

Annual Report to APA Board of Offers from the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies

September 10, 2009

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I. Committee Members July 2007-July 2008:

Gary Mar (Stony Brook University), Chair	2011
Sin yee Chan (University of Vermont)	2009
Ruth Chang, (Rutgers University)	2010
Amy Olberding (University of Oklahoma)	2009
Jinmei Yuan (Creighton University)	2010
Ron Sundstrom (University of San Francisco)	2011
Kyoo Lee (John Jay College, New York)	2011

II. Preliminary Conversations with Committee Members.

During the summer before my tenure as Committee Chair was to begin, I set up phone appointments to talk not only with the outgoing chair, but with each of the members of the committee about their experiences, expectations, and special expertise for accomplishing the work of this committee. These results of these conversations can be summarized:

1. With regard to the charge of the Committee, it was noted that, other than sponsoring panels on Asian philosophy, other aspects of the charge had not been addressed: (1) “assessing and reporting on the status of Asians and Asian Americans in the profession”; (2) “identifying unfair or discriminatory practices and to advise the Board and the members of the Association of ways in which they may be rectified; or (3) “studying and proposing ways of encouraging and helping Asians and Asian Americans enter the profession.”

2. The last two issues of the Newsletter had not been published. Amy Olberding, however, was going to publish a forthcoming issue of the newsletter documenting the decline in the diversity of Ph.D. granting institutions in Asian philosophy. She noted that Said's critique of Orientalism was influential, especially among younger scholars, in Asian philosophy but a critique of Said's *Orientalism* had not been undertaken.
3. I was informed by the APA that two seats on the Committee were going to be left vacant due to a lack of nominations.
4. It seemed to me that little initiative had been taken to work with the other diversity committees. I took advantage of attending a session of a conference on disabilities in NYC where the Chair of the Committee on the Status of Blacks, Anna Stubblefield, would be speaking. I asked her for a recommendation for a member of her committee to chair one of our sponsored panels. During our conversation, Anna mentioned that their committee had co-chairs and that this policy would be recommended for the other committees.
5. It turned out that the committee had sponsored panels, but they were almost entirely devoted to Asian, rather than Asian American, Philosophy, and that there was little coordination with the other groups in the APA sponsoring panels on Asian philosophy.

III. Preparatory Work and Strategic Planning.

1. I recruited **Ronald Sundstrom** (University of San Francisco) and **Kyoo Lee** (John Jay College) to join the committee. Professor Sundstrom was a member of the Committee on Blacks and would contribute a Filipino perspective to the diversity of the Asians on the Committee. I suggested meeting up with Kyoo Lee at an Asian American Studies Conference at Fordham Conference sponsored, where we also happened to meet two new faculty members who had just joined the English (**Jeffrey Santa Ana**) and Asian and Asian American Studies Departments (**Nerissa Balce**) at Stony Brook. Kyoo and Ron's nominations were officially approved on December 10, 2008.
2. I suggested that the four of us participate in a panel at the East of California Conference to be held at Storrs Connecticut in March. In conversation with the younger faculty, I learned that Said's *Orientalism* was often cited but seldom criticized.
3. Upon the recommendation of **Anna Stubblefield**, Chair of the Committee on Black Philosophers, I emailed **Eddie Sourfrant** (UNC Charlotte) to chair our panel on Asian American Philosophy at the Central Division APA.
4. I asked David Kim to consider working alongside of me as co-chair since the plans that we could put into place, especially with regard to advancing Asian American Philosophy, would not come to fruition by 2011. With David put together a panel at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies which would put philosophers establishing the field of Asian American philosophy in conversation with scholars in Asian American Studies.

5. With the advice of the (extended) committee as well as colleagues in Asian American Studies, I wrote a grant for Proposal to Benefit the Profession. When Cheshire Calhoun noted on email that there was an over-abundance of proposals, I called to ask her advice and overnight submitted a truncated grant, "A Shorter Rethinking of Philosophy Through Asian/American Philosophy" was funded for \$3,420. A report on the progress made through that grant was submitted under separate cover.

IV. Publications and Newsletters.

1. Amy Olberding edited a newsletter in which she documented the decline in the diversity of Ph.D. granting institutions in Asian Philosophy. I received the following unsolicited email from **JeeLoo Liu**, Associate Professor, Cal State Fullerton, and Vice President/Treasurer of the Association of Chinese Philosophers in North America:

I came across this APA newsletter (Nov. 2008) edited by Amy Olberding of U. of Oklahoma, which includes many insightful and thought-provoking articles on the development and current status of Chinese philosophy in the U.S. I am sure that some of you have read this report and I know that some are even authors in this newsletter, but maybe most of you are ignorant of it as I was before today. I have established a link to this newsletter on our ACPA website. I hope you are as inspired as I am by this array of articles.

2. The Spring 2009 issue of the Newsletter was edited collaboratively by Gary Mar with contributions by committee members **Ruth Chang**, **David Kim**, **Kyoo Lee**, **Ron Sundstrom** and others listed below.

3. **Amy Olberding** has edited a forthcoming issue of the Newsletter with regard to a panel she organized at the Central Division regarding "Asian Philosophy and Feminism" (see below).

V. Sponsored Panels at Regional Conferences.

1. The East of California Conference (Oct. 31-Nov. 1, 2008) at the University of Connecticut at Storrs entitled "*A Movement to Look Back To*" The keynote address was given by **Gary Okihiro** was reprinted in the Sp[ring Newsletter]. At this conference, this Committee sponsored an interdisciplinary panel placing Asian American Philosophy and Cultural Studies in Dialogue *Visual Epistemologies and Ontologies of Race in an Age of Neoliberalism: Asian American Philosophy and Cultural Studies in Dialogue*. It was organized by **Gary Mar** with panelists **Nerissa Balce** (Cultural Studies, U. Mass., Amherst and now Department of Asian and Asian American Studies, Stony Brook University), **Kyoo Lee** (Philosophy, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY), and **Jeffrey Santa Ana** (English, Stony Brook University).

2. Two panels were sponsored at the Eastern Division, December 2008.

To promote dialogue between the Committee and the APA at large, the Committee sponsored a panel "**The Pentagonam of Love**" organized and chaired by **Ruth Chang** (Rutgers) at the Eastern Division Meeting of the APA in Philadelphia in December 2008. This panel, which was well attended with standing room only, included panelists **Harry Frankfurt** (Princeton), **Rae Langton** (MIT), **Michael Stocker** (Syracuse), **David Wong** (Duke), and **David Velleman** (NYU), kindly filling in for **Jeanette**

Kennett (ANU) who was unfortunately unable to travel from Australia to participate in the session. Ruth Chang's report occurs in the Spring 2009 issue of the Newsletter. This session was recorded.

A panel on Asian Philosophy "**Transcendence in Chinese Thought**" was organized by Jinmei Yuan. The chair and commentator for the panel was **Henry Rosemont Jr.** (Brown University) with panelists **Jinmei Yuan** (Creighton University) "How Could Moist Logical Rules Work Without Transcendence?", **Kutis Hagen** (SUNY Plattsburgh) "Transcendence in the Xunzi?", **Steve Coutinho** (Muhlenberg College) "Tian Rui: 'Signs of Transcendence' in the Liezi?", and **Andrew Colvin** (Slippery Rock University) "On the Relevance of Strict Transcendence in Understanding Chinese Religious Thought; A Response to Wang Shik Jang".

2. Two panels were sponsored at the Central Division Meetings in Chicago (Feb. 2009) and a lunch was sponsored by the Committee to facilitate the scholarly interactions among Asian and Asian American philosophers and Asian Americanists. Amy Olberding organized as panel on **Asian Philosophy and Feminism**.

The other panel on "**Race, Immigration and Social Justice**" was co-sponsored by the Committee on Blacks and was chaired by **Eddy Souffrant** (University of North Carolina, Charlotte). This panel featured a presentation based on a chapter in Sundstrom's newly published book *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* in which he defends aspects of the much maligned construct of the "black-white" binary. In conjunction with Sundstrom's presentation was an invited talk "**Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America**", by **Erika Lee**, Fesler-Lampert Professor in the Public Humanities, Department of History and Asian American Studies, University of Minnesota.

Professor Lee's talk was based on the newest research co-authored by **Judy Yung** (Professor emerita, American Studies, U. C. Santa Cruz) about the international character of immigration through Angel island, sometimes (misleadingly) called the "Ellis Island of the West Coast". This new research was commissioned by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (www.aiisf.org) and will be published next year to commemorate the centennial of opening of the Angel Island Immigration Station in 1910.

3. I asked Erika Lee for permission to turn her research into a documentary with my students, currently in a course on Asian American Philosophy, giving first-person voice and witness to the immigration stories in her presentation. With the talent and directorial skills of **Dini Diskin-Zimmerman**, the first woman to director on CNN, Gary Mar and his students were able to create a documentary **We See Ourselves: New Immigrant Voices from Angel Island** which was premiered on May 7th at the Charles Wang Center. This documentary will be donated, along with other projects, to the Angel Island Immigration Station for its centenary celebration in 2010. The documentary, completed during the semester, with a committed team of collaborators can be viewed as a podcast at https://podcast.ic.sunysb.edu/weblog/gary_mar/ and was made possible, in part, by "**A Shorter Rethinking of Philosophy Through Asian/American Philosophy**".

4. David Kim arranged for a special session "Three Critiques: Philosophy and Asian American Studies in Dialogue" at the Association for Asian American Studies Annual Conference (April 24, 2009). The panelists were **Gary Mar** (Stony Brook University), "The Critique of Orientalism", **David H. Kim** (U. of San Francisco), "The Critique of Empire", and **Ronald Sundstrom** (U. of San Francisco), "The Critique of the Black-White Binary". The session was chaired by Professor **Gary Okihiro** (Founding Director,

Columbia University Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race), a founder of the field of Asian American Studies, former President of the Association for Asian American Studies, and recipient of a lifetime achievement award who was being honored on the occasion of the publication of the first two books in his series on Hawaii. The discussant was **Viranjini Munasinghe** (Cornell University). This panel was very well received and conversations have been started about devoting a special issue of the *Journal of Asian American Studies* to the intersection and cross-fertilization of Asian American Studies and Asian American Philosophy. These papers will also be used for a proposed first anthology for Asian American Philosophy.

VI. Prospects for Future Accomplishments.

1. Meeting with **Cheshire Calhoun** and the Inclusiveness Committee, proposals were discussed to have the APA collect data with regard to diversity for placement, interviewing, and job applications for a follow-up those using the APA advertizing services to report on the ethnic, racial and geographic demographics of the applicant pool. This is perhaps the only economical way to collect the data required to address the most glaring omissions in fulfilling the charge of the committee noted above in the preliminary conversations with committee members. Moreover, the information would be extremely valuable to the APA, requiring only the posting of a questionnaire form (perhaps to be developed by the Inclusiveness Committee) and a data base.

Although Asian Americans are “over-represented” at elite universities, Asian Americans are *under-represented* in Philosophy, even in comparison with other racial and/or ethnic groups such as Blacks and Hispanics. This is a fact that needs to be documented and calls out for critically examination.

2. The Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophy has set for itself some new goals: (A) to promote dialogue between the APA and the Association for Asian American Studies and various associations advancing Asian Philosophy, targeting neglected areas such as South Asian Philosophy, West Asian or Middle Eastern Philosophy and other Asian or Asian-American philosophies in addition to the traditional emphasis on Chinese or Indian or other East Asian philosophies or religions, (B) to promote dialogue within the APA between the Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies with the other such diversity committees and other organizations promoting Asian philosophies; (C) to disseminate teaching materials and seminal articles authored by philosophers and Asian Americanists with the aim of creating the first anthology devoted to Asian American Philosophy; (D) to collect data on the status of Asian and Asian-American philosophers and the state of Asian and Asian-American philosophies; and (E) to sponsor panels at the APA regional conferences that stimulate awareness of and research and teaching about philosophical topics of interest to Asian and Asian American philosophers and their communities.

3. To promote dialogue between this Committee and the Committees on Hispanics and Blacks, we have proposed a panel sponsored by all three committees for the upcoming Eastern Division Meeting in 2009 dealing with “*Migrant Laborers Building the Master’s House: Enslaved Africans, Indentured Coolies, and Latino Contract Workers*”. The panel will feature two prominent Asian Americanists and two philosophers. The Asian Americanists are **Lisa Yun**, Associate Professor of English and Asian/Asian American Studies at Binghamton University, author of *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba* (Temple, 2008) and **Gary Okihiro**, Professor of International and Public Affairs and Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University (see keynote address below). The

distinguished philosophers on this panel are **Linda Martín-Alcoff**, Hunter College/CUNY Graduate Center, and **Lewis Gordon**, Laura H. Carnell University Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Institute for the Study of Race and Social Thought and the Center for Afro-Jewish Studies.

4. Panels on both Asian and Asian-American Philosophy are in the process of being planned for the Central Division Meetings. The first panel "*Toward a Political Philosophy of Race*" is an author meets critic session, organized by **Kyoo Lee** and suggested by **David Kim**, based on **Falguni Sheth's** recent (SUNY Press, 2008) ground-breaking book by the same name. Informed by a concrete and systematic analysis of the racialized experiences of South Asian Americans and Muslims, Sheth's themes include an explanation of the multifaceted "technologies of exclusion" as well as a critique of the "color blind" history and discourse of liberalism. Commentators **Charles Mills** and **Namita Goswami** will offer their critical reflections on what light a political philosophy of race can shed on such contemporary issues as immigration, national security and the war on terror.

The second panel, put together with **Jinmei Yuan**, is tentatively titled "*Confucius and Dewey on Experiential Education*" will be chaired by **Thomas Jackson** (University of Hawaii at Manoa) with participants **Yong Huang**, Kutztown University, **Andrew Colvin**, Slippery Rock University, and **Jinmei Yuan**, Creighton University. The sessions have been planned back to back to encourage conversation between those in Asian American and Asian philosophy.

The balance of the APA Grant will be used to publish a DVD, to be distributed to school teachers, containing project created in a course on philosophical issues in Asian American Studies, to commemorate the centenary of the Angel Island Immigration Station in July 2010. This project was discussed in a separate report on the APA Grant for "*A Shorter Rethinking of Philosophy Through Asian/American Philosophy*". Additional grants to make this possible are being sought from other sources.

VII. New Committee Members.

Minh Nguyen, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Eastern Kentucky University, has proposed a session for the Eastern Division Meeting in New York on the topic of Teaching Chinese Philosophy: Challenges and Promises.

Bo Mou, Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Comparative Philosophy at San Jose State University in California, has advanced degrees from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (M.A., 1987) and from University of Rochester (M.A., 1993; and Ph.D., 1997), was President (2002-5) of the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy (ISCWP) and member of the APA's Committee on International Cooperation of (2002-2005) will be proposing a forthcoming panel for the Pacific Division meetings.

David Kim has been nominated to officially serve as co-chair of the Committee. This was deemed important and necessary by several members of the Committee because many of the initiatives inaugurated by the current chair will not see their fruition until after his term expires in 2010. David Kim not only has prior experience serving on this Committee but is also able to understand the dual constituencies of Asian and Asian-American philosophy.