

2009-2010 Report of the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies

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The Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophy has a number of new members and has set for itself several new goals: (1) 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, (2) 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; (3) 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; (4) to collect data on the status of Asian and Asian-American philosophers and the state of Asian and Asian-American philosophies; and (5) 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.

**Gary Mar**, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Stony Brook University, is the new chair for the Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies. Gary Mar is the last dissertation student of great 20th century logician Alonzo Church, co-author of the revision of Kalish and Montague's classic textbook *Logic: Techniques of Formal Reasoning*, and the catalyst for the Charles B. Wang Asian American Center at Stony Brook University (2005), which was financed with the largest donation (over \$50 million) to the public education system of New York State. Professor Mar is the founding director of the Asian American Center at Stony Brook, the founding director of the Philosophy Department Logic Lab, and is completing a book on Gödel's logical and mathematical discoveries and their impact on philosophy.

In addition to having a new chair, the committee has recently added four new members over the past year.

**Kyoo Lee**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, is the recipient of a Mellon Resident Fellowship in Humanities at the Graduate Center, CUNY, for Fall 2009-Spring 2010, and will be leading a weekly faculty seminar there with the other resident fellow, Professor Alyson Cole, a political scientist from Queens College/The Graduate Center. Her Mellon project is on "the family," the theme of the next academic year.

**Ron Sundstrom**, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Co-Director of African American Studies, University of San Francisco, is author of *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* (SUNY Press, 2008), which was the subject of a panel sponsored by the Committee at the Central Division Meeting in Chicago (2009).

**Minh Nguyen**, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Eastern Kentucky University, was born in Vietnam and after arrived in the United State in 1984, obtained his Ph.D. in philosophy from Columbia University (1999). He 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).

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.

To promote dialogue between the Committee and the APA at large, the Committee sponsored a panel "**The Pentagram 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 on this session is below.

Two panels sponsored by the Committee at the Central Division Meetings in Chicago (Feb. 2009) were designed to promote a dialogue between the **Asian Philosophy and Feminism** and Asian American Philosophy and the Association of Asian American Studies (AAAS). **Amy Olberding's** panel on the former topic will be discussed in a future issue of this newsletter. 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](http://www.aiisf.org)) and will be published next year to commemorate the centennial of opening of the Angel Island Immigration Station in 1910.

**Gary Mar**, who was teaching a course on Philosophical Issues in Asian American History, asked Erika Lee for permission to create a documentary with his students based on this research. With the talent and

directorial skills of **Dini Diskin-Zimmerman**, the first woman to director on CNN, 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/](https://podcast.ic.sunysb.edu/weblog/gary_mar/) and was made possible, in part, by grant for a proposal to benefit the profession submitted in June 2008 entitled "**A Shorter Rethinking of Philosophy Through Asian/American Philosophy**".