Asian American Radicalism Reimagined

Moving the Movement:

MAASC
18th Biennial Midwest Asian American Student Conference

Oberlin College
March 14–15th, 2014
MISSION STATEMENT

Whether a first, second, third, or seventh generation member of the Asian diaspora, it is integral to understand our histories of resistance that have bred our historical presence in the United States for the past two and a half centuries. Through understanding these legacies of activism, we can begin to identify the endless ways that radicalism now manifests itself in the present-day. By revisiting the legacies of Asian American activism that have come before us, we now move forward by questioning how to create innovative, effective, and accessible organizing. Whether through academia, social media, art forms, or community organizing, the contemporary Asian American movement has evolved through the years to create multi-generational and intersectional forms of resistance.

The 18th Biennial Midwest Asian American Student Conference, *Moving the Movement: Asian American Radicalism Reimagined* will gather movers of multiple generations and disciplines to bring these critical conversations to the unique experiences of Asian Americans. Throughout this weekend, we will host a variety of speakers which are not entirely exclusive of one another. They come from a number of ethnic communities within the Asian American diaspora including Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Thai, Filipino, and Vietnamese communities with grassroots activism, community advocacy, political organizing, academia and research, visual and performing arts, social media, library science, and law as areas of focus.

We recognize that not all identities and methods of resistance are encapsulated in this conference due to the multifaceted nature of Asian American experiences. The conference hopes to inform our own understandings of the negotiation and renegotiation of as many individual and community identities within Asian America as possible as an act of radicalism itself. Asian American experiences created from the intersection of our multiple identities are critical and undeniable voices that shape our society and inform activism, articulate justice, and challenge a static notion of radicalism. This conference explores radicalism as a pursuit of activism that is effective and unafraid to challenge a dominant majority’s power and privilege. It is able to address, however subtly or gradually, the civil, social, and spiritual needs of the Asian American community with regards to the pursuit of social justice and interests of our community. Ultimately, it must be closely attuned to the needs and challenges of Asian America. Radical Asian American activism is relevant and refuses to be marginalized.
FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2014

4:00–5:15pm  **CHECK IN // REGISTRATION // MEET & GREET**  King 106

5:00–6:00pm  **OPENING KEYNOTE // Daryl Maeda (Department Chair & Professor of Ethnic Studies at University of Colorado Boulder)**  King 106

10:30pm–1:00am  **OPENING PERFORMANCE // Bambu // Rocky Rivera // Elephant Rebellion**  The ’Sco

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2014

9:00–9:45am  **LIBERATION FOR ONE, LIBERATION FOR ALL: ASIAN AMERICA & MULTIRACIAL SOLIDARITY WORKSHOPS // Soya Jung (ChangeLab) [King 227] // Kabzuag Vaj (Freedom Inc.) [King 237] // Elephant Rebellion [King 239]**

10–10:30am  **Discussion following workshops // Moderated by Kristen Surla (Asian and Pacific Islander Diaspora Community Coordinator at Oberlin College’s Multicultural Resource Center) and Erica Qiao ’14**  King 106

10:45–Noon  **ALTERNATIVE ARCHIVES PANEL // Samip Mallick (South Asian American Digital Archive) // Jan Christian Bernabe (Center for Art and Thought) // Ngọc Loan Trần (writer and activist, nloantran.com) // Moderated by Harrod Suarez (Assistant Professor of English at Oberlin College)**  King 106

Noon–1:15pm  **LUNCH**  Root Room

1:30–2:00pm  **SMALL GROUP ENERGIZERS**  Root Room

2:15–3:30pm  **EDUCATE, ORGANIZE, MOBILIZE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT WORKSHOPS // Cathy Dang (CAAV Organizing Asian Communities) [King 227] // Cathy Vue (Asian Services in Action, Inc.) [King 237] // Cris Hilo (GABRIELA USA) [King 239]**

3:45–5:00pm  **LEGACY AND ACTIVISM IN APID STUDENT ORGANIZING: OBERLIN COLLEGE, A CASE STUDY // Shelley Lee (Associate Professor of Comparative American Studies and History at Oberlin College) // Donn Ginoza ’74 // Rashné Limki ’05 // Joelle Eliza Lingat ’14 // Moderated by Maria Paz Esguerra ’02 (Visiting Professor of Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College)**  King 106

7:00–8:30pm  **CLOSING KEYNOTE & BANQUET // Robyn Magalit Rodriguez (Associate Professor of Asian American Studies at UC Davis)**  Root Room

9:00–10:00pm  **OPEN MIC NIGHT with ELEPHANT REBELLION // MC BITTER & MC QT BBY**  Asia House—Shepherd Lounge

10:30pm–1am  **AFTER PARTY**  The Edmonia Lewis Center—House Side
LIBERATION FOR ONE, LIBERATION FOR ALL: ASIAN AMERICA & MULTIRACIAL SOLIDARITY

Soya Jung (ChangeLab), Kabzuag Vaj (Freedom, Inc.), and Elephant Rebellion

Moderated by Kristen Surla (Asian and Pacific Islander Diaspora Community Coordinator at Oberlin College’s Multicultural Resource Center) and Erica Qiao ’14

[King 227, King 237, and King 239 // 9–9:45am workshop, 10–10:30am facilitated discussion]

The movement is interconnected. Cross community solidarity in the 21st century is necessary and inextricably tied to one another. With the changing demographics and diverse experiences of Asian America, addressing multiracial solidarity within our own communities has come to the forefront of our work. Why is Multiracial Solidarity important for Asian America? How can we work to strengthen and support each others’ movements? What does true solidarity across racial & ethnic lines look like? How do we effectively collaborate to create movements together? This series of workshops brings together organizers who are committed to prioritizing multiracial solidarity in their work. Not only is it an important part of our Asian American identity development to understand ourselves, but also contextualize our experiences within a larger and complex system of race. Each of our workshop speakers will share how they include multiracial solidarity in their own work and suggest how we can work to implement cross community solidarity in our own work.

ALTERNATIVE ARCHIVES

Samip Mallick (South Asian American Digital Archive), Jan Christian Bernabe (Center for Art and Thought), and Nguyễn Loan Trần (writer and activist, nloantran.com)

Moderated by Harrod Suarez (Assistant Professor of English at Oberlin College)

[King 106 // 10:45–noon, mini-lecture series with Q&A session]

It is time for our voices to be heard: Asian America will no longer stay off the record. This mini-lecture series followed by a Q&A session will explore the ways in which Asian American activism manifests itself in the form of archiving. What does it look like when Asian America constructs and preserves its own history? What does archiving look like on a diasporic level? An individual level? How has the face of archiving changed with the rise of digital technologies? The work of activists Samip Mallick, Jan Christian Bernabe, and Nguyễn Loan Trần embodies many scales. From the diasporic to the individual, “Alternative Archives” will examine how Asian America takes ownership of and amplifies its many histories and voices.
EDUCATE, ORGANIZE, MOBILIZE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

Cathy Dang (CAAV), Cathy Vue (ASIA Inc.), and Cris Hilo (GABRIELA USA)
[King 227, King 237, and King 239 // 2:15–3:30pm, round robin workshop]

The Asian American community in the United States is diverse in experiences, oppressions, privileges, and ideas. What is the role of community organizations in mobilizing the Asian American community in times of need? What constitutes a time of need? And what are the different organizing frameworks that are used when approaching different Asian American communities? This session will consist of three rotating panels where you can interact and learn from three different community organizations in smaller groups. Cris Hilo, based in NYC, works with General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action USA on women’s issues. Cathy Vue, based in Ohio, works locally with Asian Services in Action Inc.’s Reaching Asian-Americans through Innovative and Supportive Engagement, on community health. Cathy Dang, also based in NYC, works with CAAAV building grassroots community power across diverse poor and working class Asian immigrant and refugee communities.

LEGACY AND ACTIVISM IN APID STUDENT ORGANIZING: OBERLIN COLLEGE, A CASE STUDY

Shelley Lee (Associate Professor of Comparative American Studies and History at Oberlin College), Donn Ginoza ’74, Rashné Limki ’05, and Joelle Lingat ’14
Moderated by Maria Paz Esguerra ’02 (Visiting Assistant Professor of Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College)
[King 106 // 3:45–5pm, facilitated discussion]

“Empowerment comes from deciding that the outcome of struggle doesn’t matter as much as the decision to struggle.” —Lisa Marie Cacho, Social Death

What are issues that have been happening on your campus, at your home? How has this conference helped you reflect on the role of activism, academia, and community? This panel discussion will open space to begin addressing these issues, using Oberlin College as a case study. Following the panel, we will have a large group discussion to ask questions to the panelists and reflect on your own experiences. These discussion aim to take a comparative look at the work students have done before us, the good work we do now, and ways we can collectively move forward.
Daryl Joji Maeda is Chair and Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he teaches courses in comparative ethnic studies and Asian American studies. He has published two books on Asian American activism during the 1960s and 70s, Reconsidering the Asian American Movement (Routledge, 2012) and Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). He earned a Ph.D. in American Culture from the University of Michigan and an M.A. in Ethnic Studies from San Francisco State University. He is currently working on a cultural biography of the martial artist and actor Bruce Lee, focusing on how Lee embodied the hybridity engendered by transnational flows of people, cultures, ideologies, and practices.

Bambu, from the city of Los Angeles, has been making his mark on the Hip Hop scene for almost a decade. His first album, self untitled... first saw the light of day on the 10-year anniversary of the LA Rebellion of 1992 and the climb has been forward since. Soon after releasing that first LP, Bambu joined fellow Los Angeles emcee, Kiwi and Bay Area transplant, DJ Phatrick to create the now defunct, Native Guns group. After the disbanding of the group, DJ Phatrick and Bambu continued to do shows around the country and eventually built a reputation as strong live performers. Bambu dropped his follow up solo album, ...i scream bars for the children... in 2007 and ...exact change... in 2008. His latest project, ...paper cuts... dropped at the end of February, 2010 and has definitely solidified the emcee as one of Los Angeles’ best. In addition to music, Bambu spends his days with his family and out in the community organizing with People’s CORE and Kabataang maka-Bayan, Pro-People Youth.

Rocky Rivera is an accomplished journalist-turned-emcee whose editorials appeared in XXL, The Source and Rolling Stone Magazine before she decided to perfect her own musical craft. Trading her moleskines for microphones, she’s dropped three musical projects since 2008, Married to the Hustle Mixtape, the self-titled album, Rocky Rivera, and the POP KILLER MXTP. Her debut album was released in 2010 and since then, has garnered critical acclaim and press coverage from VIBE, 2DopeBoyz.com, Refinery29, and numerous music blogs across the web. In 2012, Rocky became the only female artist at the VIBE HOUSE’s Respect The West Showcase at the SXSW Festival, sharing the stage with West Coast favorites such as Nipsey Hussle, Strong Arm Steady, Snoop Dog and Kendrick Lamar. In the past, she’s opened up for diverse artists such as Zion-I, Macklemore, Blue Scholars, Pac Div and dead prez.
**Elephant Rebellion** is a collective of artist, writers, and activists, who use their talents to spread social justice and youth empowerment. This collective was inspired by the drive and integrity of the late John Vietnam Nguyen who said, “The elephant is an emblem, representing the displacement we face as members of society. Elephants roam in packs, unified by mutual feelings, whether they are complacent or oppressed, and sound their yawp—bellowing and beautiful.”

**Soya Jung** has been active in the progressive movement for the last 20 years. During the ’90s she worked as a reporter at the International Examiner, communications and policy staff for the WA State House Democratic Caucus, and executive director of the Washington Alliance for Immigrant and Refugee Justice. She was the founding chair of the Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition, which formed in 1996 to restore food and cash assistance for low-income immigrants and refugees in Washington State. During the 2000s Soya was the Director of Grantmaking at the Social Justice Fund, a public foundation supporting progressive organizations in the Northwest, and consulted for various institutions including the Western States Center, the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, the Nonprofit Assistance Center, the City of Seattle, the Washington State Budget & Policy Center, and the Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition. In her volunteer time, she serves on the Steering Committee of Sahngnoksoo, a local organization of progressive Korean Americans, and on the Executive Committee of Grassroots International, which funds resource rights in the Global South.

**Kabzuag Vaj** was born in Laos and came to the United States as a refugee child with her mother and siblings. In the past 20 years, she has dedicated her life to ending violence against women and girls. In 2003, she created Freedom Inc. (FI), a grassroots collective for Southeast Asian women and youths to address racism, sexism, and gender-based violence. Today, Freedom Inc. is an evolving collective of Black and Hmong women, gender-non-conforming, queer, and young folks working together to organize around root causes of violence, creating new definitions/solutions, and building their community members’ capacity to be agents of change. Since its inception, FI has provided much needed services, and has created safe cultural-gender-generation-linguistic specific spaces for low-income Southeast Asian and Black communities. In recognition for her work, she was awarded the White House Champion of Change award in 2012, Alston Bannerman Sabbatical award for long time community organizers, and more recently the Hmong National Development Impact Award-change makers advancing the Hmong community. Kabzuag’s ability to build family, solidarity, and shared analysis across race, culture, and generations has become an example of how Asian and Black communities collectively can build power, share resources, and mobilize to bring about deep social, political, culture, and economic change.
Samip Mallick is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the South Asian American Digital Archive, the only non-profit organization working nationally to give voice to South Asian Americans through documenting, preserving and sharing stories that represent their unique and diverse experiences. Mallick was formerly the Director of the Ranganathan Center for Digital Information at the University of Chicago Library. He holds a M.S. in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Illinois, a Bachelors degree in Computer Science from the University of Michigan College of Engineering and has done graduate work in Ancient Indian History at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. He also previously worked for the South Asia and International Migration Programs at the Social Science Research Council.

Jan Christian Bernabe is an interdisciplinary scholar of Asian American art history and visual culture, comparative race and ethnic studies, and queer cultural studies. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in the Program in American Culture. He is finishing up a manuscript on Filipino American time-based art practices as cultural and historical critiques of United States-Philippines post/colonial relations and U.S imperial visual regimes and knowledge production. He is also an interdisciplinary artist and uses new media and digital imaging technologies to create artwork that captures his interests in queer bodies, affects, spaces, and temporalities. He is currently the Operations, New Media, and Curatorial Director for the nonprofit, Center for Art and Thought. Starting with the Filipino global diaspora as the organization’s point of departure, CA+T’s mission is to promote visual and digital literacy by facilitating the convergences of scholars, artists, writers, and the broader public through the opportunities afforded by new media and digital technologies. He has published in Wasafiri: International Contemporary Writing and International Review of African American Art Plus. He has also curated art exhibitions at Whitman College and for the Center for Art and Thought. He is co-editing an anthology which will be published by the University of Washington Press entitled Que(e)rying Contemporary Asian American Art.

ngọc loan trần is a Viêt/mixed-race immigrant, queer and gender weird, disabled writer, storyteller and aspiring educator. currently they are growing and learning in the U.S South where they feel deeply and spiritually connected to the sacred legacies of survival, resistance, beauty and creation of the region. loan is trying to live a life committed to critical compassion, fearless visioning and bold future building. learn more about their work at nloantran.com.
With roots in Queens, NY and Los Angeles, CA, **Cathy Dang** has been a community and worker center organizer leading campaigns for just living and working conditions in immigrant and communities of color for nearly a decade. Her former day job as a labor organizer with unions, worker centers organizing restaurant and retail workers is what sustains her true love and passion for community organizing in immigrant communities. She is the Board Secretary for the Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, a worker center for restaurant workers fighting for racial, gender, and economic justice in New York’s restaurant industry.

**Cathy Vue** is a Program Coordinator at Asian Services In Action, Inc. At ASIA, Cathy manages public health initiatives throughout the Asian American/Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander communities in Northeast Ohio along with instrumenting state-wide Affordable Care Act efforts throughout Ohio. Prior to working at ASIA, Inc, Cathy worked as an Emergency Preparedness/Health Educator at the Monroe County Health Department in Monroe, Michigan. She attended The University of Toledo as an undergraduate and earned a master’s degree in public health from the Northwest Ohio Consortium for Public Health in Epidemiology and Global Health in 2012.

For the past six years, **Cris Hilo** has been educating, organizing, and mobilizing in the Filipino community around immigrant rights and issues of violence against women and children with GABRIELA New York, especially cases of human trafficking. Alongside her organizing in the Filipino Community, she has worked on union campaigns with nurses’ and teachers’ unions.

**Harrod J Suarez** is Assistant Professor of English and Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College. His research on diasporic Filipina/o literature examines the intersections of globalization, gender, and cultural production. He also curates Poetastic.com, a digital archive of poetry readings on video.
**Shelley Lee** is an associate professor of history and comparative American studies at Oberlin College. On the Oberlin faculty since 2007, she teaches and/or writes about Asian American history, U.S. immigration, urban history, and recent American history. She is the author of two books, Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Prewar Seattle and Japanese America (Temple UP, 2011) and A New History of America (Routledge, 2013), and is currently working on a project about post-1965 Korean immigration and urban politics in Los Angeles.

**Donn Ginoza, OC ’74** is a third-generation Japanese American graduate of Oberlin College with a long history of advocacy on behalf of the Asian American community. He is currently an administrative law judge for the California Public Employment Relations Board in Oakland, California. As an undergraduate at Oberlin, he participated in the formation of the Asian American Alliance in 1972. After graduating in 1974, he became Oberlin’s third Asian American Counselor Coordinator, taught the first Asian American course for credit in the College of Arts and Sciences, and led a contingent to the Midwest Colleges Asian American Conference at the University of Wisconsin. As one of two resident counselors, he helped successfully launch the Third World Dorm at Talcott Hall. His role in arranging for speakers led him to associations with notable community activists on the east and west coasts and fueled his interest in pursuing a legal career addressing the needs of the Asian American community. Following a law school internship at the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco, Mr. Ginoza began work as a legal aid attorney in Oakland and later South Central Los Angeles, where he litigated numerous civil rights cases. In Oakland he was the lead attorney for a coalition of community health clinics serving immigrants, including Asian Health Services, that successfully sued the County of Alameda Hospital for language discrimination. The case resulted in establishment of one of the nation’s first hospital translation departments with full-time staff covering five languages, including Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, and Spanish. His work in language access and cultural competency led to his involvement with the National Health Law Program (a former legal services agency), the nation’s premier organization for enforcing rights to language access in health care. Mr. Ginoza served for over 20 years on the board of directors of both Asian Health Services and the National Health Law Program, including serving as the board chair for both organizations. In Los Angeles, Mr. Ginoza was active in the Little Tokyo Peoples’ Rights Organization, where organizing restaurant workers led to his interest in labor law. Other community organizations in which he has served include Asian Multi Service, a job training organization, and Asian Pacific Legal Islander Outreach, a nonprofit law office serving special needs. He co-founded two philanthropic organizations, Asian Foundation for Community Development and Asian Health Services Foundation. As a judge for the Public Employment Relations Board, he has decided many high-profile cases addressing the scope of public employees’ rights to organize and bargain collectively with their employers.
Maria Paz G. Esguerra, OC ’02 is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Comparative American Studies and an Oberlin alum. She received her Ph.D. in History from the University of Michigan and her M.A. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota. At Oberlin, she teaches courses on Asian American studies and the history of marriage and family in the U.S. Currently, she is working on a project that looks at Asian immigrant communities, interracial marriage, and miscegenation laws in the American West between the 1920s and 1940s.

Rashné Limki, OC ’05 was the Asian/Pacific American Community Coordinator at Oberlin College's Multicultural Resource Center from 2005–2006. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Centre for Ethics and Politics at Queen Mary University of London. She is a member of Black Feminists UK and the London Roots Collective. She occasionally blogs at blackfeminists.org.

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez is a teacher, researcher, and community organizer and activist. She earned her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, taught at Rutgers University in NJ, and is now Associate Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Davis. Her book, Migrants for Export: How the Philippines Brokers Labor to the World (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), has recently won distinction from the Association for Asian American Studies. Her research focuses on the Philippines and labor migration, political transnationalisms and resistance, and the ways in which globalization and neoliberalism have reconfigured states and citizenship. Rodríguez’s background in Asian American studies informs her actions as an activist, as Asian American studies emerged out of student movements many of the demands were for access to communities that have been long left out of the university. She is very much inspired by that tradition, and uses the skills she has developed as a researcher to contribute to communities. She has been working on a participatory action research project for Filipino caregivers in the Bay Area, which prompted the migrant workers to self-organize and in December 2012, they formed Migrante Northern California. As this is the kind of work that prompted her to go into professorship to begin with, she embodies the importance of scholars engaging with communities beyond the academy. She was the founding member of ASIAN! (Asian Sisters for Ideas in Action Now!) at UCSB, the League of Filipino Students (San Francisco, Bay Area), the Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (San Francisco, Bay Area) as well as the Collective for Critical Filipino/ Filipina Studies (a national network).
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