

THE AASC - A BRIEF HISTORY

Cambodia and Kent State created the explosion that marked the beginning of a new Asian consciousness at CCNY; a consciousness of concern, sensitivity, and involvement. That first Asian workshop held in May 1970, and the subsequent Asian protest march brought us together with a new sense of pride; a pride of being Asians in America; a pride of being what we are.

The activities of May created an avenue of expression for Asian students who wanted to break down the walls of stereotypes and express their bottled-up, yet sincere concern for what was happening around us. CCNY was never more surprised than with the protest march through the campus (North and South), where anti-war chants in Chinese were voiced by over 100 very vocal Asians and friends. Fellow students on the campus greeted us warmly. Our march ended amid the cheers of the engineering students as we joined their rally in front of Steinman Hall.

A series of meetings of Asian students followed. The momentum was very visible, in terms of a large attendance at those meetings and the enthusiasm with which students voiced themselves. Most of the energies of students were eventually channelled into establishing a course on the Asian American Experience, with a student designed course proposal. An Asian American Studies Committee formed. More meetings followed, highlighted by an inspiring talk by Dr. Isao Fujimoto, coordinator of one of the major Asian American studies programs in the country, at the University of California at Davis. Working with Dr. Osborne Scott, chairman of the Urban and Ethnic Studies Department, we were able to send two Chinese students from CCNY, Richard Chu and Anna Chu, for a study and travel in Taiwan. All expenses were covered by our U.E.S. Department and the

Nationalist Government of China. By the end of the semester, two major articles were written about the activism of the Asian students in the college's newspapers.

During the summer Betty Lee Sung, author of Mountain of Gold, a history of Chinese in America, was appointed to the UES faculty to teach the Asian American culture retitled U.E.S. 51, Chinese-American Heritage. Students worked with Mrs. Sung during the summer to develop the course.

At registration time, Asian freshmen were greeted by upperclass Asians to help make some sense out of that particular semi-annual CCNY chaos. As they helped, recruitment for the U.E.S. 51 course also went on. As the Fall semester resumed, noticeably absent was much of the remarkable enthusiasm so many Asians had had the previous semester.

Approximately 100 Asians were in the three U.E.S. 51 sections. Organizers of the course sensed the successful outcome of their work. It was during the first week of the U.E.S. 51 course that the concept was formed of the Asian American Student Community.

Our work, our new visibility and the enlarged Asian student population had an impact on our new college president. We talked about Asian American studies, we talked about problems; problems of Chinatown, of immigrants, and of youth. We explained what we were trying to do in terms of programs. The President then posed us with a challenge. We were told if we wanted to get things done, we should get people into the Student Senate. He thought it was very important. From an excited meeting with members of the Chinese Student Association which followed this meeting, the idea of an Asian Alliance developed. The Asian American Student Community formed.

The following is a description of our activities during the Fall Semester, 1970.

ENCOUNTER WORKSHOPS

Over 100 students participated in the two workshops. People experienced more meaningful ways of relating to each other, quite differently than with the standard teas, dances, etc. Comments from the participants were overwhelmingly favorable and enthusiastic. From these workshops will develop an Asian sensitivity program working with the RICORSO Human Relations Program of the college. A regular seven week group program and a marathon session are being planned.

CONFERENCES AT YALE

In mid-October students representing the newly formed AASC participated in the two conferences organized by the AASA at Yale. One was an organizing Asian/Asian American/Chinese student groups on the campuses and the other was on Asian American studies. In terms of the East Coast Asian student organizing it became apparent that CCNY plays a significant role due to having the largest Asian student population. Yet it also was apparent that CCNY Asians had really started moving. Representatives from approximately twenty campus groups attended the meetings.

WRITERS WORKSHOP, TUTORING CHINESE STUDENTS

AASC assisted the English Tutorial program to tutor foreign born Chinese students at CCNY. The program started this semester. The bilingual (Chinese-English) student tutors are salaried through the English Department. This is the initial phase of a much

larger project which AASC hopes to develop. The English Department is working on a handbook which would define the patterns of English language problems unique to foreign-born Chinese students and serve to aid instructors and tutors in the future. Further coordination by AASC would involve working with the college's School of Education. ESL (English as a Second Language) programs in Chinatown and bilingual programs involving Chinese at the high school, junior high school, and elementary school levels.

CANTONESE COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Results of the AASC survey indicate a very strong interest of students to develop courses in Cantonese, the dialect practiced by the vast majority of Chinese Americans and by those newly immigrated to this country. The language is an indispensable skill for meaningful service in the Chinese American community. A committee for developing a Cantonese course is forming, headed by Richard Chu, and work has proceeded.

ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Our intent is to create a college program that puts students to work in New York's Asian American communities for college credit and to demonstrate the validity of a first-hand, field work education. One particular program that this committee, chaired by Koke Fong, is trying to develop involves bilingual assistance (Chinese-English), working with Teachers Inc. of the lower East Side. Most of the financing would possibly come from the Federal Work-Study funds which are administered by City College. A representative of Teachers Inc. will be coming to the College to explain the program

Ed. Note: CCNY is the City University of New York.

AASC can't

For further information,
write to

Asian American
Students Community at
City College of
New York

Finley Students Center
133rd St. and Convent Ave.
New York, New York 10031

House at the New Federal Theater in August. In September, a musical revue in English and Chinese was presented by AART as a part of the Chinese Cultural Festival in Columbus Park, Chintown. The well received show was repeated by the Chinatown Planning Council in October.

In the future, the group will promote an original play by a contemporary playwright, Japanese American, Kazu Iijima, "Flight from Hong Kong", dealing with mail order brides from Hong Kong at the Henry Street Playhouse in mid-December.

LA MAMA CHINATOWN
ASIAN AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATRE

The Asian American Repertory Theater was established in June of 1970 as a subsidiary workshop group of the Oriental Actors of America. At the time of its creation, Ching Yeh, a resident director and playwright of 'La Mama Chinatown' Experimental Theater Club was appointed Artistic Director and membership was made open to all Oriental Actors who wished to participate.

The first production was Wallace Stevens' wise play "Three Travelers Watch A Sunrise", which was presented under an Equity Showcase contract at the Church of the Transfiguration in Chinatown, New York City. After this successful run, Eileen Stewart of La Mama ETC, offered the AART a position as a nucleus group of La Mama, making all the facilities of that theater complex available to AART as well as many classes to the members, such as acting, Yoga, music, dance, and other theater Oriental classes. La Mama has always also given financial assistance to the group has always also given financial assistance to the group.

The original production of "Three Travelers" was presented under the auspices of the Arts for Living Program of the Henry Street Settlement

AART was established out of the need of Oriental Performers to find a place to work at their trade since the established theater in this country seems to exclude Orientals except in taken numbers in one or two plays here and there. While AART's founding organization Oriental Actors of America sought to fight this sort of discrimination through political and legal means, and has won some degree of success in recent months, it is felt that the Oriental performer can make a sizeable contribution to the fight by working in a workshop situation, improving his own skills and being presented in plays and revues that show off these skills and talents to the best advantages in the hopes that agents, producers and the public in general will realize that the Oriental is equal to any other talent in the American theater. The group is equally divided to giving an accurate interpretation of the Oriental on stage so as to stamp out racism and stereotyping.

For further information, write to:

Oriental Actors of America
c/o Katie Smith
200 West 108th Street
New York, New York 10025