

## Charles Ken Chear



I am a 2<sup>nd</sup>-generation Chinese-Cambodian American – distinctions I would've not thoroughly explored if not for Asian American Studies. We are born into identities, but so few of us are given the opportunity to “discover” them (especially and notoriously Cambodian refugees). And from identity we learn about what they mean: culture, heritage, and ancestral lineage; but more importantly, oppression and privilege. I feel fortunate to have been introduced to the concept of social justice and to have been challenged by Asian American Studies at UMass Boston. The curriculum provides both cultural and political motifs that persistently encourage participation in the communities of Boston and abroad. Through the network of friends and mentors made within the program, I've learned from and contributed to organizations like the Coalition of Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY) and took initiative in projects catering to Cambodian Americans. I have also developed a great interest in Black and Asian relations, domestically and globally. Perhaps what became most important to me during my growth process was the realization that “Asian American” is most valuable when linked with other initiatives/ movements. “Asian American” is not just a bartering tool for initiatives at the receiving end, but an identity that encourages giving to all disenfranchised communities with utmost sincerity and full-fledged dedication. Currently, I am a counselor at Pine Street Inn's Men's Inn and work for a diverse population of homeless men in Boston. I plan to attend graduate school for

education, public policy, or a combination of some sort. I'd like to focus on social capital and literacy in their relationship to poverty and wealth.

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## Yan MinXian Chiu



Yan M. Chiu is a 1.5 generation Chinese American when she emigrated from China in 2000. She recently earned her US citizenship this past December. She will be graduating from UMass Boston this June with a degree in Finance and a minor in Asian American Studies. Yan participated in the Asian American Studies Program because as an immigrant she wanted to learn more about the history of Asians in the United States. She took several Asian American Studies courses, including Asian Minorities in the United States, Asian American Psychology, and Asian Women in the US. In these courses, she learned about the struggles that Asian Americans experienced from their arrival in the nineteenth century to the present day. This knowledge, coupled with her own experience living and working in Boston's Chinatown, motivated Yan to work and volunteer to help her community. Yan is currently undecided on her future plans, but continues to work within her community to make it a better place for all Asian Americans.

## Chealyn Tim



Traditional Khmer, but American morals. Why is that? I was born in Rochester, New York, the oldest of my family's second generation Cambodian Americans. Percent Asian: 2.25%. Percent Khmer: ??? (Other Asian: 0.61%, that's me).

When my sister and I were growing up, we were so excited to see any other Asian people, we would want to jump up and hug the person with joy. But other Asian Americans did not have that reaction with us. We were Cambodian, Khmer. I did not fit in with the other Asian groups in upstate New York. When I tried to get involved in the community, I always felt shunned, that I did not belong. There was no one listening to me, or welcoming me in, or considering my ethnicity. I always felt I had to work harder to have my voice heard, my opinions considered, or to even be recognized as part of the Asian American community.

When I came to Boston to major in Sociology at UMass, I wanted a different experience in working with the community. I threw myself into getting involved as before, with and through the Asian American Studies program. I became involved with MAP for Health through helping to organize the Cambodian New Year celebration in Lynn. I felt the need to gain recognition and access for the Cambodian community in Asian American organizing, and I could prove it through my dedication. But, I have never been one to enjoy the limelight. So I have always worked behind the scenes, preferring to do the event planning and organizing, fundraising and soliciting.

The most meaningful experience I had was taking Asian Women in the United States course (AsAmSt 228L) with Prof. Nalini Visvanathan. Asian womyn power!!! I want to have a comfortable life working in or with the community, but well paid. I know the experiences that I gained through the program have changed my thinking in many ways.

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山本康仁 (Yamamoto, Yasuhito)



Who I am couldn't be explained through my ethnicity, generation, or any facts such as I was an English major at UMB for the last four years. Let the photo talk more than hundreds words, and let you interpret it in more than thousands words (by the way, I don't smoke).

I didn't know what to say once when I was asked why I took Intro. to Asian American Studies (AsAmSt 200). Honestly, I didn't remember the reason, and second of all, I probably took it because either it sounded easy or it fulfilled my requirement. The class wasn't easy, but it was fun. Toward the end of the course, faculty members of AsAmSt visited the class and explained what they would be doing the following semester. Their courses sounded interesting. Moreover, I felt my "who I am" might be appreciated in those classes. I still feel in that way, and maybe that's something that made me complete the program.

In future, I will be a poet, or languages-addicted. Awareness of Asian American issues, relation with other minority Americans issues, will never stop influencing my language. "We've got to fulfill de book. Won't you help to sing?" Ai, too, are a美丽ca. Cheers.

Victoria S. Yue



About 24 years ago, a baby girl was born to two Chinese immigrants in Boston's Chinatown... That was me! I grew up and majored in Criminal Justice at UMB and am pursuing a career in Youth Work in the Asian American Community. I was first introduced to Asian American Studies in Shirley Tang's *Southeast Asians in the US* class (AsAmSt 225L). From her teaching and the resources of the Asian American Studies Program, I was able to learn about myself, my culture, and my identity. I never knew that so many other people were facing the same issues and problems that I faced. I learned that the ways we think and the ways our parents think are all part of an Asian American culture and history that I have learned to embrace and balance. From then on, I continued to take Asian American Studies courses whenever possible. I was motivated to learn more about Asian American culture and about the different ethnicities that existed all around us. It was fitting for my last Asian American Studies class to be Peter Kiang's *Boston Asian American Communities* (AsAmSt 423L). Through this class I was able to put all the knowledge I had acquired into visual images. We explored the different cultures in Massachusetts by visiting places like Dorchester, Boston's Chinatown and Lowell. The class even took it to the next level by visiting and researching the different Asian communities down South that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

The guidance and teaching of the AsAmSt program at UMB motivated me to pursue a career in the Asian American community. I currently work at a Youth Center in Boston's Chinatown where I hope to teach youth about the importance of balancing both the Asian and the American culture, the history of their culture and their families, and how they can make a difference in the Asian American Community.

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**Graduate Student Leaders in Asian American Studies**

Julie AhnAllen



I am a 1.5 generation Korean American who is graduating with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. My clinical work focuses on children, adolescents and their families across multiple mental health issues. I am particularly interested in working with underprivileged and underserved children and families. My research focuses on racial and/or ethnic identities of Asian Americans, especially marginalized groups within the Asian American community. I became involved with the Asian American Studies Program during the first year of my graduate studies, both in the context of research and mentoring Asian American undergraduate students in Dr. Karen Suyemoto's research team. As I became more involved with the

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program through research projects, program evaluation/documentation, participation in a campus organization for Asian American graduate students, and national conferences, the Asian American Studies Program became an integral part of my learning and sense of belonging to the larger UMass community. It provided opportunities to engage and learn from other Asian American students and faculty. It often created a space to voice concerns as well as raise issues that were important to the Asian American community as a whole. Over the years, it has been very empowering to see and listen to other Asian Americans come together and create social change and raise awareness on issues related to Asian Americans. Personally, it has allowed my psychological background and understanding to merge and intersect with my Asian Americanness as well as to deepen my relationship with the larger Asian American community. I plan to continue my clinical work and research with a particular focus on Asian American psychology and assist in the process of bridging the gap between mental health services and Asian Americans.

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Grace Sunghae Kim



I am a Korean American who immigrated to the U.S. at the age of fifteen. I'm finishing up my Ph.D. in clinical psychology this year. The Asian American Studies Program and its faculty members have provided a wonderful support network for me over the past seven years at UMass Boston. Asian American Studies helped me think more about the lived experiences, successes, and challenges of the Asian American population

and encouraged me to locate my own research and clinical work in these larger socio-historical and political contexts.

Teaching the Asian American Psychology course (AsAmSt/Psych 238L) a few years back stands out as the most memorable experience for me. It was such a great teaching and learning experience to have a class devoted to the lived experiences, identities, acculturation, and mental health of Asian Americans. I think I learned from my students as much as I taught them about Asian American psychology. I loved this teaching experience so much that I hope to pursue an academic career in the future. In the short-term, I will be a post-doctoral fellow for the Asian Clinic at Cambridge Hospital during the 2006-2007 academic year.

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Yuya Kiuchi



I joined UMass Boston's Master's program in American Studies as an international student from Japan. As I continued my research during my first year in the program, I began to realize that I was very much interested in issues concerning community development and the role of media technology. With faculty members having been engaged in many community-based projects, UMB's Asian American Studies Program was an optimal environment to investigate the history of intra and inter-racial

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community building. They have very strong networks with people not only in Asian American communities, but also with other minority community leaders, members, and organizations. I was fortunate enough to take advantage of these networks during the process of my thesis research and writing. The information, knowledge, experience, and passion that especially Prof. Shirley Tang and Prof. Peter Kiang shared with me enabled my final project on the history of media use and empowerment in Boston's communities of color to be completed -- and to win the Michael Lenz Research Award in American Studies. Starting this fall, I will continue my graduate studies in the American Studies Ph.D. program at Michigan State University.

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Chu Ly

I am a one point five Chinese Cambodian in the Master's of Education program. When I first started the program at UMass Boston, I was lost. Often times I could be found wandering the halls or looking out into the (somewhat) polluted, yet beautiful sunset that revealed itself to us at UMB; that crevice by the picnic table at Wheatley was my isolated yet solaced home. Returning to UMB for this final year of my M.Ed. program, I worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for Peter Kiang (AsAmSt 223L) who introduced me to a safe, happy, learning space -- the ASAMST Program and office -- a place of laughter, food, games, and friendships that became family for me: a real community and home. No longer was I wandering about aimlessly, but with direction, learning how to deal with locked doors to not deter me from wanting to embrace the people whom I've met, who have done amazing, great things for themselves and their community.

Recently in the 'office', I was asked who was my hero and I didn't have an answer. Now I do. My heroes are those who reside in the office, those who are here, those who will come, and those who have left; it is these people whose passions for the community and the world around them that makes them all heroes in my book. I've been touched in ways I am not sure I can articulate easily. I've changed and feel lucky to have been a part of the Asian American Studies Program, with the little things I've done. The experience I've had this past year has made a tremendous impact on me and how I view and live life. For the first time ever, I felt part of a community; I know that feeling can and should be shared with all in this space known as Asian American Studies.



My next step in life is very vague. I am not sure what I will be doing. Much of everything in my life right now entails impulsive decisions. The one fact I do know is this: I will continue on my quest as an Asian American woman, here, and in a few months in China. This all works in my goal of being a poetess, though who knows if that will ever happen -- or at least doing something meaningful in my life. And yet again, I have no idea what that may be...

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Sophy V. Nun-Hoeger

I am a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Cambodian American. My family and I have been very fortunate to have survived the *Killing Fields* of Cambodia. My dream is to work with Cambodian communities here in the U.S and in Cambodia, to bring awareness about the issues that Cambodians face everyday.



Like myself, I find that many young Cambodians of my generation have struggled with a dual identity. Growing up, I was internally conflicted with my role as a Cambodian woman, being a good daughter, responsible and always obedient. But when I am not at home and outside of my community, all the things that I have been taught are contradicted in this individualistic society that I now live in. Living in this society, the opposite is expected of me -- having a voice, being opinionated, and being a successful career woman.

The AsAmSt Program and Dr. Peter Kiang have provided me support and guidance during my studies as an undergraduate student in completing the Asian American Studies Program-of-Study and then as a graduate student in the M.A. Program in Applied Sociology. Although my master's program was not very diverse ethnically, my involvement with the AsAmSt Program kept me focused on my interest and desire to do work that is relevant to Asian American communities. Furthermore, the AsAmSt Program at UMB has had a big influence on me because it is a place where I feel that I am not alone. Most importantly, it is a place where all are welcomed to come and learn about one another.

The Asian American Studies Program also congratulates:

- Bobby Rathanak Pres, undergraduate recipient of the 2006 Anthony Chan Award presented by the Institute for Asian American Studies;
- Undergraduate Steven Kim, who received his US Army Officer's Commission in 2006 and will be deployed following graduation;
- Affiliated faculty Karen Suyemoto, Pratyush Bharati, and Richard Hung who gained tenure and/or promotion in 2006;
- Rajini Srikanth, who took office as President of the national Association for Asian American Studies, and also received the AAAS Book Award for Literature in 2006;
- Shirley Tang, Rajini Srikanth, Elora Chowdhury, Paul Watanabe, Rooshey Hasnain, Peter Kiang, and other colleagues who received grants and fellowship support in 2006;
- Youth Art in Action, a long-term partner with both Shirley Tang and CAPAY, for receiving a prestigious Coming Up Taller Award in 2005 from the President's Committee on the Arts & Humanities;
- Adjunct faculty, Sophia Kim, and the Gulf Coast Student Research Team, who each received 2006 leadership awards from the AARW;
- Jen Nguyen, American Studies graduate student and Gulf Coast Team member, who received a 2006 DanThan Corps Fellowship from the National Association of Vietnamese American Service Agencies for Operation Community Building in the Gulf Coast;
- Clinical Psychology doctoral students, Phuong T. Nguyen and Nancy Lin who passed their comprehensive exams, and John Tawa who co- led an important student initiative on Black-Asian relations in 2006.

*We are thankful to our alumni, community partners & donors, and we offer best wishes to all of our students who took Asian American Studies courses with us and are graduating this year!*