



APA Program Newsletter

Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program

August 2008

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Happy August! Title Contest Still Open!

Hello! We are very proud to say that our newsletter has taken off quickly and is expanding. Numerous responses to our *Newsletter Title Contest* have come in, but we're still waiting for a few more. The contest ends **August 22**, so continue sending in your ideas for a chance to win a **\$25 gift card to Amazon.com!** Also, please keep in mind when submitting suggestions that this newsletter serves the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. You are more than welcome to submit multiple entries.

These newsletters will be archived on the Smithsonian APA Program website soon. You will be able to access old newsletters without having to save all the emails in your mailbox. More details to follow.

We also plan on having a newsletter sign-up box on our website for those who are interested in receiving the newsletter. However, until then, if you know of anyone who would be interested, please don't hesitate to forward them our emails. Thanks for your support!

- Becky Esman
Newsletter Co-Editor



Traveling Exhibit Updates

Vietnamese American Exhibit to Open August 20 in Houston

The Smithsonian exhibit "Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon" will be on display at the Houston Community College from August 20th to November 30th. This exhibit covers more than 30 years of stories, challenges, and contributions made by the vibrant Vietnamese American community in our nation. Houston is the third venue after Orange County, California and San Jose, California for this exhibit's three-year national tour. Developed by the APA Program with curator Vu Pham, it is the first Vietnamese American historical exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution. If you are interested in hosting, or want more information, please visit www.apa.si.edu/VietAm.

Singgalot Open in LA

Two years after it was shown at the Smithsonian in 2006, "*Singgalot: The Ties That Bind*," an exhibition on Filipinos in America, finally embarked on its four-year national tour. The first venue is Remy's on Temple Art Gallery in Los Angeles, California, with a grand opening night coinciding with the Filipino Town Festival. Three beloved pioneers of the Filipino American community in LA were also recognized at the opening: Royal Morales, Esther Soriano-Hewitt, and Remedios Geaga. All three have passed away but their legacies of community activism and social work is

evident in the existence of social service agencies. The community leaders, workers, and students whom they mentored and inspired through the years continue their legacies.

Los Angeles is most appropriate as the first stop for *Singgalot's* national tour. The city has had a rich history of Filipino immigration since the early 1900s. One of the attendees remarked how his father and other *manongs* lived in downtown's Little Manila and Bunker Hill during the Depression years until they were pushed westward to the Temple-Beaudry area due to redevelopment and economic forces.

The hosting and grand opening of *Singgalot* was made possible with the diligence and perseverance of the Los Angeles *Singgalot* Planning Committee and Remy's on Temple Director and Curator, Jonathan Geaga Yap. The exhibit is open to public viewing until October 26, 2008. For Gallery hours, please check www.remysontemple.com.

Farmers Insurance is a generous sponsor of the *Singgalot* national tour.

SALTAF Author Spotlight: Tahmima Anam

This year's South Asian Literary and Theater Arts Festival, otherwise known as SALTAF, is thrilled to welcome Tahmima Anam to the Smithsonian this fall.



Anam's profound debut novel, *A Golden Age* (Harper, 2008), depicts the violent war for independence in Bangladesh during the 1970s. While Anam's novel focuses on Rehana Haque, a widowed mother, and her relationship with her children as they grow increasingly involved with revolutionary politics, it cannot be pigeonholed as typical domestic drama. Anam provides her audience with a portrait of Bangladesh at this time of great upheaval, and simultaneously captures the horrors of war and the deep emotional bonds that formed during these years of conflict.

Anam earned her PhD in Social Anthropology from Harvard University, and combines knowledge gained from fieldwork in Bangladesh with her family's history to write the novel. Anam recently received the 2008 Commonwealth Best First Book Award for *A Golden Age*. Anam will be reading from *A Golden Age* and as well as sign books at SALTAF 2008 taking place on November 15th, 2008 in Baird Auditorium at the National Museum of Natural History.

SALTAF, an annual showcase of South Asian diasporic literary and film talents, is one of the APA Program's most popular events. SALTAF is a partnership with the Washington, DC chapter of the Network of South Asian Professionals (NetSAP-DC). Previous SALTAF programs at the Smithsonian have featured impressive participants such as Booker Prize-winner Kiran Desai and renowned international filmmaker Deepa Mehta who U.S.-premiered her latest feature, *Water*, to a thrilled and overflowing audience.

Keep checking www.saltaf.org and www.apa.si.edu for the latest updates about this great event.



**Smithsonian APA Program and
National Museum of the
American Indian
Co-Sponsor *Passing Poston*
Film Screening**

Ruth Okimoto went to school, played with her friends, and was raised in a loving family, but her childhood was spent behind barbed wire. Okimoto, like many other Americans of Japanese descent, was raised in a prison camp during World War II.

The new documentary, *Passing Poston*, captures the story of Okimoto and fellow Japanese Americans who were wrongfully imprisoned during the war. The film also reveals that the camp was formed not only to imprison Japanese Americans on the West Coast, but also to revitalize the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation. The Japanese Americans provided free labor cultivating and irrigating the land for future Native American settlement. Today, the area continues to flourish and be agriculturally productive, no doubt due to the labor of the Japanese Americans.

The film gathered over 250 viewers to the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), with more than half of the audience staying for the lively discussion with Okimoto, filmmakers Joe Fox and James Nubile, and moderator Franklin Odo. The panel discussion covered the building of the barracks, aspects of camp life, and the transition of the residents after being released from the camps. Questions from the audience led to a discussion on the filmmakers' research and making of the film. The audience enjoyed hearing the broad range of topics covered and hearing and sharing personal stories.

Thank you to all who came out to see us and making the *Passing Poston* screening such a success. We hope to see you again in another of our audiences!

Photo from left to right: Joe Fox, James Nubile, Ruth Okimoto, and Franklin Odo.

Dr. Franklin Odo Speaks to IIT Bombay Alumni

Franklin Odo, Director of the Smithsonian APA Program, was a featured speaker at the New York gala for alumni of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) on July 18th, 2008. There he announced the newest APA Program initiative, "Homespun: Made in the USA," the first-ever spotlight on the Indian American experience to be hosted at the Smithsonian.

IIT is one of the most prestigious and competitive educational institutions in the world. Dr. Odo's presentation was well received and a few have already voiced their support for the HomeSpun project. Homespun seeks to establish an exhibit concerning Indian American history and culture to debut at the Smithsonian and later travel across the country, as well as provide public programs and a web-based middle-school curriculum guide.

For more information about HomeSpun, please visit our website at www.apa.si.edu.

Organization of Chinese Americans Honors the Smithsonian APA Program

On August 1st at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) bestowed the Award of Excellence on the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program. The award recognizes all the work the APA Program does in developing and incorporating APA and Pacific Islander initiatives at the Smithsonian.

For over 10 years, the APA Program has served as the central resource within the Smithsonian's complex of 19 museums in providing APA history and culture, as well as acting as a vital liaison between the Smithsonian and the diverse APA communities nationally.

Ginny Gong, President of the OCA, presented Franklin Odo with the award. It was a great celebration with the beautiful backdrop of NMAI, the newest museum at the Smithsonian.

Thank you, OCA!



Collections

Ben Kuroki: "The Boy from Nebraska"

Ben Kuroki joined the Army Air Corps shortly after the Japanese attacks on December 7, 1941. Sergeant Kuroki was one of the few *nisei* (second-generation Japanese American) admitted to the Corps. He earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses and was acclaimed as the first *nisei* war hero after flying 30 missions in Europe as a tail gunner and top turret gunner aboard a B-24.

The U.S. government sent him on a tour to Heart Mountain and two other prison camps in an effort to promote recruitment and to discourage the increasing draft resistance among *nisei* men. Kuroki asked for duty in the Pacific and, after initial rejection, became the only *nisei* to serve in active combat with the Air Corps in the Pacific Theater, flying 28 more missions over Japan as a tail gunner on a B-29.

After the war, Kuroki became the first Japanese American editor of a general newspaper in Nebraska. He later edited newspapers in Michigan and Southern California. Kuroki recently donated his personal scrapbooks, along with his personal letters and wartime artifacts, to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

In the above photo, Kuroki is pictured holding his airplane's turret, which was demolished over the German city of Munster during his 30th mission in Europe. Fortunately, he had briefly leaned back seconds before into the plane before the flak hit and was lucky to not be seriously injured.

Spotlight on Smithsonian Affiliations Museum

Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, CA)

For over two decades, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) has promoted the understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience with a national and international audience. The museum is located in Los Angeles, California, and was founded primarily by the efforts of Japanese American war veterans and businessmen. In 1982, World War II veterans from the 442nd Regimental Combat Team began to explore a remembrance of Japanese American history, as did a separate group of businessmen from Los Angeles' Little Tokyo. Those efforts of the businessmen and veterans came to fruition as the JANM in 1985.

JANM became a Smithsonian affiliate in 2004, and has collaborated with the Smithsonian on such projects as "Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics," "September 11: Bearing Witness to History," and "Japan After Perry: Views of Yokohama and Meiji Japan."

Most recently, JANM served as a host-site for the National Museum of African American History and Culture's program "Save Our African American Treasures: A National Collections Initiative of Discovery and Preservation." The project was a collaborative effort amongst cultural institutions, community leaders, and the public to preserve and collect African American material culture.

The Japanese American National Museum is located at 369 East First Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, and can be contacted by phone at 213.625.0414, fax at 213.625.1770, or online at <http://www.janm.org>.

Staff Event: Laser Tag

Last month, the APA Program office geared up for a highly competitive game of laser tag. Team Red consisted of interns and grad students, while Team Green was the staff, family, and kids. Team Green won an astounding victory putting the interns to shame!

Afterwards, everyone trekked to the staff picnic to fill up on delicious Asian cuisine and sing karaoke. It was a great day of office bonding for all - at least until next year when Team Red will surely get its just revenge!

This Month in History

Civil Liberties Act, 20th Anniversary

August 10, 1988 remains a date of relief, healing, and victory for many Japanese Americans. On this date, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, apologizing for the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Congress and then-President Reagan officially apologized. Not only was \$20,000 given to each former internee, but the simple act of apology helped many Japanese Americans regain a sense of loyalty, dignity, and patriotism.

The apology was a long time coming, and yet it has not done quite enough. The Act did not overturn the Supreme Court decisions that allowed for the incarceration; thus the incarceration is still not considered a violation of Constitutional rights and freedoms before the judicial system. Also, during the war, many Japanese Latin Americans were kidnapped from their homes in Latin American countries and sent to incarceration camps in America. At the end of the war, these people were said to be illegal aliens and many were deported! The Civil Liberties Act did not include any reparations for these victims and so the fight for justice continues.

On August 3rd at the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During WWII in Washington, DC, the APA Program co-sponsored an event that commemorated the 20th anniversary of the passing of the Civil Liberties Act. Former Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta - who was imprisoned as a young child - spoke to the gathered crowd, a wreath was placed to honor the veterans of WWII, and 25,000 origami cranes were draped around the memorial.

Information from:

<http://www.opencongress.org/bill/110-h662/show>

Yamamoto, Eric K., et al. *Race, Rights, and Reparation Law and the Japanese American Internment*. New York: Aspen Law & Business, 2001.

<http://www.global-alliance.net/SFPT/ApplicationOf1988CivilLibertiesAct.htm>

For more information, visit www.apa.si.edu.

Until next month,

- Becky Esman and Amanda Andrei, Newsletter Editors
- Gina Inocencio, Noriko Sanefuji, Mina Yu, and Rajiv Menon, Newsletter Writers

* Title photo of ikebana at the Freer-Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, by Becky Esman.

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