a class in chemistry on dark room processes.

Ricky did a double major in Biology and Journalism while at the University of Carolina, Chapel Hill, but the pull of journalism and his love of photography was too strong. Ultimately, after working on the college paper, educational travels abroad, school yearbook, and a stint as a photography editor, he received his degree in Journalism and put aside his medical aspirations. Instead, he focused on visual communications, and photojournalism in particular, but he also took classes in graphic design, multimedia production, and web development.

Just before he started work with the APA Program, Ricky had a contract position with *National Geographic Magazine Online* as a design and development assistant. He is also a card-carrying member of the National Press Photographers Association, the Society for News Design, Golden Key International Honour Society, and the North Carolina Press Photographers Association.

Outside of work, Ricky enjoys even more photography, movies, board games, Frisbee, running, and indoor climbing. There are rumors that he might be good at karaoke but that remains to be seen – or heard. For now, we are delighted to have a fulltime website designer and a tech guru in the office. Just don't tell him Kal Penn now plays a medical doctor in that other popular medical drama *House*.

Intern Highlight: Amanda Andrei

Hello! Amanda Andrei here, one of the interns from this past summer. I'm currently studying as an exchange student at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines.

I'm conducting ethnographic research for six months in preparation for my senior thesis at the College of William & Mary. My research is still open-ended – I know I want to focus on the relationships between the Philippines and the United States, and Filipino American culture, but as to what aspect of that (family life, foodways, group identity, everyday life, etc...), I'm still open to any possibilities!

If you have any suggestions, or even recommendations of what I should see or do or eat while in the Philippines, please feel free to email me at andreial@si.edu!



Cultural Fun Facts

After all that Thanksgiving food, try a dish from Vietnam!

Bánh mì is a Vietnamese baguette made with wheat and rice flours. The sandwich consists of thinly sliced pickled carrots, daikon, onions, cilantro, and different varieties of meat, such as grilled chicken, barbecued pork, shredded pork skin, and crushed pork meatballs. Popular *bánh mì* fillings include pork, paté, chicken, and head cheese. The contrasting flavors and textures of the sandwich make it a popular snack or meal.

The sandwiches are a by-product of the French colonial empire in Indochina, fusing baguettes, paté, and mayonnaise from France, with Vietnamese coriander, hot chili pepper, salty fish sauce (*nuoc mam*), and pickled carrots.

The *bánh mì* tradition followed the French out of Vietnam back to Paris, and settled into tiny sandwich shops and modest eateries centered on the Vietnamese/Chinese enclave in the neighborhood of Belleville. A similar scene is developing in Manhattan's Chinatown and Vietnamese American enclaves around the United States.

Source: <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/lifestyle/1996/09/25/1996-09-25-east-meets-west-in-nam-sand.html>

Collections: "Barriers to Bridges"

A new exhibit, "Barriers to Bridges," was unveiled at the National Museum of American History (NMAH) on November 21, 2008 when the NMAH itself reopened after extensive renovation. This artifact case presents glimpses of a rich history of Asian Americans from the 19th century to the present.

The immigration process was never easy for Americans of Asian Pacific descent. Asians were initially tolerated, along with other immigrants, but resentment and racial tensions led to a series of exclusionary laws that began in the late 19th century – for the first time in U.S. history, immigrants were barred entry solely on the basis of race. While the Chinese were the first group to be excluded, by the early 20th century, most Asians were prohibited from immigrating and applying for citizenship until 1965.



Visitors will find anti-Asian images but the exhibit also includes stories of Asians who found ways to enter the country. After the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and subsequent great fire destroyed many public records, allowing some Chinese immigrants to assert they had been born in San Francisco. Claiming citizenship for their children living in China, these "slots" were often sold to strangers or given to relatives. Immigration officials carried

out extensive interviews attempting to uncover these "paper sons." The "coaching" book on display helped an immigrant memorize hundreds of detailed questions to "prove" his status as the son of an American-born parent.

Being a picture bride – so named because often the couple knew each other only through the exchange of photos and family information – was another legal immigration path into the United States. In the early 20th century, over 20,000 picture brides from Japan and Korea arrived mostly in California and Hawai'i to join their husbands. One such picture bride left a beautiful wedding kimono and her wedding photo.

After 1943, Asian exclusion laws were replaced with a very restrictive quota system. While some Asian countries received tiny allotments (105 people per year for China, for example), certain non-quota immigrants were eligible for entry and eventual citizenship. Asian American populations in the U.S. increased after World War II as Asian women (wartime brides), children (adoptees), and refugees entered the U.S.

Asian immigration grew quickly after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 which privileged family reunification. Some immigrants left their homelands because of political turmoil such as in Southeast Asia, but most were drawn by economic opportunity and a desire to unite with their families. In the artifact case, visitors may see a Filipino nurse's cap, Hmong story cloth, entry permits for Vietnamese political refugees, and a doctored Thai passport for an exploited laborer.

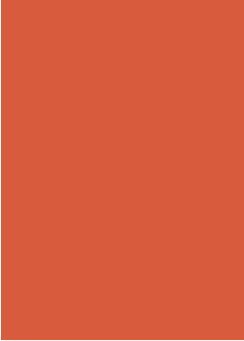
Today, about 15,000,000 Asian Pacific Americans make up 5% of the U.S. population and join Latinos as one of our fastest growing ethnic groups.

We plan to have more Asian Pacific American objects and stories included in the American History Museum and throughout the Smithsonian, so come visit us soon!

This Month in History: Refugee Act

The late 1900s were a tumultuous time for Southeast Asian countries, ranging from the Vietnam War to the Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia. These terrible circumstances created many refugees who were hoping to find asylum in the United States.

The Southeast Asian Refugee Act passed on December 22, 1987 acknowledged some of these issues and tried to help. Section 904 called for more attention to be given to refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos who were living in asylum camps in Asia. Section 906 called for specific help in regard to those related to the Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia.



However, the most interesting section for United States Vietnamese Americans is Section 905, which finally allowed entry into the U.S. to the thousands born to Vietnamese mothers and American fathers. These half-Asian/half-American refugees had sadly not been recognized by either the American or Vietnamese governments. Because of this exclusion, they suffered harsh living conditions. Finally in 1987, these hapa refugees were allowed to enter America.

The treatment of refugees remains a hot topic today. In terms of the War in Iraq, especially, thousands of Iraqis are displaced and yet the American government is only allowing a few to enter the U.S. Do we have a responsibility to these people or should they be left to fend for themselves?

Source: Franklin Odo's *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian American Experience*

For more information about what's going on in our office, visit us at www.apa.si.edu

Until January,
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* Title photograph of Smithsonian Castle, Washington, DC by Becky Esman