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**Activist Anthropology:
An Ethnography of Asian
American Student Activism
at Oberlin College**

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Spring 2006**

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all my informants and others who have contributed to this project and express my deepest appreciation to my advisor, Professor Valentina Pagliai, and also my department for supporting me in my scholarly and personal interests. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Professor Robert O'Brien, of Temple University and my fellow panelists at the 2005 meeting of the American Anthropological Association and the 2006 Central States Anthropology Society for their feedback on my preliminary work. I am also grateful to the past and present Directors and Community Coordinators of the Multicultural Resource Center as well as Amelia Niumeitolu for encouraging my activism at Oberlin. In addition, thank you to all of my professors at Oberlin, with special mention for Professors Pawan Dhingra and Jinzhao Li; you have given me the analytical tools to complete this project. Last, but not least, thank you to Professor Theresa Mah of Bowling Green State University who was gracious enough to come to Oberlin as my discussant and who also has provided me with constructive criticism.

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Introduction: What does the Asian American Alliance have to do with Anthropology?

Not long ago I interviewed a recent alumna of Oberlin College, about issues within the Asian/Pacific American (A/PA) community on campus. Rita (a pseudonym), had been an active member of the college's A/PA activist community and had been hired as the A/PA community coordinator in the campus multicultural center after she graduated. She told me that student activists within her community continue to face burnout and a lack of institutional support. She explained that one of the main activist groups on campus, the Asian American Alliance (AAA), has been struggling for more than thirty years to institutionalize Asian/Pacific American Studies. She elaborated that students feel that they have not made much progress and continue to express concern about problems of faculty and student retention. As a former student and member of AAA herself, the personal experiences she related reveal the amount of emotional as well as scholarly investment that A/PA students feel toward their activism. She further emphasized the extent to which these issues effect students' lives as she stated that although as a staff member she could go home at the end of the day and leave her work behind for a bit, students at Oberlin College live on campus and thus do not have that luxury (Rita interview 2005).

This thesis examines the issues that have become enmeshed in the body politic of the current generation of Asian/Pacific American student activists at Oberlin College. It discusses students' personal trials as they confront academic burnout, institutional amnesia, and a continued lack of support for A/PA studies, through a case study of activism in motion. Other aspects of this research include the role of identity in pan-ethnic Asian American community organizing, the power dynamics of identity and the

strategic deployment of identity as a political tool (Lowe 1991, Espiritu 1992). In addition, the project highlights emerging concerns in the community and highlights the relationship between shifting membership and changes in admissions demographics. Examples of some of the new challenges that AAA faces are the difficulty of forming and maintaining new alliances, controversy within the community about the expansion of a focus on "Asian America" to one on "Asian/Pacific America," and the inclusion of South Asians within the movement.

Essential to this thesis is its theoretical grounding in anthropology as it is an attempt to address the lack of visibility of Asian American student groups in the anthropological literature. In pursuing this topic, I suggest that the dearth of scholarly work on this group is a reflection of their marginality within mainstream American culture and is a direct result of the stereotypical depiction of Asian Americans as the model minority. While authors such as Ancheta (1998) have suggested that Asian Americans have been marginalized and rendered invisible in mainstream and academic discourse on racism because of a black-white paradigm, I see this issue in terms of the "like-white" or "almost-white" depiction of the model minority. I do not, however, disagree with Ancheta (1998) in saying that Asian Americans are neither black nor white, and thus occupy a theoretical "third space," nor do I contend with his assertion that Asian Americans may share more in common with Black Americans than white Americans in terms of historical disenfranchisement and as targets of hate crimes. To return to the subject of the model minority, it is an idea that is often invoked by mainstream society and serves multiple purposes, but primarily as a way to maintain hegemonic power relations in the context of U.S. society. As Dhingra (2004), Prashad (2001), Varma

(2004) and several other authors have pointed out, the model minority paradigm asserts that Asian Americans are high achieving and are more successful at fulfilling the American dream, in contrast to other immigrant and minority groups. Dhingra (2004), cites Kitano and Daniels (1995), Chang and Yang (1996), Lee (1996), and Fong (2002) in his argument that Asian American issues are often rendered invisible by the idea of the “model minority.” Kitano and Daniels (1995) have demonstrated that there is an entire sub-set of Asian America that experience poverty at a rate greater than the national average. Moreover, they find that even on the other end of the economic spectrum, Asian American professionals face limitations and barriers to advancement, a phenomenon known as the “glass ceiling.” Chang and Yang (1996) explain that part of this difference can be seen in the income and salary of Asian American male professionals, who on average earn less than their white, male counterparts. Lee, has found that the economic inequality that exists for Asian Americans has lead them to feel solidarity with other marginalized minority groups in the U.S., rather than with white Americans, with whom they are thought to have more in common. In addition to this focus on the economic aspect of the model minority, Timothy Fong (2002) adds another dimension, when he discusses the ways in which Asian Americans experience racism in college admissions policies, and through hate crimes perpetrated against them. Prashad (2000; 2001) and Dhingra (2004) both explain that mainstream depiction of the model minority has grave consequences for Asian Americans in that it pits them against other minority groups, with whom they may share similar experiences of disenfranchisement and marginalization. One such example, which Prashad (2001) discusses, is how the debates around Asian Americans as the model minority are used as veiled criticisms of African Americans and

Latinos, who are represented by the mainstream as underachieving because they are not as hardworking, etc. He further elaborates on how this understanding, when considered from the standpoint of historical disenfranchisement then leads to policies such as affirmative action programs that then exclude Asian Americans as minorities, and work against them in the admissions process (Prashad 2001, 44). Moreover, the model minority stereotype renders many of the real issues related to class distinctions, immigration status, country of origin, etc. invisible, and thus relieves the larger society of the burden of addressing inequalities effecting Asian/Pacific Americans in the U.S. By extension of these theories on the model minority stereotype as a vehicle for oppression, I argue that the struggle waged by students at Oberlin for the institutionalization of A/PA Studies and the general lack of progress toward that goal is related to this paradigm and expands this marginalization into the realm of campus politics. Thus, I suggest that AAA can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger Asian American movement, with issues that mirror and replicate many of the concerns and struggles of Asian Americans in the United States as they have been discussed in literature about the movement in the 1990s (Aguilar-San Juan 1994).

In addition to examining how the construction of the model minority is used to disempower Asian Americans, I look at how class differences and other factors that are taken for granted as homogeneous in the A/PA community directly affect AAA as an activist organization. First of all, the ideas of culture and community are inevitably brought up in the debates that occur within the organization itself. It is therefore instructional to deconstruct these ideas. Anthropologist Gerd Baumann's 1996 book, *Contesting Culture*, discusses the discursive ways Southall, London residents understand

and engage with the construction of “culture” and “community.” Baumann notes that they consciously reflect and negotiate their own participation “not only in the dominant discourses about ethnic minorities, but also in an alternative, non-dominant or demotic discourse about culture as a continuous process and community as a creation” (Baumann 1996, 36). Baumann’s discussion of culture in this way harks back to Clifford Geertz (1973), and the twelve interpretations of culture that he drew from Clyde Kluckhohn’s *Mirror of Man*, listed below.

1. "the total way of life of a people"
2. "the social legacy the individual acquires from his group"
3. "a way of thinking, feeling, and believing"
4. "an abstraction from behavior"
5. "a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave"
6. "a storehouse of pooled learning"
7. "a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems"
8. "learned behavior"
9. "a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior"
10. "a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men"
11. "a precipitate of history"
12. a behavioral map, sieve, or matrix

Baumann’s findings in Southall specifically apply definitions 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 11 in his informants’ understanding and use of culture. This is clear from his statement about the “culture-making” he observed individuals to be engaged in as “not an *ex tempore* improvisation, but a project of social continuity placed within, and contending with, moments of social change” (1996, 31). In addition, Baumann explains that Southall residents’ conception of community, is strategic, political, and deliberate, and is related to the project of culture as a way of empowering individuals. “[C]ommunity has come to serve as shorthand for a category of people in need of civic resources and reliant upon the brokerage of community leaders, (*Ibid*, 71). At the same time, Baumann relates the

aspects of culture in 2-4, 7-8, and 10-11 to ideas about ethnicity that emerge from adoption of hegemonic discourses on culture. He comments, “It is decidedly strange [that] no one local seems capable of fundamental dissent and everyone seems engaged in reproducing the same, indiscriminately shared, ethnic culture” (*Ibid*, 158). Geertz’s definitions and Baumann’s work in Southall offer valuable theoretical insight to some of the strategies that the members of the Asian American Alliance implement in their activism. As mentioned previously students must work with and against essentialized notions of culture, ethnicity, and identity. Stuart Hall notes that the idea of “culture” is based on meaning. He states, “Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings—the ‘giving and taking of meaning’—between the members of a society or group (Hall 1997, 2).” He warns, however, that fixating on “shared meanings” can be misleading and make “culture” seem more cohesive than it actually is. “In any culture, there is always a great diversity of meaning about any topic, and more than one way of interpreting or representing it,” (*Ibid*, 2). It is important to understand that the Asian American Alliance is not a “cultural” organization, and does not represent itself as such, but rather a pan-ethnic, identity-based, political group, that advocated for representation for Asian Americans and their issues. AAA therefore tries to address misrepresentations of Asian Americans, and in this way is engaging in Hall’s “giving and taking of meaning.” In this way, these students are engaging in cultural discourse even as they reject the idea of culture, itself.

Whereas culture is not the focus of the Asian American Alliance, identity is, and as with other pan-ethnic movements, the idea of identity, like culture and community, can be limiting and essentializing. There are a number of different aspects of identity that

make it a difficult and lengthy subject in any context. Joan Scott (1992, 14) talks about identity “as the referential sign of a fixed set of customs, practices, and meanings, an enduring heritage, a readily identifiable sociological category, a set of shared traits and/or experiences.” Not only is it a referential sign, but it is a constantly shifting category. As Baumann has observed in discussing culture, identity is also not *ex tempore* and can be strategically deployed and reconstructed through representation in response to one’s environment and experiences with outside agents. The work of Judith Butler (1997, 2000) discussing subject-formation has been foundational to the discussion of identity as performative. As Dorinne Kondo explains, the representation of self is inseparable from identity; “The world of representation...is a site of struggle, where identities are created, where subjects are interpellated, where hegemonies can be challenged,” (Kondo 1997, 4). Scott (1992), Rajchman (1992), Kondo (1997), Butler (2000) and others have also highlighted the historical processes of identity formation and how individuals enact agency in deconstructing essentialized identity through a process of historicization and analysis. Moreover, through conscious recognition of the hegemonies that influence identity formation, social actors and researchers complicate the idea of identity. In terms of this project and Asian American identities, another significant aspect of these discursive exchanges revolves around the constructed nature of “Asian America.” Thus, claims made by individuals about the misrepresentation of Asian Americans in mainstream culture, suggest that there is a “true” or “authentic” Asian America/n. This is a double-edged sword, for in actuality, there is no single truth and “authenticity” is just as imaginary as Asian America. As mentioned earlier, the lumping of various groups of people into one monolithic group, in this case “Asian American” ignores disparate

realities, experiences, histories, and ethnic difference. At the same time, however, it creates a “new historical bloc” as coined by Gramsci, which then plays into new types of hegemony and creates a new power structure (Lowe 1991). Lisa Lowe (1991) warns that such an essentialized Asian American identity is extremely problematic because it “Underestimate[s] the differences and hybridities among Asians, but also inadvertently the racist discourse that constructs Asians as a homogeneous group...” (Lowe 1991, 30). In contrast, she adds that revealing the heterogeneity of Asian American and of ethnicity creates new avenues for building solidarity networks with other non-Asian groups and movements (*Ibid.* 30). These aspects of the theory may seem extremely confusing, but they are essential to discussing the discourse students take part in even as they are simultaneously fighting against it. At the heart of this negotiation of politics, identity and meaning, is this hegemony and larger power dynamics as we shall see.

While the ways in which society subjects Asian Americans to hegemonic discourse through the model minority stereotype are often apparent, it is not always clear how it works within the group. Drawing on Foucault’s (1976; 1977/1978) theories on power, I analyze some of the dynamics of the organization through informants’ testimonies in order to expose internalized forms of hegemony in operation within AAA. As Foucault stated, power comes from below, is not centralized, and where it exists, there is always resistance. Moreover, it is constituted through particular types of relations between individuals (Foucault 1994, 324-325). My application of his ideas examines the politics of inclusion and exclusion within AAA, and the ways in which power is negotiated through this interchange. In addition, I provide data that complicate preconceived notions about the singular dimensionality of power flows and demonstrate

how they sometimes operate against conventional gradients within the space of the organization. Indeed, as Butler has discussed Foucault's ideas on self-construction, she notes that the subject is forced to undergo self-recognition through the norms imposed from the outside. That recognition of self is therefore constraining on the subject, but not so much so that they cannot act as an agent and resist them in this process of self-making. However, it remains that whatever course of action the individual takes will in some way be related to these outside imposed norms, whether by virtue of conforming to them or resistance and rejection of them (Butler 2005). If you take this into account with what Foucault says about the subject and power, then it is easy to see how hegemony can operate within. He states that some struggles are ones that question the individual, and that on the one hand difference is encouraged through the paradigm of plurality, but on the other hand, it is questioned and attacked because it threatens to "[Break] his links with others, [split the] community...and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way" (Foucault 1994, 330).

Throughout the history of AAA, there have been several issues of major contention within the organization which seem to arise over and over again. Many of these disagreements have to do with the individual members' ideas about whom the space serves. One controversy that commonly reemerges regularly relates to the fact that the Asian American Alliance considers itself a safe space. By this they mean that the organization and its general meetings are closed to non-members, which they loosely define as individuals who are not of Asian descent. This policy has been at various times viewed by some members and non-members alike as "reverse-racism" and has caused such strife in the community that members have left the group. However, this policy has

had both positive and negative consequences. While it alienates some members and would-be non-Asian/Asian American allies, it allows students to foster a community and space where students can feel comfortable to air grievances without having to defend their viewpoints just to save the feelings of an ally whose presence might in itself silence subaltern and marginalized voices. I would suggest that the implementation of safe space has facilitated the development of AAA as a radical organization because it has led to less radical individuals being weeded out, and has allowed for self-reflection by members' of societal injustice on a more advanced level. In addition, it has simultaneously fostered solidarity between AAA and other safe space organizations and garnered critique when the space has been challenged by outsiders in public forum. At the same time, this lends itself to analysis of power dynamics if one delves into the ways in which dissenting voices who do not agree that AAA should operate as a safe space wind up leaving, and the mitigating factors that contribute to their decision.

Yet another contentious subject in the Asian American Alliance revolves around similar ideologies about who the organization represents and what its purpose is. AAA is the only pan-ethnic Asian American organization on campus that devotes itself solely to the purpose of activism, rather than to activities revolving around cultural and ethnic identity. For many years AAA called itself the A/PA umbrella organization, a title that many of the organizations supposedly under its canopy have in recent begun to reject. In fact, the accessibility of the Alliance has not always been very broad and often excluded groups and/or individuals that it claimed to serve and/or who have only gained access in recent years. The subject of access, representation, belonging and the right to claim AAA as one's own highlights the problematic nature of identity politics that often arises in the

setting of ethnicity based and pan-ethnic activist organizations. The matter is far more complicated, however, as Espirtu (1992), Mouffe (1992), Rajchman (1992), Scott (1992), West (1992), Aguilar-San Juan (1994) and Kibria (2002) have argued, because organization based on (collective) identity will always exclude some for the benefit of others, and the represented identity will always be in some way essentialized and politically constructed. The very nature of identity as a construction especially in relation to the political agenda of the Asian American Alliance and organizations like it implies that these groups are strategically deploying identity in their activism. As I will discuss in the second chapter of my thesis, this strategic representation operates on many levels. Not only does it incorporate and modify outsiders' essentialist constructions of particular identities in order for them to be "recognized" and taken seriously, but it also attempts to subvert these imposed identities even as they are being performed (Butler 1997; 2005, 22-23, Foucault 1978, 1994).

My research for this project actually began almost four years ago when some friends convinced me to go to an Asian American Alliance general meeting. It was the first of many such meetings that came to fill my schedule each week for my four years at Oberlin. That first AAA meeting was a gateway for me into a community of radical activists that has changed my life on a personal level and helped steer me to this point in my academic career. As an active member and officer of the organization, I have been a part of the various discussions, letter writing campaigns, and a host of other projects that AAA has undertaken since my freshman year. I have also heard the stories, and read the copies of the documents that record the organization's history and have become part of the institutional memory that we try to pass to every new class as we elaborate on the

group's purpose for existence. I came across a book produced by Oberlin students in conjunction with faculty and staff documenting the struggle for Asian American Studies at the college. Skimming through some of the documents I noticed that ten year old official reports about the state of the Asian/Pacific American community on campus described exactly the state of the community in 2005. It occurred to me that this was something that warranted further attention and it is then that I decided that this would be the focus of my research.

Over the next several months, I conducted interviews with current and past members of the Asian American Alliance who were active in the organization during their Oberlin careers. I contacted both recent alumni and older members to try to obtain a diverse and as accurate as possible impression of what AAA was like during different time periods and how it has developed and changed since it was first founded in the seventies. In addition to interviews, recorded in person and those obtained through emailed questionnaires as well as through informal interactions, I also incorporate a large amount of archival data which I have been collecting over the past year and a half. In the tradition of what Abu-Lughod (1991; 1993) calls "writing against culture" I have endeavored to write a thesis in which the issues of the Asian American Alliance and its members are accurately represented through their own words and experiences. True to the theoretical framework Abu-Lughod suggests for writing an ethnography that "writes against culture," I make a sincere effort not to generalize but rather to treat each of the experiences as related to me by my informants as distinct, and to contextualize them in a multifaceted, polyphonic student narrative of the Asian American Alliance. The purpose of this approach was to emphasize student voices, and I endeavored to reach out to

students who have left the community at various times because they felt marginalized. I realize that due to limitations on time and other constraints that this project is in no way representative of every voice or every experience. However, I believe that it represents enough students' voices to be able to present an accurate picture of the issues the community and its members have been facing from year to year.

In order to accomplish the goals I have set forth here: to present a comprehensive look at the Asian American Alliance and the various issues its members faced in the past and today, it is necessary for me to first provide a context and background information on the organization. I have therefore organized chapters in such a way as I think best facilitates my purpose. Chapter one sets the tone for the rest of this thesis, and situates the Asian American Alliance in the struggle for representation. As I stated before I examine how the struggle for Asian American representation at Oberlin College can be seen as a microcosm of similar efforts by activists in the larger United States context. In addition, this chapter describes how the model minority stereotype affects this work. The second chapter follows with the politics of identity in pan-ethnic organizing, and exposes the various strategies AAA activists employ individually and as a group as a means to effectively achieve their goals as organizers. Here, I look at how multiple identities are either incorporated in the organizational agenda or silenced. This chapter also investigates the link between demographics and active participation in the Alliance. The focus of chapter three is the impact of the Asian American Alliance on its members; how the various issues that come up in the first two chapters manifest themselves in the academically and personal lives of student activists. Sections of this chapter include statements made by both the students themselves and by the staff members that support

them about institutional memory and burnout as well as problems with retention. Chapter four then looks at how students combine their activism and academia and relates this work back to my thesis of the role of anthropology in regards to this type of activism. Lastly, the fifth and final chapter is devoted entirely to my conclusions and final analysis. I begin this chapter with a brief summary and discussion of the ideas I present throughout the preceding sections and discuss the major findings of this thesis. I also return as I have throughout the paper to my thesis topic and give suggestions based on my analysis of future avenues of study as well as some of the ways anthropology can help pan-ethnic student activists and other organizers.

Chapter 1: The Asian American Alliance and the Struggle for Representation

According to a statement published in an issue of *In Solidarity*, the people of color campus newspaper,

Asian American Alliance (AAA) is an on-campus student group that promotes awareness about issues concerning the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. AAA was born out of the struggle for Asian American Studies (AAS) at Oberlin College, which began over 30 years ago. We are a diverse and complex community of Asian/Pacific American (A/PA) students who are active in and allied with various political, cultural, and identity-based groups at Oberlin and beyond. As part of our mission, we engage in campus activism and work towards equality on the academic and institutional level. Crucial to this goal is our significant co-sponsorship of the biennial Midwest A/PA Conference, which takes place on campus in an attempt to address the educational gaps created by the lack of AAS at Oberlin. Our programs explore the various identities of A/PA students as they are connected to ability, class, gender, race, sexuality, religion, visibility, nationality, and other social, political and economic structures (George and Suarez 2005).

The description also states that AAA hosts “a variety of events throughout the year, including films, panels, and speakers.” In addition they support the Asian American literary magazine on campus and co-sponsor events during A/PA Heritage month. The

final line of the piece reads, “AAA is both a radical political organization and one that seeks to offer support to the A/PA community.” This quote was written and submitted to *In Solidarity* by the two co-chairs of the organization as part of an informational issue meant to introduce incoming students to the various people of color organizations on campus (George and Suarez 2005). I use it here to a similar ends, as a brief overview of what the Alliance does, who it serves and to what ends. I will return to this topic again in future chapters. The focal point of this chapter however, is what the group does in terms of its activism.

The Institutional Fight Part I: The College Curriculum

According to the preceding account and the official charter for the Asian American Alliance, one of its purposes is to “Organize for the implementation of Asian American Studies (AAS) to the Oberlin College academic curriculum” (Asian American Alliance 1997). However, one of the founding members, Gillian ('75) remembers that at its inception, AAS was not yet a goal.

We were mostly concerned about distinguishing APA issues from East Asian studies. You have to recall that the major texts¹ from Berkeley were just being published about this time and Asian American studies was just getting started at major institutions in C[alifornia]. Almost all of us took Chinese or Japanese language and most of us were first generation born in the US (Gillian interview 2006).

Although the birth of AAA was not directly related to the struggle for an institutionalized Asian American studies curriculum, it is apparent that student activists had at least some of the ideas behind it in mind. The concept of a difference between (East) Asian studies

¹ Gillian is referring to the texts coming out of Berkeley and other West Coast institutions of higher education discussing the need for ethnic studies departments. The first ethnic studies department in the country began at San Francisco State after a series of protests and a major campus-wide strike. By 1972, the first publications about the strike and the Third World Liberation Front as well as the Asian American Movement were coming out of Berkeley.

and Asian American issues is one of the main arguments for AAS, which continues to struggle for legitimacy as an academic field of study in many institutions. In fact, from a historical and an institutional standpoint, students' efforts to raise awareness of the issues facing Asian Americans mark the turning point and the foundation of the movement to toward securing an AAS curriculum at the College. The fact that students were mobilizing at Oberlin even before some of the seminal work about the Asian American and Ethnic Studies Movements had been published, grounds Oberlin in these larger historical processes. Glen Omatsu (1994), an activist and academic who has written extensively on the fight for Ethnic Studies and the history of the Asian American movement, noted that the African American-led Civil Rights era inspired other people of color to organize around issues of visibility and legitimization. He notes that the 1962 student-led strike for Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State was for Asian American students, a turning point whereby they could reclaim the legacy militant political organizing by Filipino farm workers and others (Omatsu 1994, 25). That legacy is one of many that have been lost as a result of being excluded from the teaching of U.S. American history in the primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions. It is part and parcel to the continued invisibility of Asian Americans in mainstream U.S. discourses on history and in other academic fields. If the term and identity "Asian American" is imbued with the meaning of being an American of Asian descent, then it makes little sense that their histories and experiences should be excluded from the national discourse on American history. It is this idea, says Omatsu (1994, 24-32) that led to the call for ethnic studies, and for Asian Americans, Asian American studies.

An October 1973 internal memo from then Asian American Coordinator, Johann Lee describes the need for a class that deals with “the historic, social, economic, and political experiences of Asians in America.” While Lee notes that a similar class was already in existence at the time as an Experimental College or EXCO course, he felt it was imperative that such a class should be offered at the institutional level of the College of Arts and Sciences. The earliest AAS class actually appeared in the 1972 EXCO catalog and the first formal appeals for classes in the regular college began as letters to administrators and the larger college community written in fall of 1973. In essence, 1972 was the beginning of an organized Asian American student activist movement at Oberlin, which drew strength from the larger national one which had already come into full swing on college campuses throughout the United States. In this same year, the college established the Asian American Counselor Coordinator position from which emerged the EXCO class. Students also pursued individual research projects, winter term research, and took private readings to supplement EXCO offerings. In addition, many of them wrote academic papers on Asian American issues. The Asian American Alliance provided the activist base for these struggles and helped establish the Asian American Speaker Series which by 1995 had changed its name to the Biennial Midwest Asian/Pacific American Conference.

The first courses through Arts and Sciences arrived in 1992, following the tradition of extensive letter writing campaigns originally launched by students starting in 1973. At this time the college decided to address the lack of departmental courses by what Professor Ron DiCenzo calls “re-tooling” (Ham, *et. al* 1995, 1996). That is to say, instead of hiring new faculty to teach AAS classes, current faculty were encouraged to

enrich their academic knowledge of the subject and offer courses in existing departments. This was a but a small victory, while it brought courses into the College of Arts and Sciences; it was a problematic policy in several ways. However, in critically evaluating the decision, one must consider that the college was suffering from financial strife. The main ways it remained problematic were in regards to the “meanings” imbedded in the policy. For instance, the idea that any faculty member could teach an AAS course implies that any faculty member could teach a course about anything, despite it being outside their academic expertise, a premise that was not and is not upheld for any other department/subject. This idea delegitimizes AAS as an academic field of expertise, in comparison to other established departments and disciplines, thus sending the message that AAS is not important enough or does not warrant the need to hire new faculty. The first faculty taught course came in 1992 through the history department and was taught by Professor David Kelley. Now here it is interesting to note that David Kelley’s focus in the history department is mainly in East Asian Studies. While it is admirable that he would take the necessary time and effort to offer an AAS course, and students were happy to have the course, the situation lends itself to critique when one considers that one of the main arguments that students made for a separate department is that Asian American Studies is different from East Asian Studies. This is a fact of which I believe both Professors Kelley and DiCenzo were aware. While technically any historian could learn about and teach any aspect of history, it is interesting to observe that Caucasian professors teaching Asian American history are not “marked” in the anthropological sense as much as they would be if they were teaching African American History. That is to say that a Caucasian professor teaching AAS classes is not seen as problematic as

much as the same professor teaching African American studies. This is part of a larger debate in higher education, as can be seen in an article from 2004 that appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Dr. Dennis Baron, former department chair in English at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, notes that while his institution has several African American graduate students, there is no presumption that they will focus on minority studies. However, two recent alumni who both wrote dissertations of African American literature, “met resistance” from some search committees “because they weren’t black” (Baron 2004, C2). That African American Studies departments would want Black faculty members is taken for granted while Asian American students’ desire for professors that look like them is not, points to the marginalization of Asian Americans in comparison to other minorities, as I have discussed previously. However, possibly in response to this discourse, the African American studies program showed support for AAS by also offering a course. The Black studies program offered a course on Asian American History that was supervised by Professor William Scott in 1979. I would suggest that the supervisor-capacity of the faculty member that was built into this course was one way of navigating this difficult terrain.

In the late nineties, the college finally acceded to the requests of students and established two tenure-track positions in AAS, one in the history department and the other in sociology. This was in part facilitated by the new president, Nancy Schrom Dye who took office in 1994. One alumna, Nina (’05), who had been very invested in the fight for AAS, shared this thought, “Dye and others supported the AAA movement, the purpose being to have Asian [American] Studies here at Oberlin. They were pivotal in even getting both tenure-track positions created,” (Nina interview 2006). Tanya (’03), an

alumna who has been at the college in one capacity or another from 1998-2005, explained that the struggle had taken an interesting turn during her time. She says, "Well, at that time we were still pushing to have a department for Asian American studies, the CAS didn't exist. So then it became a struggle to get CAS." AAS activists recognized that their fight to establish Asian American studies was seen as too specialized and so began to regroup and joined in the fight for a Comparative American Studies (CAS) program. In this way, Asian American students found a larger support base at the college and at the same time could argue increased campus interest in such courses. They saw as a compromise, a stepping stone toward one day establishing a department for AAS. It also served as a rallying point for other People of Color (POC) groups, in that they would no longer have to compete for institutionalized courses. Amir, an alumnus who graduated in 2000, the year before CAS was formerly established wrote:

I think Oberlin now has an American Studies program, right? My senior year was the year right before it was established. I think its establishment is due in large part to the push by the APA community for Asian American Studies (Amir interview 2006).

Indeed other alumni, like Minnie ('04), saw the establishment of CAS as a turning point as well, and as a major personal, political, and academic accomplishment.

The issues of the activist community affected people around me to varying degrees. Some people took up arms and became very involved while others worked on the periphery to support the different causes. The CAS program affected many of my friends by enabling them to take more classes on issues that they were keen to learn about. The faculty members also became a form of support for several of my APA friends (Minnie interview 2006).

Not only did Comparative American Studies address various minority groups' issues, histories, etc. in its classes but could effectively address intersectionality, and how racial/ethnic identity interacts with class, sexual orientation, ability, gender, and various

other aspects of identity within the context of the United States. The new Asian American faculty and professors in the CAS department were tenure-track AAS professors, and added to an institutional support structure that had until then only consisted of the A/PA counselor coordinator (later restructured as the A/PA community coordinator in the MRC). These circumstances have over the past eight years led to moments of rapid mobilization by students when the Asian American history and sociology positions have been perceived as threatened. Several examples include the various protests led by Asian American student activists when the positions were vacant after Professor Moon Ho Jung in history left citing personal reasons, and after the dismissal of Professor Antoinette Charfauros-McDaniel in sociology, which will be explained in greater detail, shortly. In 2005, students organized again, for a temporary sabbatical replacement for Professor Pawan Dhingra in Asian American sociology. In addition, they rallied for a permanent replacement of Professor Daryl Maeda, who left Asian American history to take a position at another institution.

During the 2002 and 2003, two major events rocked the stability AAS was beginning to build. The Asian American history and sociology positions were both being vacated. The college was still having financial difficulties and students feared that these two professors might not be replaced. In addition, one of the professors was not leaving of their own volition. As Tanya ('03), a sociology student remembers,

Antoinette Charfauros McDaniel was a professor in the sociology department and she was let go ostensibly because she didn't finish her thesis and it was a major blow for the students because she was such a support of all of us. And being a sociology major and having worked with her...it had a big impact on me and a lot of the people I worked with as a student. So, there was a lot of rallying around that and...it was one of the major things we worked on where it didn't come...to anything good. And she had to leave because of it (Tanya interview 2005).

As Tanya stated, during the 2002-2003 academic year students organized in opposition to a request for resignation from the Asian American sociology professor, Antoinette Charfauros-McDaniel. The request came after she failed to complete her doctoral dissertation under the stipulations of her contract with the college. She was initially granted an extension on her original deadline and when she was unable to comply with it, the faculty were forced to move towards termination. As a beloved professor who many Asian American students considered as a mentor, and as respected member of the Association of Asian American Studies (AAAS), there were two direct consequences to her dismissal. The first informed the second; students were in an uproar and appealed to the AAAS for support. This led to a boycott of the vacant position led by several prominent members of the organization. Dominick ('06) a former co-chair of the Asian American Alliance explained it to me thusly:

So there was...pretty much there was miscommunication between the college and national organization and a professor who did not get her tenure leading to trouble within our community and leading to eventual fixing of it.... She did not get her tenure because she did not complete her dissertation.... [It] happened the year before I came. She was apparently a big mentor for people in the Asian American community and she had a large course-load, she had to finish her dissertation, and she served as a mentor to the student population. So, all of that put together was a lot of stress. This is why she did not complete her dissertation. When she did not complete her dissertation the college let her go, basically, and when that happened she contacted members of the Association for Asian American Studies to let them know that they probably shouldn't apply for a replacement of her at Oberlin College, leading to what was known as a boycott of Oberlin even though it wasn't an official boycott from the Association itself, many others Asian members did boycott the College (Dominick interview 2005).

Nina ('05) remembers how the issue took the campus by storm and incited campus-wide mobilization that brought together several different constituencies. In addition, Nina told

me how much the students, herself included, found that they were personally committed to Professor Charfauros because they saw her as a mentor who went beyond the call of duty.

See, I took this class with Prof Charfauros that changed my life...Then my sophomore year I hear that Charfauros will be let go. Or terminated. You know I can't remember the word that was used. I remember over Winter Break or just after there was a big circle meeting at [Third World House]. At that point I had already been in touch with [some particular students]. These were people who were big up on what was going on. I was a freshman I had no clue. This big meeting joined the efforts of many constituencies I think: diff[erent] org[anization]s, diff[erent] people who were students of Charfauros and wanted to help her stay. All I remember from that meeting was that it was decided that everyone should write letters of support... So after this meeting (or right before) I was very skeptical. I loved Charfauros but I wasn't going for the whole DYE-KOPPE-GOLDSMITH ARE THE DEVIL bit just because I wasn't about to be spoon-fed anything. So I remember pulling [someone] aside and being like, please explain this whole thing to me. Why are they really being targeted, what is *really* going on? In this meeting I began to understand the whole history of the "movement" of CAS, of the AAA movement, of Faculty of color retention....

You have to understand that not everybody agreed about Charfauros. She tried to move mountains with this and it just didn't work. I would say that the academy defeated her—that for PhDs all need to finish this dissertation. It was not the end of her career, she just needed to finish her dissertation. But I think for her she felt like it was, and she tried with all her power to fight it—but I think it left a really bad mark on her career, and I don't even know if she's teaching now. I will say that the academy has lost a wonderful teacher and a huge voice for Asian American studies, Asian American students (this is how she positioned herself), and for Pacific Islands studies. This thing—the academy—at this point was a really hideous thing to me. But it was Charfauros who planted the idea in my head at first that I could be in her place, I could be her colleague and two is stronger than one. She was the first person who said this to me (Nina interview 2006).

In this way, the situation was framed by individuals as part of a larger structural problem with retention of faculty of color and moreover as part of a larger struggle in the macrocosm of U.S. academic institutions and society as a whole. According to Fred A.

Bonner II, a professor of adult and higher education, “The literature on the experiences of minority professors shows that many believe that they must work twice as hard as other faculty members to get half as far,” (Bonner 2004, B11). Bonner suggests that minorities engage in code-switching in terms of their identities, and rely on support structures outside the institution. He elaborates by saying that “Many women, members of cultural and ethnic minority groups, and many gay and lesbian people have found academe an inhospitable environment,” (*Ibid.* B11). Moreover, while many colleges and universities have offices of multicultural affairs, they often only serve students, leaving faculty isolated and without institutional support (*Ibid.*). Interestingly enough, recent figures on “full-time faculty members in degree-granting institutions” from 2001, showed that “Asians and Pacific Islanders [accounted for] 6.2 percent,” which is higher than all other ethnic/racial categories, but not by much, it listed “African Americans accounted for 5.1 percent, Hispanics for 3.0 percent” and Native Americans and Alaskan Natives at less than 0.5 percent (Jacobson 2004, A8). The trend in low numbers of faculty of color at the College is something that other institutions face, but what Bonner has to say is relevant to the experiences of faculty of color at any institution and adds insight to possible reasons why retention of minority faculty has been an issue. In addition to the dearth of faculty of color, there seems to be a trend toward hiring young, untenured, faculty of color who then suffer the burdens and responsibilities of obtaining the credentials to earn tenure. As Alan Rauch, an associate professor of English at the University of North Carolina noted, by nature of being junior faculty alone, young professors are yoked with high demands in terms of publishing, committee participation, and in some cases, family as well (Rauch 2005, B15).

In addition to all of the pressures elaborated by Bonner, Jacobson and Rauch above, Oberlin's minority faculty, especially Asian American professors, also have to meet the demands of students for mentorship roles outside of academia. It is interesting that while the literature talks about minorities, and specifically about Latina/o and African American faculty, it has been silent on two fronts. I found no articles that focused specifically on Asian American professors and none of the above articles mentioned how faculty of color are relied upon by students to act as mentors outside the classroom. To give an example of this role, Maria ('06), a Korean American who has been active in the Asian American Alliance as well as the Oberlin Korean Student Association, mentioned the mentorship role she saw as part of being an Asian American faculty member. She stated,

[A]bout Korean boys. I don't know what the deal is. This is a historical problem with Oberlin and Korean boys not graduating in time or getting expelled completely. I talked to [Hillary], who was a student here [in] the late 90s....She said that was a problem when she was here too. I don't even know why it's like that. Maybe because there is not a tradition of long-term Asian American male mentors on this campus. [L]ook at the history position. Daryl lasted less than 4 years. Moon Ho Jung, under 5. When was the last time there was a male A[sian]/P[acific] A[merican] C[ommunity] C[oordinator]? (Maria interview 2006).

Maria's understanding of the Asian American professors' secondary function as advisors outside the traditional academic sense of a departmental advisor is a key point regarding the way students view the AAS positions. This was particularly true of Professor Charfauros-McDaniel, as was apparent from the emphasis that students like Nina, Dominick and others placed on her role as a mentor.

However, as students became aware that Charfauros would not be reinstated and the boycott meant that she would not be replaced, they decided to mobilize again and

called upon the members of the Association for Asian American Studies to help them. Students recognized the importance of the two AAS positions and that any delay in filling them could endanger them and would mean all of their hard work would have been for naught. They were torn between their loyalty to Charfauros-McDaniel and their need to move past this difficult time. Tanya notes, with despair even in retrospect,

[O]ne of the major challenges was the Miss Charfauros thing and losing her when she had been such a major support for all of us. And then with AAAS....I think it's great that we're able to work through that but I'm still kind of trying to figure out how much of a success that was or not.

[T]he AAAS boycott of the sociology position search, and having to work through that and making sure that the position was secure so we didn't lose Miss Charfauros and the position and also dealing with the whole pain after that relationship between the students and Miss Charfauros after that.

Oh, after we realized that it just wasn't going to do any good to keep bringing it up, we decided to figure out what our next step could actually be to still have progress (Tanya interview 2005).

Charlie ('02), an alumna and former co-chair of the Asian American Alliance noted the difficult position students were put in,

Ultimately the students chose not to pursue action to oppose Prof[essor] Charfauros' firing in order to preserve the [two] tenure track positions. This caused some internal division [and] a great deal of disappointment on the part of Prof[essor] Charfauros. Eventually [the Association for Asian American Studies] ended their boycott, but it was pretty ugly. Prof[essor] Charfauros left the school and other professors were hired in her and Prof. Jung's place (Charlie interview, 2006).

The students invited then president of AAAS Dana Takagi to campus to clear up any misunderstanding of the situation and sent a petition signed by students urging the end of the boycott. They then devoted their attention to filling the vacant position. Students remained involved every step of the way, sitting on the sociology department's hiring committee, going to talks given by invited job candidates, meeting with the candidates

outside of faculty involvement, and sending feedback to the committees. The sacrifices students made paid off in the end, as Charlie alluded to in her statement. Rita, remembers the push to engage Asian American students, and the reward that came after all the students' investment,

My sophomore year the students worked really hard to repair relations with the with AAAS the Association for Asian American Studies and consequently to get Asian American students involved in the search to replace Professor Charfauros McDaniel, so they were involved in the search that finally or that ultimately hired Pawan Dhingra in the sociology department (Rita interview 2005).

To be sure the Asian American Alliance and its members played a crucial role in this process. Fred ('03), a former officer in AAA, sat on the sociology department's hiring committee, and made sure that candidate talks, etc. were well publicized in the community via emails to the entire AAA members' list, and countless hours of explanation in and outside of general meetings. Students took time out of busy schedules to attend these events, often on short notice, and to fill out candidate evaluation forms after the talks and student forums. It was obviously something that the older members took very seriously, and I personally remember attending a rap session as a first year with Professor Dhingra and students during which he admitted that he applied after the deadline because it had passed by the time the boycott had been lifted. Even as a new member of AAA, I understood the significance of that statement as it serves as a powerful reminder of a historical moment in this struggle and the remarkable achievement that students were able to effect.

During 2005, students felt the security of the two positions slip again. Rita summed it up best when she related to me,

My senior year when both Professor Dhingra and Professor Maeda were... going to be on sabbatical the following year, students again had to work to get the College Faculty Council to approve of at least one visiting position to replace either of the two professors which we eventually did get with Jinzhao Li in sociology (Rita interview 2005).

As can be expected, students were not happy when they found out that the college would only grant one replacement, in sociology, and for only one semester. In response to the decision, the Comparative American Studies department in conjunction with the Sociology department appealed for the replacement to be for the whole year. Professors Daphne John chair of Sociology, and Jan Cooper, chair of CAS emphasized the debilitating impact that only granting a one semester replacement in sociology would have on students in both Sociology and CAS.

Specifically, we feel that if two full semester courses in Asian American studies can be filled, the needs of Sociology and Comparative American Studies majors can be met, while also serving the growing number of non-majors who desire instruction in Asian American and immigrant social sciences knowledge.

Several years ago the College supported the Sociology department in making a commitment to cover Asian American subject matter, and, while at times that has been a rocky path, student thirst for the study of Asian American and immigration social phenomena has finally started to be met since Mr. Dhingra's arrival.

Furthermore, the Comparative American Studies Program is at a similarly precarious stage in establishing its coverage of Asian American Studies. It depends entirely on the Sociology and History departments to provide courses in that field, which is one of its four main emphases (including African American, Latino/a American, and Sexuality studies).....[M]ajors who plan to finish concentrations in Asian American topics will be thwarted. Other majors as well will lose the opportunity to pursue study in this area to contribute to other sorts of comparative analysis (John and Cooper letter 2004).

Professor Cooper's candid assessment of the consequences of not replacing at least one position for the entire year indicates her understanding of the situation very clearly. Not

only was it going to be detrimental to CAS and Sociology majors concentrating in AAS, but also to other students. While she stressed in her letter that other majors would benefit from the comparative analysis these courses lend to the discipline, she did not mention the crucial role AAS faculty have been filling in terms of mentoring the Asian American community. Professor Cooper was aware of this aspect of these positions, and her choice to exclude it might be explained in a number of ways. On the one hand, the role of advisor outside the classroom is seen as secondary to academic departmental responsibilities at the College. Consequently, it would not be seen as a valid argument in favor of a year-long position, especially since visiting faculty are not permitted to even take on the role of a majors advisor or advisor to a student organization. One reason for this policy is the assumption that new faculty would be unfamiliar with many of the various programs and non-academic departments that students might seek out through the course of the year. They would therefore be unable to refer them in those directions if necessary because they would not be savvy of the new institution. Another rationale is that professors for only one or two semesters most likely would not put down roots, and not become very involved in student life and campus activities. In addition, at the time there were a number of Asian American administrators and faculty at the college, which the College Faculty Council could point to as potential candidates for this type of mentorship. Whether these individuals actually did or could function in that capacity is debatable, but it is likely that this could have been an argument made by CFC. One last explanation behind Professor Cooper's decision not to include students' community needs is that she was aware that students were already articulating it themselves in their own letters to the Council. Indeed, students had written to Dean Witmer and the CFC

almost from the beginning asking for a replacement of both professors and stressing the essential capacity they serve as advisors. As a December 2004 draft of a letter to members of the College Faculty Council from Asian American Students read in part,

The two positions are valuable to us as a community outside of teaching and official advisory roles. Next year we will be holding our 14th Biennial Midwest A/PA Student Conference. The involvement of these professors is integral to the sustenance of the tradition of this conference this tradition. This is only one example of their deep value to us outside of the classroom. These two positions also provide much needed academic support and mentorship to us individually and to the larger community as a whole as official academic advisors (Asian American Alliance letter 2004).

In this way, students were able to voice their concern from a community standpoint and express how vital these professors were outside of classroom academia for the Asian American community.

As the 2004-2005 school year came to an end, however, students found out that Professor Maeda was actually leaving the college instead of going on sabbatical. Again, the college was still in the midst of a budgetary crisis and had created a strategic plan that required a number of faculty positions to be cut by attrition before additional positions would be created. This seemed to spell doom for Asian American history, especially since no other faculty had said they would teach courses to make up for the loss. Students moved again, writing letters and working with History, CAS, and other faculty members to ask the College Faculty Council (CFC) and Educational Planning and Procedures Committee (EPPC) to make an exception and reinstate the position. The History department's formal request for the return of the position was submitted by the chair, Professor Heather Hogan, and included the following excerpts:

We request a permanent replacement for the position vacated by the

resignation of Mr. Daryl Maeda...[as a joint position] in the History Department and the Comparative American Studies Program(CAS).... Twice in the past seven years, CFC and EPPC have thoroughly examined, deliberated over, and approved essentially the same Asian American history position. It is one of the most carefully scrutinized—and approved via faculty governance—faculty positions in recent memory.

The Asian American History position originated within the History Department at a time when the CAS did not yet exist. The creation of CAS, however, was predicated on the existence of the Asian American position in History.....[T]he courses offered by Mr. Maeda have become central to the CAS major.... In light of the fundamentally interdisciplinary nature of this position and its importance to both programs, we believe it appropriate that the position now become a joint appointment.

Our conversations with the MRC and the Asian American Alliance indicate that there is strong student interest in these courses. Not returning the position will also adversely affect mentoring for Asian American and Pacific Islander students and the workload of other already burdened junior faculty who support them (Hogan and Cooper letter 2005).

The History department's letter stressed the history of the position itself at the College and reinforced its link to the CAS program. In reminding the CFC and EPPC that the creation of CAS came about in part because of the Asian American History position, the department established it as an essential component of the new program. Moreover, reference made to the position has as returned twice in seven years, during all of which the college is known to have experienced financial difficulties was very strategic. It called attention to existing precedent in regards to Asian American History and emphasized accommodation of the request rather than compromise. In addition, by positing their request in terms of a joint appointment, the department offered this as a logical and economical way to serve the needs of two programs of study. Lastly, the letter mentions the importance of the Asian American History position to Asian and Pacific Islander students. This acknowledgement is testament to the mobilization of the Asian American Alliance in conjunction with CAS and History major representatives. Students wrote

letters as majors and committees, and met with CAS and History department faculty to strategize a multi-pronged, unified effort to regain the Asian American History position. Members of AAA called emergency meetings and resurrected the defunct Asian American Studies Committee under the new title of "Asian American Studies NOW!" They met with the Dean of the College who also chairs all CFC meetings to express the urgency of the matter and explain a number of points that they had included in a letter to the Council. They were informed that the CFC might defer to the EPPC, as they were inclined and accustomed to doing, who would then handle the matter from there. The CFC did do so and students once again scrambled to action. They found AAA members and allies to the cause that were willing to join the EPPC and others who would present the case for the return of the Asian American history position. In addition, AASNOW! composed a letter to EPPC and chair of the committee, Dean Witmer, informing them of the major issues. The letter was circulated to history and CAS majors' representatives, who also signed it. It read,

We, the undersigned members of the Asian American Studies NOW! Committee, and Major Representatives of the Comparative American Studies Program and the History Department, want to express our interest in securing the immediate return of the Asian American history position, formerly held by Professor Daryl Maeda.

Following the dismissal of Prof. Antoinette Charfauros McDaniel, the Association of Asian American Studies (AAAS), declared a national boycott of her position at Oberlin College. A/PA students at Oberlin worked very hard to repair relations with AAAS and successfully convinced them to end the boycott.

Any delay in the return of this position will lead to renewed frustration among the student community, and will have negative implications for the efforts invested by students, faculty and staff to institutionalize Asian American Studies at Oberlin. Furthermore, delays in returning the Asian American History position may endanger future faculty and student recruitment efforts.

Moreover, his classes also address Pacific American as well as South and Southeast Asian Diasporas, subject areas in which the Oberlin curriculum is seriously deficient.

We wish to reiterate that the Asian American History position is distinct from any Asian History/Asian Studies position. While both areas are of equal academic importance, they each cover very different bases of knowledge, methodologies, etc.

Any vacancy in this position would result in stunting the development of Asian American Studies and CAS at Oberlin, leaving students without a necessary component of United States history (Asian American Studies Now! Committee letter 2005).

The students' letter was very strategic in design. They were well aware that the Charfauros incident was still a fresh wound that members of the faculty and administration might perceive as a threat and made certain to call attention to the role students played in ending the AAAS boycott. Thus, students deemphasized the menacing aspect of past involvement in the boycott, by reminding the crucial part they played in mediating conflict with AAAS. At the same time, the letter contains a veiled warning that delay in returning the position could hurt recruitment of faculty and staff was a reference to the perceived notion that Oberlin had issues with minority faculty and staff recruitment and retention. The students also promoted the idea that AAS courses are a unique asset to the College, and expounded on the various ways Professor Maeda's classes enriched the curriculum in areas that were otherwise deficient. In addition, they reiterated the difference between Asian American and Asian/East Asian Studies, thus effectively arguing against "retooling" current faculty or new hires in the extant East Asian Studies (EAS) Department. One reason for this harks back to earlier decades when Professor Kelley had taught AAS classes. The point was even more salient because the History department simultaneously applying for the return of the Asian American History

position and a Japanese History position, after Professor DiCenzo had announced retirement. However, students made sure in distinguishing these disciplines that they did not devalue either, understanding that to do so would undo many of the alliances that had been formed during the movement for AAS. I would like to reiterate that students were careful not to overemphasize Asian American Studies because they felt that it was extremely important to foster those gains that had been made in the past through the institutionalization of CAS, since this was a time of fiscal conservatism that could have a negative impact on a newborn program. Lastly, the letter makes a powerful statement about why Asian American History is so important, and that it is precisely because Asian Americans are absent for the dominant discourses on United States History.

In the end, the request for the return of the history position was denied, citing the budget-crisis and low enrollment. Students mobilized again after this CFC made the announcement.. They wrote letters to college faculty and administrators, *The Oberlin Review*, the campus newspaper, and appealed to President of the Oberlin College, Nancy Dye. In addition they met with the CAS department and other faculty and staff as well as the Dean of the College, Harry Hirsch to discuss what was necessary for another appeal. President Dye, often hailed as a long-time supporter of Asian American students, reconvened the members of CFC to re-evaluate their decision. Students did not lose any time in establishing a preemptive plan of action for the day the CFC would reconvene. They adopted guerilla organizing techniques; they created a fact sheet, which they circulated through email and other means to trusted friends and allies across the campus. They held emergency meetings and decided that they would stage a mass action. They discussed the goals of this move and set ground rules. Eventually, everyone present at the

strategy meeting agreed that they would hold a silent protest, almost a vigil with signs and banners, outside the administrative building on the day the CFC was to reconvene. In a matter of days, students had gathered materials, made signs, flyers, and gathered support in the community for the big day. The amount of time, effort, and careful planning that went into organizing this mass action in the course of a few days is tremendous and reflects Oberlin students' dedication to AAS and CAS. The fact that this was a coalition of Asian American student activists, departmental majors and allies is also essential to the way protest was conceived and executed.

It was crucial that students' voices be heard, but it was also important that they were not seen as impediments to the CFC's process of deliberation. Moreover, rather than making speeches and statements out loud, a silent vigil could say more. It would eliminate the possibilities of power struggles that could potentially emerge in the organizing by maintaining equality; no one would be heard more than others because no one was actually making a sound. The lack of noise would draw attention directly to the sight of students standing together in solidarity, and to the messages on the signs and banners that students had created together. More importantly, a silent student protest, the idea of a protest without sound, was meant to drive home the message that failure to reinstate the Asian American History position is akin to silencing marginalized histories, and ultimately silences and marginalizes everyone. There are two important steps that Asian American activists took in maintaining visibility in the control of the protest. They accomplished the first task by strategically placing Asian American activists at the head of the procession to the administrative building and made sure that they were the ones to hold the main banner. In addition, they also made sure that a group of Asian American

students were visible at all times inside the building around the banner. Lastly, they appointed one of the AAA co-chairs to act in conjunction with one of the CAS majors as spokespeople for the assembled students. A/PA student organizers felt very strongly about the protest and linked it to a historicized struggle for AAS at Oberlin. They were grateful for the allyship and the contributions of all the majors and other supporters but conscious of letting the cause or the protest be usurped. Asian Americans thus asserted their claim as marginalized individuals to Asian American History by leading the march, but also acknowledged their allies by sharing the responsibility of communicating with the administration. This last step ensured that allies and fellow activists would not feel alienated, and be part of the process, but helped to emphasize that the issue was not only of importance to one community, group, or individual.

I would like take a moment here to explain why I categorize the manner in which the student activists conducted themselves as “guerilla” in nature. First, “guerilla” actions are often covert and use the element of surprise. These meetings and the plans behind the protest itself were kept on the “down-low,” they were not publicized except through emails to specific people and word of mouth. All recipients were blind carbon-copied, so that no one on the receiving end knew who else was a recipient. This was done in case email was being monitored. The activists involved were very wary of alerting college administrators and other officials about their plans because of the fear that they would be removed and thus be unable to achieve the presence they sought. To that end, individuals were given very specific instructions not to leak the information to anyone who might alert campus security, or other college officials that might be unsympathetic. It was also important to leave faculty and staff out of “the loop” in order to protect them from

possible professional backlash or other consequences. Many of the emails that I received during this critical time period included lines warnings such as this one, "Please keep this only amongst students (no postings on face book or other public spaces) so that we are not stopped or hindered before we begin." Other emails clearly spelled out the ground rules for participation in this mass action, "This will be a SILENT PEACEFUL NON-OBTRUSIVE protest." Defining the event in such a way is strategic in that it ensured that potential allies know what they were signing on to and that non-supporters would not feel threatened or perceive a need to alert college authorities. These were all lessons students had learned from the experience of previous generations of activists at Oberlin. Again, the planning came about rapidly, in a matter of about two or three days. That was all the time organizers had between when they were notified CFC would reconvene and the actual date of the meeting. In addition, numbers were crucial but also the types of numbers. It was imperative to have a diverse representation, but also an educated group of people who knew what to do, when, and how to execute the plan. It was therefore necessary to make sure that people had accurate information. All of the participants were instructed to utilize the fact sheet that had been compiled rather than just disseminate information that might not be completely correct. One email read in part,

The MOST IMPORTANT STEP right now is to show broad STUDENT SUPPORT behind reversing the decision. The History department and Comparative American Studies department are working very hard from inside the meeting to show why this position is vital, but what the CFC has not seen to this point is what the students "think."

We think this position is vital, and that we think Ethnic Studies academic disciplines MUST BE A PRIORITY for Oberlin College.

To make our support known, there is going to be a SILENT SIT-IN at COX on [F]riday at noon before and during the CFC reevaluation meeting. It will be silent so as to be more powerful, and we do NOT want to disturb

the meeting in any way. [I]t is GREAT that the meeting is even taking place. We just want our presence to be known by having a whole lot of bodies (with signs) at Cox when the CFC members come in - so they can SEE the student support behind this position. We will stay for the entire meeting, so that while they are in there, they know that we are all out there counting on them to make the right decision.

If you are interested in participating in this action, first EMAIL ME BACK RIGHT NOW so that we can get your name on the 'will be participating' list. This is real important, cuz if we cant get more than 50 or 60 bodies, it will NOT look impressive, and we may cancel the action. Then, there is a meeting TODAY at 4:30 about strategy, and a meeting late tonight to make signs. Tomorrow, we will try to gather at 11:30 to check numbers, but if you cannot or are not willing to not go to a 11-11:50 class, or leave early, then just head for Cox as soon as class is let out (Undisclosed author, email 2005).

This email mentions the sit-in but also states that interested supporters should communicate back to the original sender and does not disclose the location of the meeting that is to be held on Thursday. While the time and day of the protest are listed, it also says that it might be canceled. These facts necessitate the establishment of a communication network, so that if someone was not supposed to know about the protest responds, organizers would know right away. Also, it mentioned that the protest could be canceled, which serves as a way to protect individual organizers and to possibly confuse administrators who might get a hold of the message. The fact that it will be a silent protest also communicates to such administrators or outside parties that this is meant to be peaceful and non-threatening. However, there are other aspects of the email that lend themselves to analysis.

The organizers placed great emphasis upon the purpose of the protest, which they indicated was to demonstrate the breadth of student support for the Asian American History position, since they said CFC needed to know what students thought. This served several purposes on the one hand it adopted a language of empowerment by which

students became the pivotal point around which the debate moved. Thus, they were the force for affecting the positive outcome by the virtue of their presence or absence at the event. Next, the statement about CFC having not seen what students think is very interesting and can be read in contradictory ways. On the one hand, the protest organizers were well aware of the letter-writing campaigns that went on up until this point, both in public forums like the review and in private spheres as in letters to the individual members of the Council. To say that students' thoughts were unknown to the College Faculty Council therefore could be seen as devaluing and ignoring the hard work and effort of the students who took the time to write letters. On the other hand, however, this message could be reversed, since most of the campus was aware to some degree that the issue was being raised from reading the campus newspapers. Accordingly, by stating that the Faculty Council still did not know what was on students' minds sent the message that they were ignoring the letters and that a show of support through physical presence could not be ignored as the letters had been. Next, by also posing the protest as the students' half of a joint effort with departmental faculty from History and CAS working from the inside, increased the rhetoric of empowerment by highlighting the idea that these professors were counting on students to make the difference. After introducing these ideas of the critical role of students in this process, the email dictates the stance and platform that protest organizers will be espousing, that of Ethnic Studies as a College priority. This was one of the first times in recent records that these positions and CAS were constructed specifically using the term "Ethnic Studies." By invoking this historicized term, students created a bridge to the past to the 1962 San Francisco State strike. In this way students could draw on the almost legendary protest to inspire support

and to connect themselves to other historical campus movements. At the same time it legitimized this fight because Ethnic Studies is a discipline that has grown tremendously and changed West Coast academic departments since its birth in 1962. Thus positing the Asian American History position in terms of Ethnic Studies could only serve to bolster its credibility. Further, since the African History position and Japanese History were also up for review, since they were both vacant at the time, an Ethnic Studies framework made the statement that Asian American students were aware of the struggles that other departments and disciplines faced. It also declared that they stood in solidarity with the individuals organizing around these positions because they, too were valid and should not be pitted against one another to vie for CFC approval. The rest of the email as I said before had to do as much with communication to the intended audience as the possible unintended audience, explaining exactly what students would be doing and the logic and intended meaning behind it. In this way students who wanted to join the movement would know how to conduct themselves, what the purpose was and would know why it was being done in this way. Not only would a silent protest be unobtrusive, it would be less threatening, more accessible by marginalized students who wanted to participate, and did not require more conservative supporters to leave their comfort zone and act in ways that they saw as ineffectual. Moreover, students who only knew the basics of the issue would not be singled out to represent the group since the points of the student side of the argument would be clearly displayed. In addition, silence would show that students wanted the deliberation process to occur and had no wish to disrupt it in any way. The peaceful vigil would also put pressure on the members of CFC who streamed past on their way to the meeting as they saw the faces of students they would see in their classes.

the following week. Lastly, if students were quiet and not disruptive, they would most likely not be asked to leave, and their excellent conduct might be counted in favor of the position, whereas poor conduct would certainly be resented and perhaps count against students in the decision.

Early in the morning on Friday, November 18, 2005 students gathered in front of the student union building holding signs and banners, and then silently processed over to the administration building where they took up positions outside and along interior corridors, lining steps, and walls in silent vigil. These students stood silently holding signs from noon onward in order to make their voices heard. They took turns with outdoor shifts, passed cookies and pieces of pizza donated anonymously, all in silence, as they waited for the College Faculty Council's decision regarding the return of the Asian American History position. When the members of CFC finally adjourned and filed out of the locked second floor office, a group of student leaders pressed them for their decision. They were told to wait for the dean's official announcement down stairs. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences announced that the CFC had ruled to return the Asian American history position as a temporary, non-tenure track position. In the last seven years, the position had come up for review twice and been returned unanimously both times. Maria ('06), one of the students who sits on EPPC and sat on the committee when during this critical time period, expressed to me her deep frustrations with the decision. On the one hand she said that she was grateful that the position was returned in some form but unhappy with the way the strategic plan pits departments against one another. She further lamented that the reason the situation happened the way it did was due to the general delegitimizing effect of other academic fields in relation to ethnic and minority

studies. That is, Maria believes that ethnic studies are consciously excluded from institutions because conservative departments continually invalidate it. As she elaborated, her response echoed sentiments that other members of AAA, such as Dominick have shared with me. She says,

Let's see, broadly, the "30+ year struggle for As[ian] Am[erican] studies on campus..." Prof[essor] Charfauros McDaniel's debacle... it took AAAS, a national organization, to step in for us to clear that one up. The way Daryl's position was handled by the administration... Asian American studies is pitted against other departments that are similarly not fitting the 'traditional' academic curriculum so basically all ethnic/minority studies are competing for resources. This isn't necessarily an intentional thing. 1) a lot of people who are old/belong to traditional departments just don't think of ethnic studies, American studies, queer studies, etc as legitimate academic fields. So already we have to convince the powers that be, that what we care about is important and then 2) there are limited resources, I realize, and many people don't realize that these different fields also have different methodologies - I don't think I even understand the complexities of that - so they're all lumped together as 'social scientists' or 'humanities' ... so then all of these depts., areas of study are pooled together and structurally forced to compete for the limited amount of money or FTE's [full time positions] or whatever... Well [h]ow much detail do you want? After Daryl left, his position was sent to EPPC I sit on that board... and CFC to be reviewed. CFC, which makes the decisions (EPPC informs CFC), decided to eliminate the position due to 'a number of factors' most of which were vague or never mentioned. Except for the argument that the classes weren't ever filled to capacity. I heard that one over and over again followed by 'among other reasons'. But that's the only argument anyone repeats over and over again. [A]nd then we 'won' a [one] year nonrenewable temporary position. Fuck that. Nobody qualified wants a position that doesn't offer tenure, at a college with a short term history of not valuing Asian American studies (Maria interview, 2006).

Maria sees one of the main problems with the institutionalization of Asian American studies as stemming from a devaluing of AAS as a valid field of study. This she relates to the lumping together of programs focused on minorities under the broad category of "humanities," an idea that essentially pits departments against one another. For instance, during the big protest for the return of the AA history position, some members of the

Africana community on campus were reluctant to support the position. Their reasoning was that their request for an African history position would be coming up for review soon. The Asian American history position would therefore be in direct competition with the African history department for renewal. Dominick expressed similar feelings about the deligitimization of Asian American studies when he told me,

Well, for one, area studies aren't always received as being legitimate in an academic arena... And therefore, you know, even though they're you know all colleagues all professors, these certain professors might not be seen as on the same level as people in philosophy, history, biology etc. (Dominick interview 2005).

In this way students link their struggles at their own institution to larger structural problems in academia. What Maria describes is academic gate-keeping, whereby traditional departments set an academic agenda that excludes area studies. In Maria's view, despite the College Faculty Council's support and subsequent return of the AAS History position in the recent past and in 2005, there is still a tremendous amount left to be desired. She sees the high turnover rate as something that was not purely coincidental but a symptom of larger structural problems at the college, ones that lead Asian American faculty to leave, or rather to not stay. Her last comment about the new decision to offer the job as a one year, non-tenure track position as unappetizing, reflects her belief that the College will not go out of its way to structurally support AAS. In the case of Asian American Studies, this type of situation, whether coincidental or intentional, contributes to Asian Americans in the Humanities going unseen. Thus, I argue the lack of AAS in institutions such as Oberlin College is symptomatic of the ways in which Asian Americans are rendered invisible the larger society. Harking back to Baron (2004), it would seem that Asian Americans therefore have to fight twice as hard to be taken

seriously in the academy. While student activists are aware of the resources they have already gained, and will continue to fight to protect them, they do not see the matter of institutionalizing Asian American studies as yet over.

The Institutional Fight Part II: The Multicultural Resource Center

The institutional struggles of Asian American students were not limited to those in the academic arena. Concurrent with the Professor Charfauros-McDaniel's dismissal, was a campus-wide outcry about the planned restructure of the campus Multicultural Resource Center (MRC). According to the MRC website, the Center was established in 1995, "To serve as a resource for people who have historically been disenfranchised from higher education including people of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people." The description also says that the MRC is also committed supporting low-income, first generation, and international students. In addition, the site lists the Center's goal as "To provide the institutional and administrative structures necessary to support Oberlin's commitment to a diverse social and liberal arts education." The professional staff of the MRC includes the African Community Coordinator, the Asian/Pacific American Community Coordinator (A/PACC), the Latina/o Community Coordinator and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Community Coordinator, overseen by the Dean of Students. The MRC helps put on a number of programs throughout the year, including the weekly MRC Social, and support of at least two major speaker series every year. In addition, they work with student groups providing support and resources to help with organizational programming, speakers, panels, banquets, conferences, and history/heritage month events. It is obvious from this discussion, the important resource the MRC is for students, as well as faculty and staff who seek a way

to build relationships with the campus community and students outside the classroom. It is for these reasons that Oberlin students were so upset when they heard they might lose the MRC in the midst of the struggles on behalf of Professor Charfauros McDaniel. Not only would A/PA students lose a mentor to their community but they and other minority constituencies were in danger of being without the “institutional and administrative structure” of the MRC. As Tanya remembers,

The MRC, I mean that wasn't directly the...the A/PA community but...they were going to take away the intern positions and try to institute two people serving ALL of the disenfranchised groups on campus. And I mean the A/PA community coordinators that we had were so important, when we were organizing things.

But there was just no way that all the programming could have come together without them and that's it. Like the support and the space, and especially all the work that Rachel [Beverly] was really doing to give the students a presence on campus and a voice (Tanya interview 2005).

At the time, the MRC Community Coordinators were intern positions. However, the coordinator-interns and the MRC director, Rachel Beverly worked very hard to put together programs and offer support to student groups without taking away organizations' autonomy. With the tremendous workload, the idea of reducing five people to two seemed ridiculous to students and staff. Again, students took the time out of their busy schedules for yet more emergency meetings about the MRC, in addition to the meetings and their organizing around Professor Charfauros-McDaniel. Nina recalled,

What I remember then was that legendary meeting at what was the WRC (women's resource center) where there were so many people who were outraged at the possibility of the MRC being reduced to two people (from 5) that people had to sit on top of each other basically. It was a feeling I will never forget, it was power coursing through a room filled with outrage. And the very next day, this outrage was posterized throughout campus with silkscreens demanding the security of the MRC. I mean all over campus. As in you couldn't look anywhere and NOT see these

silkscreens. This was my freshman year, man. It was amazing (Nina interview 2006).

In Nina's reflection to the time period, she sees the time as one of conflicting emotions. On the one hand, students were angry about the administration's plans to cut the number of positions and restructure the Center. On the other hand, she felt invigoration and power in the room as the students planned and organized their course of action in response to the issue. This is an interesting scenario because students felt empowered by their own agency and in what they were doing not only for the staff of the MRC but for themselves. Students in this case made their voices heard through visual media displayed throughout campus, which they used to demonstrate their disagreement with the administration's proposed policy. In addition, students sported the message on their bodies, wearing temporary tattoos featuring the classic image of a red heart with an arrow through it and a white banner saying "The MRC" with "I" above the heart. In this way students were able to demonstrate to the entire campus their solidarity with the Center and with each other through the temporary tattoos. Photographs from the period show they held a large meeting around the campus fire pit in a rally of sorts. However, there was a negative side to this empowerment, because the enthusiasm and the effort that students put into saving the MRC had negative impacts on other "voices" that were vying for attention, as Nina became aware of only later. She states,

Later I've heard issues with this. I've heard that the move for MRC was so loud it alienated other departments (like theater) who were having similar human resources issues. However, I will say here that it's not just a human resource issue, we're talking about support for the small community-the minority community-of queer/people of color on campus. It was fueled by Charfauros's forced departure, people felt insecure, and when push came to shove; we shoved back and demanded the right to not feel insecure. It's true, it's all about what support systems are in place—especially in an institution as powder-lipped on "diversity" as Oberlin claimed to be.

ESPECIALLY at an institution that touts its history as much as this one does (Nina interview 2006).

Here, Nina further recognizes the impact of the students' organizing but differentiates and prioritizes minority students' issues because they were fighting for a support structure that was integral to their well-being. She mentions that the MRC intern positions made students feel safe, and that it was a struggle in which students' "demanded the right not to feel insecure." The notion of security and safety are important to students' mental states and the idea that the MRC provided a sense of security that students felt vulnerable without is important to understanding its value to them. Thus, the focus of the issue was that the MRC and its staff provided more than just programming and resources, it gave them a sense of "safety." Tanya's interview mentioned something akin to what another alumna had told me about campus surveillance of student of color activists. Potri ('01) gave an informal talk for the Filipino American Student Association (FASA) during the 2002-2003 year where she recounted how particular protests against the College had seemingly been thwarted before they were even executed leading to suspicion that administrators were monitoring emails and telephone conversations. The idea that College administrators were "watching" students' moves and strategizing counter-maneuvers may be paranoia with a number of possible explanations. It is possible that the College was aware of students' plans based on information that was leaked from inside the students' own networks, or that they could read the signs of student unrest. It is also possible that there was an element of truth to Potri's paranoia, and administrators were watching particular "trouble-makers." Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000) and others have discussed the function of rumors in disenfranchised communities as empowering, even as they breed paranoia, they can actually act in a way that increases

community awareness of parts of systems that threaten them in some real way. This paranoia whether unfounded or not might explain the need for security that students faced. But Tanya notes,

[W]e had so many meetings, strategizing and they were really well attended because it actually overlapped or coincided with them wanting to restructure the MRC, which was essentially doing away with the MRC as it was known or as we know it now. So, yeah, there were a whole bunch of students that came together and had meetings, in the Women's Resource Center at the time. And then we had all kinds of information going around and there was a separate email address even because we thought the administration was watching us. Which they probably were (Tanya interview 2005).

Tanya's comment about being watched seems possible considering many of the meetings were overlapping. Many of the same people were meeting over and over again in the Women's Resource Center space, thus providing a perfect opportunity for them to be monitored, even from within the group itself. However, the truth of the matter is not as important as much as the idea that students felt threatened and unsafe. All of this organizing was coincident with the struggle for Professor Charfauros, and students felt that the administration would have to meet at least some of their demands, which did in the end happen. As Tanya interprets it,

It's all blurring together but I feel like we definitely went to Cox or to some place where all the faculty were. We still didn't make a difference. Except with the MRC. But I can't remember why. I think they had to give into one. Really....

Peter Goldsmith's reputation was not doing very well. So I think that had a lot to do with why the MRC was able to stay around because it would have destroyed him when he saw how many students were rallying to save the MRC. If he had in fact gone through with the changes then they would have turned against him and eaten him alive pretty much (Tanya interview 2005).

In this way students were aware of their power as individuals and the limitation that the system posed on them. This provides an interesting case study for the ways that students understand hegemony and power in Foucaultian terms. As Butler explains, "If there is an operation of agency, or indeed, freedom in this struggle, it takes place in the context, of an enabling and limiting field of constraint" (Butler 2005, 19). Thus, the students were able to seize their agency and act in ways that exercised their power, while at the same time were fully aware of the limitations and constraints of the institution on their positions in terms of the MRC and Professor Charfauros.

The fight for institutional (non-academic) support for Asian American students did not begin at this moment in history and did not end there. It had occurred at various points in time since the creation of the A/PA Counselor Coordinator position in 1972, which came about because administrators and students recognized a need for this type of support structure. Over the years, the position was in danger of being dissolved, and students fought to maintain it. Eventually, the Counselor Coordinator position was reduced to the Intern-Community Coordinator positions when the college restructured due to financial problems, as an alumnus and former Counselor Coordinator explained to me. Today, through the efforts of administrators, staff, and students the Community Coordinator is now a full-year professionalized position. CC's as, they are called now enjoy full benefits, salary, etc. as other professional posts at the college. Moreover, this year the administration is renegotiating the contract in favor of an increase in salary.

The necessity of this Community Coordinator position for Asian American Students goes without saying, considering the issues facing the community in relation to students' ability to graduate. While the model minority myth continues to pervade society

and remains ingrained in the attitudes of some administrators and faculty at the College, the reality is quite the opposite. According to Tanya, who spent some time in the Community Coordinator position,

[O]ne of the major things is the burnout with our community because you see people who become so involved and overly invested that they just don't have the energy...are a huge number have been on probation or suspended because they've gotten so involved in the community, in planning stuff. And I feel like we have to do more to address it but I don't really know what it can be at this point. I mean...I was on probation and yeah, so like finding that balance between wanting to do all of this activist work and be as student. I feel like when you're at Oberlin you feel all the issues (Tanya interview 2005).

The fact that students are having trouble making it through Oberlin in four years is deeply troubling. It is something that will be discussed more in later chapters but is one example of the burdens on Asian American student activists at the College, which most likely would have been exacerbated without the support structure students find in the MRC. Thus, one can see the various problems and issues A/PA students face at Oberlin in regards to finding and maintaining institutional support structures both in and outside of the classroom. Not only must they constantly convince the administrators of their need to have access to their histories as they have contributed to the formation and development of the United States, but they must simultaneously convince them of their marginality and their need for a voice as students in an institutional support structure, via the MRC and A/PACC.

Chapter 2: Who can claim an Asian American identity?

“[T]he problem of identity is not just a political problem, but is at the same time a problem for thinking, a problem of what we think a political community is or should be,” (Rajchman 1992, 6).

As Rajchman suggests, identity even outside the political context, is inextricably tied to political movements. As discussed previously, one major problem Asian American student activists at Oberlin face revolves around recognition of their issues. In order to get the attention of the wider campus community and to be taken seriously, they often must present an essentialized Asian American identity, even as they try to undermine this type of categorization. Scholar Yen Le Espiritu has written extensively on the political construction of panethnic Asian American identity as a strategic maneuver to increase political clout. She states,

Pan-Asian American ethnicity is the development of bridging organizations and solidarities among several ethnic immigrant groups of Asian ancestry. Although subject to the same general prejudice and discriminatory laws, Asians in the United States have rarely conceived themselves as a single people and many still do not (Espiritu 1992, 14).

Indeed, Espiritu, notes, like Omatsu and others that pan-Asian organizing did not take place in the United States to any large degree until the 1960s with the birth of the Asian American movement (Espiritu 1992 and Omatsu 1992). The use of broad racialized terms such as "Oriental," etc., were, Espiritu says, "merely convenient labels" for outsiders. Panethnicity, she argues, was adopted by Asian Americans as a result of the political power it permitted, in terms of "interest group mobilization" and civic goals (Espiritu 1992, 14-15; see also Lowe, 1991). I suggest that this superficial presentation as Asian American is a form of strategic deployment of identity (Lowe 1991, 39). Lowe states,

We must conclude that 'Asian American' is not a natural or static category; it is a socially constructed unity, a situationally specific position that we assume for political reasons. It is "strategic" in Gayatri Spivak's sense of "strategic use of a positive essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (*Ibid.*, 39).

Lowe further explains, that at the heart of “strategic essentialism” is the implementation of these broadly constructed categories “disrupt the discourses that exclude Asian Americans.” In addition, it undermines the idea of a unified Asian America because it allows the conflicting images of difference to come to the surface, thus forcing society to see the problematic nature of essentialized identity (*Ibid.*, 39). Lowe suggests that this process of politicization is therefore actually one of counterhegemony, rather than hegemony because Asian Americans are minorities defining themselves as “other,” and through strategic alliance construct a new majority (*Ibid.*, 29). As mentioned above, adopting broad categories is problematic because they subsume individual identities, and either render them invisible or can be tokenizing. Moreover it reifies essentialized notions of identity. As Joan Scott puts it, “Part of the contradiction we’re caught up in whenever we claim identity—an unavoidable political strategy at some moments—is that we reaffirm the differences we are seeking to challenge” (Scott 1992, 38). I argue that in terms of Asian America, this type of identity tactic can have several effects. It can often alienate individuals and identities that are marginal to the construction of mainstream Asian America as it is constructed from within and influenced from outside by U.S. society. In addition, it can incorporate a rhetoric that internalizes particular definitions and markers of “race” and “ethnicity” that then excludes individuals or groups of individuals based on their conformity or rejection of these categories. This is also true of the Asian American Alliance, as several mixed race individuals have related to me. Kate, a rising senior, related to me her personal struggles with identity in relation to the group.

I haven't been all that involved in AAA because when I went to the first meeting...someone stood up and asked all of the self-identified allies and non-Asians to leave the room. While I stayed, because I felt like I identified as an Asian American, it definitely made me question my

whiteness. Then a few weeks later I went to a meeting for the formation of *In Solidarity* because they were looking for writers Of Color and I am a Creative Writing major who is also Of Color. But at the meeting the person in charge asked me to leave because he said it was only for People of Color and said I didn't look like I was of Color. He asked me to identify myself and when I said I was Chinese American, he didn't believe me. That was the end of my involvement in the A[sian] A[merican] community at Oberlin for a year and a half... My racial identity was attacked a lot during my first year of college and it not only hurt my self esteem but it made me feel estranged from the community (Kate interview 2005).

But Kate's feelings of isolation as a mixed race person are nothing new to the Asian American Alliance, nor other pan-ethnic activist groups on campus or elsewhere. As her narrative illustrates, she not only felt out of place in the Asian American community, but was specifically told she should not be part of other spaces designed for "People of Color" (POC). Kate eventually returned to AAA and found a place with *In Solidarity*, the campus' only POC newspaper, and in other POC spaces. However, her experience of marginalization remains with her even now. This points to the ways in which race and ethnicity are inscribed on the body and indicators/markers are used to determine belonging based on these physical cues. Tanya recalls how this happened by accident when a mixed race person was mistaken for white and asked to leave a space.

So, with the...with hapa students, a lot of times ...there's so much tension, particularly when they weren't easily identifiable based on their appearance and...there was an incident where... a student was asked to leave the A[sian] A[merican] R[esource] C[enter], because she was white and she was actually half South Asian (Tanya interview 2005).

The issue became public and inspired a series of political cartoons demonizing the Asian American Alliance. Eventually, the controversy died down but as Tanya says, it caused tension.

As I stated before, monolithic terms such as Asian American can operate in ways that reproduce power structures from larger society on a microcosmic level that leads to marginalization and hegemony within the community. In terms of panethnic organizing, Espiritu points out that the political agenda of the group determines the way it operates and who will feel excluded. For those seeking a broad agenda, "the pan-Asian scope [is] too narrow and its racial orientation too segregative." On the other hand, for those who were interested in "ethnic particularism," panethnicity is too broad, and excludes generations of Asian Americans born in the U.S. (Espiritu 1992, 50). In addition to these issues, panethnic political organizing at Oberlin in the Asian American Alliance, with its broad political agenda, has left students seeking cultural enrichment unfulfilled. Moreover, it has frequently alienated and lost members whose political leanings do not mesh with AAA's politics.

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, throughout the history of the Asian American Alliance, there have been several issues of major contention within the organization which arise time and again. Arguments about safe space and who the community AAA serves are some of the most common disagreements in the organization. Part of the reason why safe space is such a delicate subject has to do with the way it purposely and I argue, purposefully excludes individuals who are not of Asian descent from group participation. While all of the programming, workshops, etc., that the Asian American Alliance sponsors throughout the year are open to the campus and wider public, its meetings and therefore membership is not. Allies, friends, and individuals who do not identify as of Asian descent are welcome at AAA-hosted events, but not in meetings. The main reason for this policy is AAA's definition of safe space. The

organization has historically operated under the conditions of a safe space that excludes allies in an effort to promote self-awareness for its members about the marginalization of Asians and Asian Americans in the U.S. and Oberlin contexts. By enacting a safe space, students are supposed to feel free to share their personal experiences with, beliefs, and opinions about marginality in regards to their individual identities. The space is intended as a place where the members can explore their identity and find ways to heal in regards to the ways they have experienced discrimination as Asian Americans. To better facilitate this, allies who might otherwise hinder this process through discomfort that they might cause by virtue of their presence, are excluded. This also protects members from the burden of having to explain themselves or their identities, culture, customs, beliefs, etc. to an ally while in the space. For these reasons, I suggest the use of safe space is instrumental in allowing students to formulate their identities and their agenda as an organization outside of larger hegemonies. It also gives them an autonomy from allies who might usurp the space, group, or time and allows individuals to work out personal issues in a political way. However the issue of safe space makes many students feel that the organization is not entirely welcoming and even segregative. Thus, it remains a controversial issue that is often debated inside and outside of the Alliance. In the words of Rita, an alumna of Oberlin College and former member of AAA,

[A] safe space is essentially a physical...non-tangible space where people who identify in a particular way or who have particular histories or experiences or particular issues in common come together outside of the larger mainstream society to talk about issues and experiences to discuss how certain power structures effect them specifically but also to kind of begin to understand how to then have a conversation about their position in society, the larger mainstream society. So the Asian American Alliance operates as a safe space, and my junior year, which is 2003, there was an instance where a majority [white] student was asked to leave during the first introductory AAA meeting....And that kind of got blown out of

proportion in that the student wrote a letter both to AAA directly but also a letter to The Review talking about how he felt discriminated against and about how safe space was not a valuable concept, especially at a school like Oberlin, which prides itself as being liberal and accused AAA as being segregationist, etc., etc. And AAA then had to kind of make the college campus aware of what exactly safe space is and why it's really important for AAA to operate as a safe space. And that then led to a stream of other letters but I think what did happen within the A/PA community specifically was then other student ...then began to reevaluate whether they wanted to have regular safe spaces. [I]t seemed to be a given that all of these spaces were safe spaces until this incident when all organizations began to reassess the situation.... Only AAA then decided to be a safe space. None of the other student organizations voted to have safe spaces anymore (Rita interview 2005).

Rita's understanding of the safe space controversy reveals that the concept is contested both from within and without. Not only is there little awareness and education about the function of safe space in the larger campus community, but sometimes students are not even aware that they are part of a safe space organization. However, safe space issues become public and involve the whole campus when someone who is not a part of a particular safe space is asked to leave. Tanya discussed with me the impact of safe space on the larger Oberlin College community. She says,

I mean when those things happen, though, it's like they talk about it with their friends and it just...it breeds such a negative attitude towards AAA and I feel it seems to be present on campus....[E]ither you're part of AAA or you've been told very negative things about AAA so you won't become involved in it. And that conflict with safe space I think is a very personal thing.

I think there's definitely the people that don't see a need for safe space and then there's also the people who see the need for safe space but don't feel the need for safe space but don't feel AAA can provide it for whatever reasons. So that has always been an issue and it's rough when you see the people who are definitely looking for a community but it's just not... AAA isn't the space for them. And with people thinking AAA is too politicized and that it doesn't provide enough support socially (Tanya interview 2005).

Tanya's statement relates several of the major issues to one another. Not only is safe space an issue, but the political nature of the organization comes through the arguments of safe space. While some people feel alienated because they were looking for community and then found out that as a safe space organization it is not the space for them, others feel that the safe space is not adequate for their needs. As with any organization, students become very personally invested, and it can be devastating for them when they discover the space is not exactly what they hoped ideologically or otherwise. For Trinh, a graduating senior, the space was comfortable for her. But she also saw how it was contentious as well. She said,

Safe space is another related issue. I personally feel very well guarded within my A/PA community, but obviously, not everyone on this campus is fully aware of the safe space concept, even our own community members (Trinh interview 2006).

Trinh also recognizes how safe space is a hidden issue that only becomes public when it is violated, when she mentions the lack of awareness about it within the community. The reason for safe space being an underground concept is not only because it is a subversive space. Chartered student organizations are required to have open membership, however several of them operate as safe spaces, a fact that some believe breaks the charter agreement. However, despite closed meetings, all of the safe space organizations that I am aware of on campus have open forums, programming and events. Moreover, to deny disenfranchised groups access to the benefits of other student groups because they want to have a space to discuss their marginalization is also problematic. Thus, as one can imagine, although Trinh and many other members of AAA past and present have expressed support for safe space, this policy has had both positive and negative consequences. What is interesting is how debates about safe space are framed and

resolved according to how they arose. In most cases, campus-wide coverage of safe space result when members of dominant groups are asked to leave the safe spaces of non-dominant groups. This year the issue became public when an all People of Color (POC) dance show approached a Caucasian dancer in a piece to make sure she understood the purpose of the performance venue. Colors of Rhythm is an annual spring event, and one that brings together many of the POC cultural organizations on campus as part of a tradition of addressing the marginalization of non-Western performance art forms at Oberlin. It began when a student's request for a performance space in the Theater and Dance department was denied and she was informed that it was because her dance form was not a legitimate style that the department recognized. In response, she organized Colors of Rhythm as a POC space for POC expression, mostly though indigenous and traditional dance forms. It has continued as a protest in response to the Western-centric nature of the subject matter taught in the department, and continues despite the institutionalization of a West African dance program. Again, most times that AAA's safe space policy has been the target of criticism the catalyst has come from a Caucasian/white student who was asked to leave. However, Caucasian/white students have not been the only ones who have been singled out; sometimes they are mixed race people, as was the case with Kate above. However, the issue rarely becomes public, except when Caucasian students are the ones being excluded. Part of this may relate to a feeling of rejection from a community that they see themselves as allied with the group toward a common goal. Another aspect may be, however an unclear understanding of the role of an ally. As one student involved in organizing Colors of Rhythm told me, if the person were really an ally then they would understand that marginalized people need

their own spaces to work out their own issues, and allies are not supposed to be fighting the “good fight” for them, but “backing them up.” Another aspect of the issue may have to do with a sense of entitlement, whereby a student who has possibly never experienced marginalization becomes angry when they feel they are exposed to it by being ejected from a space. Indeed, being asked to leave can feel very frustrating, confusing, and make a person feel unwelcome, unwanted, and/or wronged. In addition, for individuals in this position who have little or no experience in, or understanding of safe space, especially first year students, and people interested in doing anti-oppressive work, it may feel like an ironic case of “reverse discrimination,” which really boils down to “discrimination against Caucasians/whites,” by people of color.

While this latest contestation involved the larger POC community, as Viola ('04) recalls, “One big challenge that came up every few years regarded safe space and the larger dynamics of racism on campus. It affects all communities, but it seemed that people seemed more justified in challenging AAA safe space,” (Viola interview 2006). Although Viola did not elaborate as to why she thought the Asian American Alliance was challenged more than other organizations, Tanya offered this insight.

It...had always been dominantly AAA. I think more people see it as a space that they can be part of...And I think it is because there is a lot of cultural appropriation and the whole thing...you know just like there's so much with anime and all of the fetishism. I think it just seems like it's a space that they feel like they can be part of so that they can learn about the culture. But yeah, definitely I mean it...the same with when it happened more recently people that were, groups that were considered safe spaces were definitely questioned about it but it just doesn't happen as frequently that there are people that try to enter that space that aren't part (Tanya interview 2005).

Thus, Tanya links AAA's past problems with safe space to larger issues of representation of Asia and Asian Americans in the mainstream culture and the subsequent

deligitimization of Asian Americans as politicized people of color. In the first case, she links mainstream trends, cultural appropriation, and commodification of Asian material culture to as contributing to a misconstrued view of Asian American and Asian as being the same. Furthermore, she then interprets the motives of individuals who are confused by these representations as seeing the Alliance as being a “culture club” where outsiders can meet Asian (American) people and learn more about Asian culture. This is an interesting concept, which she links to popular consumption of anime (Japanese animation) and “fetishism,” whereby Asian people and material culture are exoticized and commodified because of their uniqueness. This concept of the exotic “Orient” is part of an orientalist discourse in the United States, which is distinct from but related to European orientalism as discussed by Edward Said (1994). Historian John Kuo Wei Tchen, has argued that U.S. orientalism began almost at the birth of the nation and was realized through the U.S. capitalist system. He states,

The formulators of U.S. identity, while greatly influenced by European ideas, sought to advance a unique form of American nationalism that often used China and the Chinese symbolically and materially to advance a revolutionary way of life—to make culture infused with this faith in individualism and progress. Orientalism, therefore, became the cultural phenomenon intrinsic to American social, economic, and political life (Tchen 1999, xvi).

Tchen explains that U.S. orientalism in the early days of the country took on three forms, patrician, commercial, and political orientalism. The first was constituted by the symbolic status attributed to those who owned luxury goods, which in the colonial period included tea, china porcelain, silk, and other imports from China. This symbolic status was only attainable by those with monetary wealth, thus it constituted a patrician form of orientalism. The first form drove commercial orientalism, whereby the U.S. sought to

build its economy and open an avenue of trade with China following the Opium Wars. Lastly, political orientalism unfolded as anti-Chinese sentiment that ultimately led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 (Tchen 1999, xv-xxiv). These three forms of orientalism continue today but are not limited to China and Chinese Americans but rather have spread to include the consumption of Japanese animation, ethnic foods, and imported products and goods from throughout Asia. In addition, through this commodity exchange, and as a result of several international wars, including WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam and Korean wars, images of Asians and Asian Americans have been constructed in particular ways that are reproduced over and over again. For instance, Asian women have been constructed as exotic, subservient, delicate creatures (Yoshikawa 1994). Thus, commodification and the processes of globalization have all contributed to a barrage of media images of Asia and Asian America via movies, plays, commercials, and billboards. These images and the particular gaze that they create, work in conjunction with other structural racism, to make Asian America seem like an accessible place via AAA.

It is important to note that Tanya and Viola both recognize that the Asian American Alliance faces challenges of its space more than any other POC group on campus. I suggest that this is because Asian Americans are so often posited or represented in such a way as they are not seen as people of color by other POC and non-POC groups. Again, I would like to reiterate my previous argument; the model minority stereotype is a vehicle for oppression because it constructs Asian Americans in limbo as neither Black nor white, and like neither group in any definitive way. They are minorities only in the sense that they are not white, but they are claimed to have achieved honorary white status through economic and educational advancement. The model minority

stereotype also holds that the success of Asian American groups renders them ineligible for the benefits of affirmative action, therefore it actually negatively affects them by preferring other minority groups in the college admissions process (Prashad 2001). Moreover, the idea of the model minority incorporates assumptions that Asian Americans are hard-working, non-confrontational, and mild-mannered, in direct contrast with other people of color, and thus desirable employees. Thus, their high achievement is translated to mean that they do not have or have somehow overcome the problems that other marginalized groups face and therefore have no real issues (Varma 2004). This of course is not true, but the perception of this representation as truth leads Asian Americans to not be taken as seriously as minorities or marginalized peoples, as several of the aforementioned authors have pointed out. Albert, a student who dropped out of Oberlin, complained, that one problem activists in the Asian American community faced was,

[B]eing heard and taken seriously not only by the people who you are activism against, [i.e.] the administration...but also by the people around you, the general community, and making them all listen and care. For our community in particular, differentiating between the various groups within the community, making sure Koreans don't get lumped in with the Chinese and perhaps emphasizing the "American" in "Asian American" for example.

When the CFC was meeting to discuss the positions left open by Maeda and DiCenzo, and when one of the professors suggested having David Kelley teach Japanese history in addition to Chinese history, I wanted to throw a shoe at him. [T]o be fair, I think Professor Hogan did too. Things like that. [I]f people don't take you seriously, or ignore you, or deny recognition, what chances do you have of them listening to your agenda? It's all very frustrating. On the other hand, in this latest episode, the A/PA community pulled together beautifully with a broad range of campus...groups to protest the lack of retention of Maeda's position. That's one time where I feel our activism actually made a tangible difference both in terms of the CFC's decision... and how seriously we were taken by everyone on campus (Albert interview 2006).

Albert, like Tanya, felt that the problem related back to not being taken seriously as activists, but like Viola did not suggest a reason why. He did, however, outline some of the issues in relation to the construction of Asian Americans as being all the same. He saw it as a problem that is pervasive enough that members of the CFC actually suggested “retooling” the Chinese History professor to teach Japanese History. In addition, when thinking about the ways Asian American students are not taken seriously at the institution we must look at Albert’s comment that the A/PA community with the help of allies was able to get the Asian American history position returned. This could be read in terms of the role that allies played in increasing the visibility of Asian American activists, and thus a significant factor in this victory. In this way then the presence of non-Asian allies gave Asian American activists the political clout that they needed to be taken seriously. Having sufficiently discussed the ways in which the term “Asian American activist” is rendered an oxymoron by the model minority stereotype and the effects in terms of AAA and safe space, I would like to return to the topic of difference between Asian groups and ethnicities.

According to Albert, and Gillian (’75) one of the duties the Asian American Alliance has undertaken is educating about the differences among Asian (American) groups, and distinguishing and educating about their individual issues (Albert interview 2006; Gillian interview 2006). It is an interesting charge for a panethnic group to aspire to, since as we have discussed before the constructed nature of panethnic organization does not easily lend itself to this task. This is especially an intriguing concept considering the organization is not culturally based. As can be expected, various students and alumni have different takes on this. As Amir (’00) notes, “International students really didn’t

seem to care much for the issues American students within groups like...AAA, etc. were hoping to work on. This division is understandable and I don't think the fact that it existed was that much of a problem," (Amir interview 2006). In contrast, Rita ('05), who had been an international student of South Asian descent, wanted AAA to be a space for her. Before graduating she wrote an email to members of AAA stating that she thought the organization needed to reevaluate who the space was welcoming for and who it served and how. She urged the leaders to discuss how South Asians and international students could be made a part of the space.

During the first few months that I started attending AAA meetings... I wasn't even sure that AAA was a space for me, as an international student. Over the years, through the A/PA community and simply by being at Oberlin, I have tried to learn/understand what I can about various issues pertaining to Asian America/Americans. I still don't know the histories or understand a lot of the experiences that the A/PA community speaks about. And in some ways, that has made me feel like an outsider, always questioning the legitimacy of my knowledge and experience, and trying to justify to myself my space within the community. And I know that this is not my experience alone, but that of a couple of other international students as well. I am saying this because I think the one question that the community needs to rethink is: [W]ho are we? [O]r who are we for? And if the community is meant to be for Asians and Asian Americans alike, then a concerted effort needs to be made to address/emphasize that. As of now, in my opinion, a lot of the conversations that happen seem to take for granted an American context/presence and that, in a way, contributes to the marginalization of non-American voices/experiences.

I believe this is true of the South Asian and South Asian American presence as well. In the [three] years that I have been involved with AAA, there have been [three] South Asians active in AAA - i.e. Samina, me and now Caroline (and maybe Samona, if she decides to stay involved), and for the most part, we have been/will be the sole South Asian presence in AAA at any given time. I apologize if I offend anyone, but, in my opinion, not enough importance/effort seems to be given to or put into addressing South Asia/South Asians, probably because of the lack of presence and/or because of the dissimilarity of the history that South Asia shares with the US.

I am not sure if/when/how these issues need to be addressed. Please understand, that the A/PA Community is the most important/meaningful community that I identify with and feel comfortable within, on this campus. But at times, it has been difficult and uncomfortable. I am concerned that AAA may inadvertently be shutting out people in a situation similar to my own. And I am particularly concerned because the community has been such a valuable support system for me and it hurts me to think that others may not be able to experience similar support (Rita letter 2005).

It is obvious from what Rita writes that she feels personally invested in the organization but it is interesting that she chose to breach the subject of her uneasiness in an email format. However, if one considers that Rita sent the message to particular members and leaders of AAA, she may have seen this as a better way to open discussion within the larger group. The first point she brings up is that she is writing from the perspective of an international student, but that the narrative she is sharing is not unique to her own individual experience as an international student in the Asian American Alliance. Her statement therefore gives the impression that it is a subject that AAA members who are also from the international community have discussed at some point at least amongst each other. Rita explains that while she has made her best effort to understand the experiences of Asian Americans in the United States and their complex histories, they have sometimes been elusive, and this vague understanding has left her feeling like an outsider. This statement says a number of things. On the one hand it implies that Rita and the other international students are devoted to the organization and its causes in terms of Asian Americans, but at the same time they find themselves unfulfilled. In addition, the message communicates that the group should not take for granted the idea that these histories are accessible to non-American born Asians. She further points to the need to better integrate individuals whose identities are supposedly included under the rubric of

Asian American Alliance who have not felt comfortable in the space. In essence, she is not only asking for the Alliance to recognize and address the needs and experiences of international and South Asian students but all marginalized peoples in the space. The indication is that there are a number of subaltern voices that are never heard, and while the focus is on the identities Rita can claim, she is presenting the idea that the space is not always accessible, welcome, or “hers.” This speaks volumes when looking at her later comment about wanting members, herself included to always or almost always feel comfortable and a sense of belonging since she has seen and been a part of the group at its best moments. She acknowledges that it can be an effective and wonderful support system but since it can also be unwittingly alienating from time to time, AAA needs to reevaluate its mission in terms of students. What Rita is also asking for when she emphasizes her own disparate experiences, is acknowledgement from the members of the organization. Her case is instructive because the Asian American Alliance became a space where she spent three years of her Oberlin career yet she did not remain uncritical of it. Despite those criticisms she stayed with the group, something that as will be discussed later, is rare, when a member feels like they are not fully included. Rita’s email sparked conversations that had not been addressed in some time and made the organization think about how it might be under-serving other members and groups who fell under the rubric of “Asian American” and whom AAA claimed to serve.

Nina ('05), a former co-chair of AAA and a student during Rita’s time, explained to me that AAA began to have conversations about who the group was for after members themselves brought them up.

Throughout my four years, people struggled to define Asian America, struggled to include voices of Southeast Asian Americans, second-

generation, low-income students, struggled to find a place for international students to participate--to make the struggle here relevant. We struggled with how to link the local with the global--our struggles at Oberlin College, with those in the nation, with those abroad. And I don't know if we did so successfully. I know that in the four years of my activism in AAA, more international students and hapa [mixed race/multiethnic] students were involved in AAA...As well as members of Southeast Asian communities such as Vietnamese and Filipino American[s] and so the questions raised were different, the answers were different, and so were the needs. With the framework of "globalization" haunting our peripheral view, we tried to incorporate as many voices as we could (Nina interview 2006).

It is interesting that nowhere in her Nina's account does she mention South Asians, although she does discuss mixed race people, Southeast Asians, and international students. This is surprising since Nina was very close with Rita and was aware that there were very few South Asian students who participated in AAA. Perhaps Nina consciously does not include them because she is aware of the disparate histories and experiences of South Asians in the United States, especially in terms of post-1965 immigration. It is possible then that Nina understands those differences or other factors such as rejecting the label "Asian American" as reflected in their low participation. By not discussing South Asians at all, Nina may be saying that they themselves do not want to be a part of the organization. Indeed, as Prashad (2000) has noted that even pre-1965, South Asians in the U.S. had been racialized differently than East Asians and Southeast Asians and talks about a focus on differentiation from African Americans as a major issue. It is not to say that South Asians are/were not racialized or discriminated against, just that they experience racism differently. There is another reason why Nina might have excluded South Asians from her statement aside from the possibility of forgetting about them, and that is that despite conversations and overtures made by AAA to be more inclusive, attendance and participation by South Asian students was still low. Thus, Nina does not

discuss their numbers increasing because they actually did not increase, and so it makes little sense to bring them up when talking about how the space changed for other groups because it did not change nor was changed by South Asian student attendance. Her statement says nothing about actual existing numbers of active South Asian members before or after. Furthermore, one cannot be sure from her statement alone that there was any participation by this group at all but the indication remains that there was not a significant increase, either. As far as I have been able to observe, there has been little or no increase in South Asian student representation during my four years at Oberlin, and when I have inquired from South Asian activists why they are not part of the Asian American Alliance, most say they are already committed to SASA, the South Asian Students Association, and are not willing to leave. Some have also said that they do not see themselves as "Asian," because Indians are "Caucasians" or "Aryans" and those groups are racialized as white. Still others disagree with the idea of South Asian Americans as Asian Americans or are more interested in cultural events. Of the individuals of South Asian descent, however, who have chosen to participate in AAA, some have kept ties with SASA, while others have not. I remember Caroline ('05) talking to me in private about her position in AAA. Caroline had said she did not feel like the Asian American Alliance was her space but felt more comfortable there in many aspects than in SASA because AAA was a more radical space than SASA. She also complained that SASA was more international student-centered and that sometimes made her feel alienated because she was born in the U.S., not to mention that South Asian identity was monolithic and ignored the differences in the group, from Hindus to Muslims to Christians, and from South Indians to Parsis to Pakastanis. Lastly, she stated she left

because she did not feel comfortable as a queer woman because she felt it was a patriarchal, heterosexist space. When I asked her why she felt somewhat uncomfortable in AAA, she told me that it was because there were so few South Asians and not enough discussion of their topics, experiences, etc. (Caroline interview, 2005). Although Caroline was an officer of AAA, she did not try to change the focus of the organization. The experiences that Caroline and others shared seem to indicate the difficulty of being a minority within an organization or group of any kind, and the fact that this make it even harder to try to change it. For the South Asians in AAA, which averages about one per year, it may be a burden to try to change AAA or SASA. However, those who become involved and stay also feel committed to the work the Alliance does, and are aware of how often the focus shifts so that from time to time they see some of their own issues come into focus. Albert, a Korean American noted that shift in focus happened in one of the Asian/Pacific American biennial conferences at Oberlin. He explained,

This was before your time, but the 2002 A/PA conference focused on the aftermath of 9/11 and its potential effect on the A/PA community. I thought it was great that we jumped on it quickly and I'd like to think the conference managed to raise awareness of how the attacks and their fallout would affect both East and South Asians (Albert interview 2006).

It is interesting in the wake of this terrible tragedy how the A/PA community responded. They realized the effects of the negative and false portrayal of Muslims, and Sikhs, Middle Eastern and South Asian peoples as terrorists and Al Qaeda spies and organized around this. The conference title for that year was "Transcending Boundaries: Communities, Crisis and Resistance" and its theme was the aftermath of 9/11 on Asian Americans. In fact the following year, AAA organized a public reading during Vincent Chin week when students read aloud the names and stories of Asians and Asian

Americans, mainly of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent, who had suffered hate crimes in the past year, as a result of 9/11 backlash. Vincent Chin week is a week-long series of programs sponsored by AAA, commemorating the brutal slaying of Chinese American Vincent Chin during the early 1980s. Chin was beaten to death with a baseball bat because he was mistaken for Japanese during the massive layoffs in the auto industry in his hometown of Detroit. Vincent's assailants had been angry about the layoffs, which they blamed on Japanese domination of the auto industry in the U.S., but were found not guilty of violating Chin's human rights. Thus, Vincent Chin week has become for AAA members a way to remember the injustice of the Vincent Chin case and to raise awareness about hate crimes against Asian Americans. In addition to the attention to South Asian issues during Vincent Chin week, there have also been other programs and discussions that AAA has held about South Asian issues, as well as collaboration and support of SASA programming. However, the truth remains that at any one time various issues have taken precedence over other conversations, and these pressing issues have taken the center stage to the detriment of other topics.

Discussion of the marginalization of South Asian voices in the Asian American Alliance begs the question: Who else occupies the periphery? In terms of identity, multiethnic/mixed race individuals are always listed as having trouble gaining access and feeling comfortable in the space of AAA. As Kate mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, she did not feel Asian enough, even though she knew that she was indeed an Asian American and could claim that identity. Rita, an international student from India shared her personal view points on her identities, but she also saw students who did not share her identities struggling, too. About a year and a half after she sent her email, I

interviewed her for this project. Her response to my questions talk about some of the discussions that came out of thinking about broadening AAA's scope,

For certain people it has been...thinking about how do we make the organization more accessible to multiracial/multiethnic or transpeople, or people...who haven't had much self-identification ...before or essentially didn't come from a lower income community[?](Rita interview 2005).

Here it is instructive to see the various types of identities that were not being addressed, and still are not necessarily being addressed. For instance, there are other forms of identity that she mentions such as low-income, transgender, and non-self-identification, that fall out of the realm of ethnic and racial identity, which seem to have been glossed over in the organization. Indeed, multiracial/multiethnic identity is the only racialized identity in the list. Another alumna, Charlie made a similar observation to Rita's, when she said, "I witnessed and experienced a lot of identity struggles for the APIA students in terms of queer/trans identity, mixed-race identity, ethnic identities," (Charlie interview, 2006). Tanya had a similar thing to say about sexuality and gender not being sufficiently addressed,

I think [it's] multi-issue organizing...I haven't heard too much about it recently but I know within the A/PA community there have been a number of times where L[esbian] G[ay] B[isexual] T[ransgender] issues were...always very marginalized. They're just talked about (Tanya interview 2005).

According to Tanya, even though issues of sexuality and gender identity are discussed, the discussion is all that really happens. While many informants knew of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) identified members, most of the organizing around these identities happened in separate spaces. Dominick notes that particular students tried to put together programs of their own.

From what I remember there haven't been actual internal dialogs but there have been movements to bring speakers to campus for the whole community to address issues.... Well, people come in with different agendas, as students tend to do.... There've been people who were vying more for multiracial/Hapa issues. Others more queer issues, others South Asian issues, others Pacific Islander issues, I mean everyone... comes in... and wants to make their issues not the most prominent but you know important within the activist organization (Dominick interview 2005).

It is interesting that Dominick does not remember conversations about queer Asian American identity happening, but he had been part of a conference committee that sponsored a panel on queer A/PA issues. Dominick does discuss the ways in which individuals sought to address issues that were not talked about in the community through organizing panels and speakers. In this way he highlights the individual agency and points to an interesting phenomenon of how different identities and agendas must compete for the spotlight. In the case of marginalized members, the minorities within minorities, they must compete through special programs outside of general discussions because they are invisible both within the organization and therefore in the outsider's perspective. More importantly, their programming then goes beyond the space to make their voices heard by a larger audience. In this way the safe space operates in a novel way because it not only lets individuals explore their identity and marginalization in specific ways but it also imposes limits by virtue of the voices competing to be heard. Thus, the limits upon the space force individuals to engage in self- and peer-education in broader forums. In this way the issues such as queer A/PA identity and multiracial/multiethnic experiences become sites for education about minorities within minorities. In these public spaces I would argue, the diversity of Asian America is demonstrated and reiterated in contrast to the essentialization of that takes place as an outside force and an inside force in the Asian American Alliance. In this way we can see how confrontations of safe space

can be positive, too because it enables larger debates to take place outside the organization in the larger campus and inside, within the safe space. However, organizing programming on issues can also be a dead end, because it does not necessarily then lead to conversations in the space of AAA, and may then leave students feeling tokenized and still isolated and/or invisible. This is something that Dominick suggests has only changed when the constituency and/or the leadership changed. Returning to the topic of mixed race/multiethnic students, he said, "I guess it was resolved because people of multiethnic descent became leaders of the organization and thus those issues came to the forefront," (Dominick interview 2005). Although it would seem that students have the structure and forum in the Asian American Alliance to be able to have discussions or sponsor educational events about particular marginalized issues, it seems to be up to individuals themselves to conduct the organization down those paths. This may be difficult to accomplish with multiple agendas vying for attention, a fact that relates back to discourses on power and hegemony. As Mouffe suggests, "As against conceptions that stress commonality at the expense of plurality in respect to differences or that deny any form of commonality in the name of plurality and difference, what we need is to envisage a form of commonality that respects diversity and makes room for individuality" (Mouffe 1992, 30). Here Mouffe is making a statement that applies very much to panethnic organizing that does not stress pluralism at the expense of the individual or individuality to the detriment of the group. Mouffe's statement resonates well in the situation of AAA with the warning of Cornel West who says that scholars need to be aware of "the very different status—the different political status—between identity from above and from below," (West 1992, 22). He also stresses that identities have political consequences and

so individuals often play a game of strategy and tactics (*Ibid.*, 22). Again, we see the constraints on the individual and the group in terms of identity and organizing in the political context as related to larger hegemonic processes. This in itself relates back to the purpose of the Asian American Alliance as a polity and its goals.

In discussing AAA as a political, not cultural, organization, it is necessary to shift the focus from identities to ideologies. Many of my informants have described how many students are put off by the politics of the organization, or are looking for a cultural group where the focus is on food, language, and cultural activities. Still others come to AAA looking for a space and think they have found it until they discover that their viewpoints and experiences are in sharp contrast with that of the organization. These ideological differences can then cause strife when they become internalized leading to individuals feeling that their identity is being attacked. Nelly, a sophomore laments that the politics of safe space and extreme politicization of activists in the space can be problematic. She says,

The A/PA community operates by the lines bordering their respective organization. This can include political, social and ideological perspectives that may clash with other community members thus creating tension and distr[ess] in the community and the community's relationships. This also dichotomizes community members' identities, one as a partial idealist, and one as a sympathetic friend/peer, which are both exhibited accordingly depending on the environment and context (Nelly interview 2006).

It would seem that Nelly's politics seemed to cause her to feel isolated and even ostracized. Furthermore, her discomfort with safe space enabled her to sympathize with allies who were excluded. In this way, Nelly recognizes the alienation that the radical politics the organization espouses, including safe space, can have both on insiders (members) and outsiders, who she describes as sympathetic allies. She goes on to define

how specifically the idea of safe space can threaten insiders who do not agree with its principles and/or practice.

It made me want to drop out of the community. Communities are supposed to be institutions you share interests and feel comfortable about. I greatly disliked being part of the community overall. Just the vibe of it turns me away. I am however friends with other members of the community, but only outside of the community. I dislike socializing with them when there are clashing agendas and no chance of cooperation (Nelly interview 2006).

Nelly's discomfort with the idea of safe space thus translated to her being unable to feel comfortable in the space itself. Nelly is not alone in her feelings of isolation, however. Tanya, an alumna who took time off after her second year told me she left because of personal problems with the Asian American Alliance. She recounted, "Well, I think that it was a time period where the older students very much wanted to have an influence on the younger students and I resisted that to a point where I just felt my identity was being questioned all the time and it caused me to have a personal crisis," (Tanya interview 2005). Although Tanya left the school and the organization for a year because of the stress, she later returned and became an active member and officer in AAA the following year. In retrospect, after having stayed on for two years post-graduation as the A/PA community coordinator in the Multicultural Resource Center, she reflects on the reasons why it is such a delicate issue that will always be unresolved.

Well, it seems like safe space is always a big issue within the community 'cause it really divides the community between students who...who feel that need for safe space and then the students... I think a lot of time it's students who have a lot of friends that aren't in the A/PA community, so it's a lot harder for them to understand the need and why it isn't something that people do on their own outside of AAA. And once again, I think it's the same thing if you don't agree with the fact that AAA should be a safe space then you end up leaving the organization. Yeah. It doesn't get resolved. That's why it's still an issue today (Tanya interview 2005).

Safe space is only one ideological issue that students have had trouble with, however.

As Charlie, an alumna of 2002 explained to me,

Internally, there were issues surrounding individual identity development and how individuals chose to manifest those issues. Sometimes there were ideological debates which caused friction/conflict. Sometimes these were interpersonal issues which were resolved between those involved or sometimes they divided the community along ideological lines. Many times, the “minority” voice chose to remove themselves from the community in order to avoid contact/communication with the other involved parties. I don’t remember any intervention of other community members to mediate conflicts....

I felt and still feel that the Oberlin activist community did not allow enough diversity of ideology within its circles. Activists who were involved in traditionally non-POC movements or who were in relationships with non-POCs (or even POCs of another race/ethnicity) or who articulated opinions not in keeping with the majority thought were often made to feel inferior, unwelcome, and otherwise alienated. This bred an environment of oppression as far as folks being able to give voice to their opinions/experiences/thoughts and led to much of the interpersonal conflict within the POC/APIA communities (Charlie interview, 2006).

Charlie identifies an ideological conflict about individuals’ identities and how they chose to represent themselves. This harks back to Nelly and Tanya’s shared experiences feeling that their identities were being attacked because they did not agree with the rest of the organization and refused to change just to accommodate AAA. She also discusses how the community sometimes took sides in disputes between two parties, for instance and wound up splitting along ideological lines. Often, she says the minority opinion leaves the group and that is taken as the resolution of the conflict even though no actual resolution came about. She also mentions how individuals’ choice of partner also caused rifts in the community. Disagreements like these inform her opinion of AAA and other POC groups as rigid and controlling, even oppressive in their dogma and practice as they tried to regulate and control members’ actions, thoughts, etc. As a mixed race female-

bodied individual who was a student from 1998-2002, she has a different take than Dominick, a male-bodied individual who has been a student since 2002 to the present. He believes that any voice can and will be heard in the organization, and believes that during his time no one really felt marginalized because of the openness of the group and the safe space. His bases his interpretation on the idea that, "AAA serves as an open forum so everyone gets their voice heard even though we might not be able to bring speakers of all those things on campus or have internal dialogs about all of them. You know it's all heard," (Dominick interview 2005). Perhaps, the difference in perspective comes from the difference in background, because in the space, Dominick has a voice, he assumes that everyone else has a voice as well. Dominick had been a student during the time when Kate and Nelly had felt excluded and left the group. Their experiences do not fit the rosy picture of inclusion that he paints, because Kate went unheard and although Nelly had been engaged in the space, her voice was ultimately discounted when her opinions were rejected instead of discussed. Thus, we can see that there are other factors that are also operating within this situation. It seems that the organization's goals and ideologies are put before those of the individual. Consequently, dissenting opinions may be noted but not really considered, pushing the person or persons who have ideas that differ from the group, outside of the organization and its processes, or forcing them to submit to the dominant discourse within the group. They then either wind up staying and feeling invalidated or leaving because they feel rejected. This then functions as an ironic way of controlling the members of the group. It is interesting how well the AAA fits the description of Asian American panethnic organizing that Espiritu (1992) has described as its members enforce the idea of conforming to one set of ideals and principles as part of

protesting other types of hegemony. In this way it reproduces existing power structures at the micro-level. During Charlie's time this ideological policing went so far as to dictate who was an appropriate partner and why, and who was eligible to be a member based on ideological and in some cases ethnic criteria. This plays into notions of how hegemony works within and identity "policing." Theorist Joan Scott writes, "The borders of identity are patrolled for signs of non-conformity; the test of membership in a group becomes less one's willingness to endorse certain principles and engage in specific political actions, less one's positioning in specific relationships of power, than one's ability to use the prescribed languages that are taken as signs that one is inherently 'of' the group," (Scott 1992, 18). In this way the judge and jury of belonging are the members who subscribe to AAA's ideology while the dissident is the person guilty of wrong-doing. The roles are not reversed or reflexive, so that little changes but by the will of the members who hold the power to change the group from within it.

There are several consequences of the complicated unyielding politics of the organization. On the negative side, some individuals feel alienated and leave the organization, with effects on recruitment and retention. On a more serious note, this may lead to individuals suffering crises of identity and being impacted very deeply and personally to the point that they leave the school. In addition, hegemony and unequal power dynamics can be reinscribed and maintained in the organization, thus preventing student activists from achieving their goals. In contrast, if a dissenting voice gains support, policies and attitudes can be reevaluated and rearticulated in better, less oppressive ways. If less radical voices that would hinder progress of a radical movement choose to leave the group of their own accord, then more students may join because of

the politics the group espouses, and goals may be achieved. Other effects that could be seen as negative or positive include splitting the group, so that new offshoots with different agendas can form, or mediation can take place when people agree to disagree, to the improvement or hindrance of the community. However, in order for any of these experiences to be instructive, students need to recognize the structural implications of these types of ideological conflict. In the Asian American Alliance during the past four years and in many other POC spaces, disagreements about partner choice have not been an issue, even when activist leaders have had partners who were Caucasian. Moreover, some individuals who do not support safe space or are ambivalent about it, such as Nelly have joined in activities and supported AAA members, thus fostering a community even if she feels only remotely connected to it. However, there is still an element that remains critical of individuals who come into the space and/or espouse particular identities but are not actively working toward a radical agenda. This is in contrast to individuals who want the space to be friendlier to individuals who want cultural programming, etc. For instance, Maria ('06) expressed to me her frustrations with College admission policies because she believed that the newer students of Asian American descent were not interested in AAA because they enjoyed higher socioeconomic status than students in the past. She said her problem was particularly with the “[bourgeoisie] rich kid Asians. Asia House is filled with apolitical ...Asian kids...nobody seems too concerned with this but me” (Maria interview 2006). She also identifies other individuals and groups of Asian Americans who she sees as apathetic about various social justice issues as problematic,

[T]here's no sense of solidarity when everyone is studying biochem, and not challenging the fact that they're being used by a white dominated, patriarchal society... so these things that are important, like the extreme polarization of economic status in Asian America for instance, don't get

attention. ...I went to a Korean church every Sunday for my first [two] years at Oberlin. I was like 'wow this is what it's like to be Korean'. Fuck that. Cleveland Koreans are rich motherfuckers; all of them are doctors/lawyers/brain drain descendents. [A]nd it's sick. Because of the unapologetic materialism, obsession with a false sense of 'Korean pride' with only some foggy emotional understanding of the Korean or even Asian diaspora today.

[T]his is what I'm talking about; my entire way of looking at things is completely different from most of the people I know outside of Oberlin. If we are good people, believe in justice, Christian even, etc, then we want to relieve people of oppression, help those in need (Maria interview 2006).

Maria, a Korean adoptee, understands some of the structural problems that operate in ways that oppress some for the benefit of others and thinks everyone should be conscious of their positionality and privilege. Further, she believes that we should all work for social justice and realize the different hegemonies that are in operation at any point within society. From her standpoint, as she has mentioned before, less radical individuals slow down and impede the movement that AAA is trying to foster. Elsewhere in her interview she expressed her dislike of Nelly because of her attitudes toward the organization and idealistic view of ethnic solidarity. In Maria's mind, AAA is a part of a larger anti-oppressive movement, and it is not important to pay attention to voices that are less radical if they are focused on something not related to overarching structural problems. If safe space allows for the goals of the organization to be accomplished, Maria is not interested in seeing it compromised to make other people (members or allies) more comfortable with it.

In this way we can see the various power struggles that go on within the organization and the demands that various social actors make on the Asian American Alliance and how they are addressed or not. As Foucault (1978) states, power is productive only as it is enacted through power relations. As Colin Gordon summarizes in

the introduction to a translation of Foucault's *Power*, "The individual impact of power relations does not limit itself to pure repression but also compromises the intention to teach, to mold conduct, to instill forms of self-awareness and identities" (Gordon, in Foucault 1994, xix). Thus, through the power relations between dissidents within AAA with the rest of the organization itself and its leaders, dissonance is the sight of negotiation and mediation. The ways in which the Asian American Alliance chooses to handle the situation through mediation, stigmatization, ignoring the problem, or reconciliation and policy amendment is an enactment of power. In the cases when an individual or party is given acknowledgement, then the agency of said party has had a positive impact, when the problem is ignored, they have also enacted their power because they brought about a conscious move on the part of the larger group to disregard the issue. Moreover, the final outcome does not always have a definitive character. In some cases an individual's departure can enact change or cause policy to be challenged afterwards. In other cases, the backlash of scandal can effect recruitment, or things could die down but stay the same. However, discussing power internally does not fully explain why these types of issues arise. For instance, controversy ideologically or otherwise about safe space is a result of several things. As mentioned earlier, the model minority stereotype discredits Asian Americans as people of color and/or oppressed and devalues their negative experiences of racism, xenophobia, and class division. Thus, the constructed nature of Asian America as full of "model minorities" erases histories and causes outsiders to fail to consider Asian American activism in a serious light. That Asian Americans would need a safe space therefore seems ridiculous to the mainstream. In addition, internalization, and privilege sometimes prevent Asian Americans themselves

from being able to understand or articulate their own need for safe spaces and divide the community. Moreover, because of the liminality of Asian Americans as neither black nor white, and the various ways Asian America is constructed through media representation and instruments of governmentality such as the national census, Asian American activists must conform and perform Asian American identity in order to be recognized by society at all. Therefore at times they must compromise the ways they go about attaining their goals and often adopt and internalize particular types of hegemonic discourses around race, class, gender, sexuality, and ideology in order to make progress. However, these hegemonies and the conceptualization of safe space in marginalized communities sometimes work to open dialog with the larger campus community about micro-level identity politics and demonstrate diversity and difference in lines with the organization's mission.

Chapter 3: The Impact of the Struggle on Students' Lives

"It saddens and worries me that as many as 1/3 of the Asian American student population at Oberlin College is either on academic probation or on the verge of being on academic probation," (Ham *et. al* 1996)

The above line is from an end of the year report written by the A/PA community coordinator in 1996. Interestingly enough, however, the date and author are of little consequence, since the message seems to be the same despite whom you ask and the time period to which you refer. Trouble with academics is only one of the ways students' lives are affected by their participation in the activist community. The demanding nature of the activist work Asian American students engage in and the constant barrage of stereotypes that they must deal with can have a draining effect on students as they

struggle to balance academics, activism and their personal lives. This chapter analyzes the various stresses members of the Asian American Alliance face and the reasons why.

As one of my informants, Maria, alluded to in a previous chapter, many of the Asian American students she knows are having a difficult time with their academics. She says, “[F]or some reason all the Korean boys, and many of the As[ian] Am[erican]s have had problems passing their classes,” (Maria interview 2006). Most of my informants discussed how their activism affected their lives in various ways, but one subject that always came up had to do with the struggle to meet graduation and class requirements. As Viola (’04), a former co-chair explains,

The tradeoff that comes with long hours organizing is the struggle to maintain passing grades... Regarding personal...the conferences were amazing!! Even though I was exhausted, I felt so grateful for the conversations that happened. Especially as an organizer, it solidified my relationships with other organizers and even gave me support when I wasn't motivated. I remember making the promise to someone that I would pass my classes and receive that diploma! (Viola interview 2006).

Viola was able to graduate on time, but her comments about her activist experiences creating the tough situation with her academics reflect the ways students are often forced to choose between classroom academics or the knowledge that they obtain outside the classroom. For her, she found that her struggles had positive outcomes because she learned something and because she felt solidarity with other activists who were having the same academic issues. However, for some students it can be very difficult to set priorities. Kate (’07) notes,

I feel like a lot of the very involved, very activist members of the APA community often find themselves making a hard decision between whether to dedicate themselves to AAA or In Solidarity or varsity sports or an instrument or a lover or running TWC or... Basically, we're "running" a good portion of the of color community and we have a hard time balancing our commitments (Kate interview 2005).

Kate's comments about a small group of individuals "running" various organizations and the challenge of balancing these commitments and interests, points to another issue, that of burnout. While most of my informants talked about burnout being the result of too much organizing, others say it perpetuates more burnout because individuals "drop out" of the community, thus creating more work for the remaining active community members. Kate, herself, took a hiatus away from the main organizing this semester to focus more on her studies, but others adopt alternative strategies. As Nina ('05) remembers,

Well I burned out. By my Junior year I was definitely *sick*, and *tired* of everything. A lot of my responses in the earlier questions come from the culmination of my senior year—meaning if you had asked me those questions in my Junior year I would have probably been a lot more jaded and unable to answer some of them. So please take that into consideration.

My Fall semester Junior year (Fall 2003) I left campus to do a semester abroad. I was *so* glad to go. I was getting to sick of all the crap politics on campus, all the run-around, all the repetitive shit that we kept getting ourselves into (Nina interview 2006).

Nina and other students who have taken semesters abroad have said that one of the reasons was that they needed the break from all of the stress of activist work and trying to balance that lifestyle with their academics and personal needs. Many of the activists who go abroad find that it enables them to resume their hectic lives at Oberlin when they return, as Nina did her senior year. Her narrative highlighted the ways in which the politics and constant fight drained her and are echoed in what Albert had to say on the subject. When I asked him about the personal struggles of Asian American activists he answered sarcastically:

[P]ersonal struggles? [W]hat about devoting all of your time to A/PA or other POC causes and not having time for sleep or class? [W]e've all been

there. Some people get so caught up in their idealism and their desire to make a difference that they don't leave time for the rest of their life. You talk about investments...members of the activist wing of Oberlin's A/PA community are some of the most driven and selfless people I've met and I've seen them move mountains. The flip side is, at what cost? [W]hat's the good of devoting all of your time to promoting change in your institution if you don't do anything else and you leave said institution as a result? For me personally, I often felt disillusioned, asking myself if anything we did really mattered and if anyone would listen to us....[A] progressive society can only be so progressive. Stereotypes and racism are too finely ingrained in our consciousness, it's impossible to rid ourselves of them fully, and to some point they'll always exist. What can we do? [W]e have to roll with it. What's the good of education if people don't listen? How do you get them to pay attention in the first place?...That was something I struggled with, and I think other people did too. In some way, I guess I'm asking "was it worth it?" (Albert interview 2006).

Albert makes several points, the first is that the work students do is worthwhile but it comes about as a result of self-sacrifice. At times the price one pays to achieve the activist goals in which they are personally invested is easily negotiated, at other times not so easily so. It seems that Albert and Nina both became jaded and embittered by the fact that no matter how much time or effort they devoted that these issues still cropped up. Albert ends his explanation on a bittersweet note when he asks, "Was it worth it?" The answer is not obvious, and depends on whom you ask. However, the question is crucial to understanding why students are burning out or having trouble making it to graduation. For many students, up to a point, it is. When I asked Dominick to explain to me what burnout meant for him on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the worst he answered, "Ten on the burnout scale is having to fail out of school or...[i]f not failing out of school, you know, failing classes and having to stay longer or take extra classes the next semester," (Dominick interview 2005). However he added that this is not just an issue with Asian Americans, "Students everywhere, no matter where you are, when you get involved, you get over-involved," (Dominick interview 2005).

If burnout and academic probation are so widespread among activists, why are Asian American students and staff so concerned that this is happening to this demographic? I would suggest that the answer may lie in the idea of Asians as high-achieving and the model minority; most of these students, when not overly involved, actually fit this depiction. However this is an oversimplification because as we have already discussed, the model minority is a myth. Why, then, would Asian American students choose to continue to do something they know is negatively impacting their grades and creating strife in their personal lives, etc? What makes it worth it? Nina describes it when she explains the trade off as motivated by personal reasons,

Time. Sleptime. Class-time. Graduating on time. Burn out. These were all things that were given too much *to* the community, taken from within oneself. Funny how we all get pissed at having to “teach others” about ourselves and yet we run conferences and panels all the time doing exactly that (my only consolation was that I was trying to teach myself). I mean, it’s not the only purpose. It’s also to put different voices out there besides dominant ones, but it’s the work that inevitably moves us, motivates us, and kills us...(Nina interview 2006).

Both Nina and Viola mentioned conferences as major time-consuming commitments but say that the reward was the personal enrichment and the meaning that it gave to them. In this way, students see the conferences, as a way for them to feel personally validated. As I discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the Midwest Asian/Pacific American Conference was created to bridge the gap in institutional coursework in Asian American studies. Even though AAS classes now exist, students still continue the tradition of this conference because it is still an integral part of their education and validates their individual identities. As Jessica, an alumna of 1988, explained, “During conference times, we were exhausted, not doing our school work, focusing only on what we needed to get done,” (Jessica interview 2006). She says that conference times were exhausting

and that students neglected their studies because they “focused only on what needed to get done.” This statement reflects the priorities that students set for themselves. The first priority is the conference, and sleep and studying is relegated somewhere after that. It seems however, that if we analyze what she says in terms of some of the other students’ statements that the first priority is actually the self or one’s own knowledge, which then prescribes the conference as an ends to meeting this need. Once the conference has been taken care of, school is next, because the purpose of attending Oberlin, which is the gateway through which the conference can happen, is education. While some of the motivations of schooling are personal and to attain knowledge, this objective is not completely fulfilled by classes, which is why the conference is made a priority above all the others. Then last, I would place sleep, because it seems to be first on everyone’s list of things to sacrifice. This emphasis on the self and feeling complete through the conference points back to the marginalization students face. They are aware of it as they fight for Asian American studies because their histories and experiences are excluded from the dominant discourses on history that are taught in grade school and in many post-secondary institutions. In addition, the sense of self-fulfillment they gain is predicated on the positive self-empowerment that comes out of organizing the conference themselves and seeing, hearing, and making their collective histories and experiences known. Thus, for the student activists who are burning out, the payoff is the legitimizing spaces they are creating, whether that is a panel or a conference, or a discussion in a meeting.

It is obvious that many Asian American student activists Oberlin are able to overcome the rocky road to graduation, but how they are able to this is not. One way is to take a break, a semester abroad or spent at home (possibly on suspension) is often how

students manage to bounce back. However, other institutional support structures help students stay afloat. One of the main means outside the academic arena is through the MRC. For instance in her 1996 end of the year report, Coordinator-Intern Diem Nguyen, described the tremendous amount of effort she had to put into engaging with A/PA students. She says that students needed help rebuilding the community because they were so burnt out. As one can imagine from the quote from the same document that appears at the beginning of this chapter, there was a sense of desperation among her students.

Nguyen writes that the students were

[N]ot...able to concentrate too well on their academics because they felt a sense of loneliness and abandonment and isolation from their surroundings...Many of these students tried to compensate for the lack of Asian American Studies and human resources by inviting lecturers, professors and activists to educate not only themselves but other students, faculty and staff at Oberlin College. In conclusion, they worked so hard that they had very little energy left to focus on their other academic load (Ham *et. al* 1996).

Students lack of motivation therefore was the product of the time and work they had put into fighting for AAS, but also they felt that the burden of having to do so much just to learn about their own histories and feel validated by the conference. Once the conference was over they then had to face the reality of a workload that had piled up with neglect for classes that did not fulfill their personal and scholarly needs in the first place. Billy ('07), explains ten years later that “[Some] of the challenges that A/PA activists face... were marginalization, maintaining activism in school, spreading awareness within our communities, and trying to stay sane and awake while working on A/PA activist issues,” (Billy interview 2006). Billy’s list probably looked like the list of reasons students felt like “giving up” a decade ago. The sad fact is that despite ten years time, students face pretty much the same challenges, and despite end of the year reports like the one Diem

Nguyen wrote and the one the director of Multi-Cultural Affairs wrote the year before describing the same issues, little has changed. As Tanya, who was another former Community Coordinator explained, "I think that's the thing though, even though the retention looks fine, it's just like a major struggle to get them to that point of graduation," (Tanya interview 2005). Since Asian American students are making it to graduation, one way or another, the administration is not perceive a real need to change anything. There are however, other factors that effect burnout in the Asian American community as I will discuss forthwith.

As I mentioned in earlier in this chapter, burnout can act as a self-perpetuating problem, whereby students who are exhausted take a leave of absence and leave their fellow activists to pick up the slack. Kate mentioned how so few people are "running" organizations and holding the community together in the first place that they are sometimes spread very thin. One issue that acts as a contributing factor to burnout is low numbers of politically active students. As Maria had pointed out, this is because there are a number of students who do not for whatever reason want to get involved. While some of this is in response to ideological disagreement, and the exclusivity the organization seems to foster, other reasons are political apathy or not wanting to take away time from other pursuits such as a major or two, personal life, and other extra curricular activities such as sports. This has been reflected in the numbers of incoming students into the organization and retention. As we have seen in chapter two from Nelly's case, she was a member who left because her political views isolated her from the community.

Meanwhile, Maria complains that while campus demographics boast a large number of Asian American incoming freshmen, eighty-eight for fall 2005, very few either want to or

actually do become involved in the Asian American Alliance. Despite changes in the leadership and increased recruiting efforts, the group still suffers from precariously low numbers. As Beatriz ('07), a former officer told me, "Retention has been terrible which means that the officers do a ridiculous amount of work and usually end up burning out." Beatriz also admitted she fit into the category of an officer that burnt out and that's why she has recently become inactive (Beatriz interview, 2006). This is something that her classmate and another former officer, Billy has also said. Charlie, who was also a former member did not see a problem in retention during her time, but stated

There was always a small, but stable number of students who were involved with AAA. I think we always felt that we needed more hands to spread the workload, but at the same time, I also felt that if the organization met students needs, then that was fine. If the organization didn't meet students needs and there was a movement to create/ redefine AAA, then that may have been something that should be considered (Charlie interview, 2006).

Charlie felt that low numbers were not particularly a problem, but that they were consistently low. She also indicates that there was always the threat of students needs not being met that could logically lead to low retention. However, Charlie remains optimistic that students needs were the mitigating factor and that as soon as this became an issue that caused people to leave, the Alliance would respond accordingly.

As we have discussed throughout chapter two, there are many different views on AAA's policies as either inclusive or exclusive, and many seem to contradict one another. Thus, low retention as a result of the ideology and political agenda of the organization proves a difficult area to explore. In addition, there are still other possible explanations that students have shared, however. Dominick responded to my inquiries about student participation and numbers by saying, "AAA has a problem with

membership in general...[and t]hat's an issue of demographics," (Dominick interview, 2005). Dominick's comment did not surprise me; it was something I had become accustomed to hearing from my informants, but the reasons they gave for this were often very different. As Nina, put it,

I am going to say something to you which has been said to me as a freshman and it's not going to help. When I came into AAA I think there were two others: it was basically [Mona], [Jeffery], and I. Later [Rita] joined from our class as well. And I think it was like the four of us (then came [Caroline] who was our year?) But the low numbers worried me, but our seniors (at that point it was [Kevin] as A[sian] A[merican] C[ommunity] C[oordinator] and other p[eople] like [Janet], [Fred], [Samina] and many others) told us that this was usual. Some years you get good numbers. Some you get few. On the years you get good numbers you think that you finally overcome the barrier of recruitment ... you don't have to worry about that anymore. But the years that the numbers are low then there's stress, stress on top of all that goes on that year. The stress questions recruitment, we try to formulate "Big Bro/Big Sis" programs ...without pursuing a hierarchy...we at AAA try to do more "friendly" programming...and then that pisses off our more radical members.... Retention has fluctuated in the last five years. We would get a year with tons of participation, and then a year with very little participation (Nina interview 2006).

Nina seems to have engaged in this discussion with her elder peers, which points to the salience of the issue during her time in AAA. In addition, it creates an institutional memory that has been passed down about the ebbs and flows in member numbers. While different strategies are employed to increase participation in the Asian American Alliance, as Nina points out it winds up complicating matters within the organization with current members. In this way one might consider current members as playing a role as gatekeepers who protect the integrity and uphold existing standards for membership even in the face of critically low numbers. However, it may be because these members maintain the organization and its boundaries that allows institutional memory and other aspects of AAA such as policy, and history in terms of safe space issues, etc, intact.

Basically, Nina was assured that she should not worry too much about too few members one year because the next might bring in more people. The deciding factors are very unclear, however. Dominick and other informants offered their takes on the situation and named demographic differences, economic status, and current debates as influencing participation in the Asian American Alliance during any given period. As Dominick explains,

[R]ecruitment is always...an issue that AAA has to deal with. It goes through ebbs and flows depending on what's going on, what kind of issues are effecting the community, sometimes there'll be a lot more because there's so much more to fight for, so much more that we have to work for that there'll be this boom in whose joining the organization and what's going on and when there's lulls and people don't feel it's really important that issues be discussed and things will drop. It just depends on what's going on (Dominick interview, 2005).

Dominick echoes Nina about the almost seasonal or annual cycles of participation numbers but says that a large part of it is what is happening on campus to get students involved or rally them around something. He also talks about demographics effecting people's decision to join AAA and stay or not stating, that the College's financial woes are reflected in the higher economic status of incoming first years, in accordance with Oberlin's switch from needs-blind to needs-sensitive admission practices.

Yet the people of lower income, people of immigrant communities grew up with certain experiences that AAA ...is said to fight for, etc. are not at the premium. Does that make sense? Are not the people that are being accepted anymore. They are being accepted but...the demographics of people who are being accepted are more upper middle and higher class in terms of general economic background...

Well, I can't say specifically how it's affected the organization. I mean people are coming in with different ideas and different agendas than what the organization has fought for in the past and others just don't feel that it's a space that they need because they didn't have that experience growing up because of their more privileged background (Dominick interview 2005).

Here, Dominick discusses again how personal experience contributes to their participation in the organization, citing that the higher economic status of American born, second and third generation Asian Americans significantly impacts their experience of being Asian in America. This is something that numerous scholars have discussed including Dhingra (2004) and Omatsu (1994). According to Gillian, who graduated in 1975, a similar situation hindered the growth of AAA after its inception.

I think the biggest rift was economic. There were a few students who were from financially needy backgrounds and they really resented those who were not on financial aid. In those days many fewer students were on financial aid and the differences between students who worked and those who didn't have to be a bigger issue in general on campus. The economic rift was greater than the American born – foreign born rift and bigger than even country of origin (Gillian interview 2006).

According to Gillian, the economic rift was ideologically insurmountable. This seems to be the case even today for individuals like Maria who complain about the upper middle class Asian Americans who she claims do not care about anti-oppressive work because they themselves benefit from class difference. Dominick's comments also allude to the way in which economic privilege shields individuals from particular experiences that might otherwise enable them to see more clearly how privilege operates in larger systems of oppression. In the case of Gillian, however, her fellow students were not necessarily affecting the way individuals participated, but it created a tangible effect by polarizing the community along class lines, the "haves" versus the "have-nots" with the immediate effect on the community being that the two groups refused to meet in the middle at a common ground.

Although there seems to be a discourse about economic differences that has persisted in the Asian American Alliance, there are many students who do not buy into

the difference being based on economics or generation difference alone. Aside from the obvious difference of Asian nationals' experience of being Asian in America in contrast to American born students, many alumni and current community members site workload and burnout as deciding factors. Amir ('00) states,

I don't remember exactly. People were interested in AAA depending on what it was doing. As students moved up in their years at Oberlin, their participation lessened. But that's understandable considering the amount of work that is sometimes involved. I do remember, however, that there did seem to be more overall involvement in AAA during my first and second years. I'm not exactly sure what the decline could be attributed to (Amir interview 2006).

Amir's understanding of the situation like that of Dominick is that people participated based on interest and what the group was fighting for at any given moment. This might include economic equality, but that is not something he could recall. However, Amir seems to think that lessened participation over time was a result in workload. Albert has also observed similar phenomena regarding students involvement tapering and in some cases swinging back and forth like a pendulum.

It often seemed like students would come to a meeting or an event during their first year, get scared and run off, and return later when/if they felt they needed the community to cope with Oberlin or with themselves. People came and went, but the core group stayed the same. Occasionally someone who had been involved in the community to a large degree or even a medium degree would scale back their commitment as the rest of their life became more hectic – since Oberlin is...an academically rigorous college and people seem to have lots of work - but they would sometimes come back once life calmed down a bit. Some people I talked to about their diminishing involvement cited disillusionment, as in they didn't know exactly what the community was trying to accomplish and didn't see how it affected them directly, for example. It's tough man, people be scared of politics (Albert interview 2006).

Indeed Albert sees work as a major contributing factor in students' decision to participate or not at various times, but also reiterates the role politics also plays in this process.

Nina's comments on why she participates less seem at first glance to fit the model that both Amir and Dominick have proposed but might also be partially a case of what Albert talks about in terms of political ambivalence with AAA's agenda.

I think first year students are always the most committed. I was very committed my first year and know there are also other committed students this year. However, as I continue on with my studies at Oberlin, I realize what I'm here for, and what to do. And I can only be responsible for myself. Therefore I continue to keep in contact with AAA and help/attend events but not much more than that (Albert interview 2006).

Nina's stated reason for her own decline in participation indicates that workload increase caused her to prioritize her academics. However, if we look at other statements she has made, it may actually be her personal experience as a minority voice and feelings of being an outsider that influenced her decision to not devote as much time to the group. Whether Nina left because her school work became more demanding or because she felt ostracized is not at issue. However, she may have left because work was more important than spending/wasting her time in an organization she felt did not take her seriously and did not serve her needs.

Now, I want to preface the next part of my analysis by saying that the demands on activists are extremely rigorous in terms of juggling work, activism, and play, as has been amply demonstrated. It is not my intention in offering an alternative reading of Nina's experience to disregard or undermine her agency or her lived experience. I am merely using her liminal positionality to make a theoretical analytical point. Nina's experiences are informative because they lend themselves to the idea that if individuals who have left the group did so for personal reasons relating to marginalization, they may have not wanted to reveal their true purpose for departing. It may have been easier and perfectly acceptable considering the probation rates in the community, for a student to say that they

left to focus on academics. Thus students are enacting a type of stigma management (Goffman 1963). As Goffman states, stigma is “an attribute that is deeply discrediting within a particular social interaction” (1963, 3). Goffman’s research showed that individuals with stigma developed various in which to deal with it, a strategy he calls stigma management. He further elaborated on three different categories of stigma and the various ways in which they are controlled by the afflicted individuals. These he defined as visible, physical deformity, character flaws, and “tribal stigmas,” which are aspects related to race, ethnicity, etc. and are linked to our ideas about “culture.” Types of stigma management include things such as explanation, information control, obfuscation, activism, and the use of humor, and can be implemented in various situations and manners, depending on the nature of the “blemish” (Goffman 1963). In this way, one can consider ideological difference or even deviant identity in so much as it may lead to marginalization within the Asian American activist community, as a form of social stigma in this case, a character flaw. In this situation a student who has left the group as a result of their perceived “character flaw” may choose not to disclose this reason when questioned but rather to say that they needed to concentrate on their studies. If indeed some students are adopting the excuse of workload as a polite way to deal with unwanted inquiries to their withdrawal from the group because they feel stigmatized in the first place, then they are managing stigma on two levels. In the first case, they are managing the original moment of stigmatization by quietly leaving the social group, in the second case they are managing the original stigma and the subsequent stigmatized behavior of leaving by controlling information and concealing the truth. This is something I observed with one of my informants, Tanya. At the beginning of our interview she mentioned she

had taken her second year off because of personal problems. Later, she told me she felt that her identity was under attack and it caused her to have a crisis because she would not just accept what older members of AAA were telling her. In the end, she admitted that during her first year she had brought a white friend to a general meeting who had then been asked to leave because of the safe space policy. The young woman was so distraught that her boyfriend wrote to the campus newspaper and the issue became public. Tanya was very embarrassed and had not been formally introduced to the idea of safe space yet. This incident was traumatic and made her question her own identity because she had always had so many Caucasian friends and did not yet understand why the Asian American Alliance would reject the presence of allies in the space (Tanya interview 2005). In this way, she dealt with the stigma by information control. Later, when she felt she could trust me more, she told me the whole truth of the matter. Although it is interesting that she returned to the organization and again became an active member after her experience, it is even more intriguing to hear her take on how self removal.

According to Tanya, it is not necessarily a problem in terms of retention that students should leave the group, but might actually be considered beneficial for the organization in the long term.

Then, yeah, that's the thing is that you get a lot of first years that come to the initial meeting and then they quickly drop off and you've got a handful, if that, ...I'd say average of about four students, freshman students that end up staying on for longer than the first meeting. And I think that a lot of it is the weeding out thing of just going there and realizing that AAA wasn't what they thought it was, which isn't necessarily a bad thing (Tanya interview 2005)..

Tanya suggests that this type of self removal as not inherently a problem, because it is a process of recognition whereby they are exercising their right to not participate.

Moreover the decision is one that also does not infringe on the organization or make demands that will not or cannot be met. Indeed in terms of stigma management, removal from the group at the beginning versus after social connections have been made is a positive strategy for avoiding stigma altogether. If no social relations are built up, then most likely there will be no inquiries made if a person chooses not to be part of the group. This type of behavior could be considered a conflict avoidance strategy, whereby exiting the group on ideological grounds quietly prevents discomfort for both the dissenting individual and the rest of the community. In addition, it allows the organization to continue on smoothly without having to reassess its priorities, goals, and members. Moreover, in the rare instance that a member is actually ejected or asked to leave the space or organization, there is often backlash because of the blatant exercise of coercive force. As we have discussed elsewhere, minimizing backlash is always the best thing for the party that is targeted by this type of retaliation. In addition, it is far more desirable from the standpoint of the members of the Asian American Alliance that alienation not occur, but as it is almost impossible to prevent, it is often more problematic when it involves the entire organization. Thus, the decision to excuse oneself from the organization quietly because one finds that it is not a space for them (for whatever reason) can be seen on multiple levels to be more beneficial than harmful in most cases. However, despite the positive aspects of this strategy, they can lead to problems such as the maintenance of hegemony and unequal power structures; the continued oppression, suppression, marginalization, and tokenization of different identities; and lastly, ideological stagnation and/or the death of the organization. These are possible outcomes if dissenting opinions are not valued or discussed in the larger group, because there is no

guarantee that the organization, its members, and its leadership will always uphold the high standards and principles for itself that it espouses for the society it is trying to transform.

The ways in which the pros for the individually-mediated participation I discussed above potentially outweigh the cons brings me to a fascinating commonality in all of the accounts my informants have given in regards to retention; they all talk about first years coming in large numbers then steadily dropping off. In addition, many, like Albert, Amir, and Dominick, also discuss the phenomena of individuals who float in and out. These two trends seem to present themselves for analysis. I have so far discussed stigma management and conflict avoidance as two functional approaches to this occurrence, now I would like to suggest a third way of looking at this behavioral pattern taking into account the specificity of the common denominators. In all of the accounts so far it seems that there is an emphasis on first year participation, this speaks to the idea that first years are malleable, because their identities are not solidified. However, the truth of the matter is as Chantal Mouffe reminds us, that identity in general is fluid and is constantly shifting based on the individual's position in relation to others and within situations.

[T]he social agent is constituted by an ensemble of subject positions that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences. The social agent is constructed by a diversity of discourses among which there is no necessary relation but a constant movement of over-determination and displacement. The "identity" of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification (Mouffe 1992; 30).

Assuming that the college experience or at least Oberlin is new to first year students, it is also reasonable to believe that there will be new discourses shaping the identities of incoming freshmen. It is also logical to assume that since the institution and all it has to

offer are also new, that student organizations and clubs have to compete for membership and must therefore do so during their first year before students fill up their schedules with the various types of co- and extracurricular activities that will take up a good portion of their free time. This remains true for the Asian American Alliance as well. Thus, it is students' first year is a critical time for recruiting new generations of A/PA activists into the organization and also educating about the Alliance's purpose, etc., so as to avoid possible campus-wide debates and backlash about safe space, for instance. The exploratory nature of students' first year also affords them a great deal of freedom of movement as they attend various group meetings and events trying to decide where they will join. The fact that they come and go in groups is because it provides a safety net of sorts, whereby an individual does not have to feel nervous in new spaces nor feel socially pressured by members of organizations to stay in meetings or spaces if they feel uncomfortable. Moreover, it offers a support network of equals to counteract any intimidation that the younger student might feel if alone in a room with older students. These large clusters also provide anonymity that will shield them from social awkwardness if they choose to not join a group they visited, because then they are but one of many or first years who passed through but did not put down roots. While this type of system facilitates the agency of individuals in the decision making process of which organizations to join and which meetings to drop in and leave, it can also constrain them if many of the members of a group decide to join a space and while some individuals remain unsure, through peer pressure. Creating ties to a group through the friends one enters with or through new acquaintance is an important mechanism that the Asian American Alliance relies on. When connections are not made, new students do not

perceive that they are included and will not remain involved enough to stay with the organization. As Viola comments,

I'll admit, it hasn't been the best in terms of retention. AAA has a reputation of being too militant or political, which deters people from getting involved in the first place. For those students who are involved initially, we haven't encouraged and fostered that enthusiasm. We just expect new members to do tasks such as posting flyers, contact a faculty, etc. While these tasks are important to help them become familiar with Oberlin politics, it is necessary for upper-classmen to show that they're learning as well. New people feel intimidated because they don't know as much, or are inexperienced. In reality, all students are on the same road to social justice, and that path has been arduous and uncertain (Viola interview 2006).

Viola starts off by reluctantly repeating the dominant ideology that there have been problems in retention. While it is not untrue, it does not take into account alternative views of the situation like the one Tanya had to offer. Next, Viola cites the power of rumors, when she states that the Asian American Alliance has a reputation as militantly political which deters potential members. One would remember that rumors came up in an earlier chapter in relation to perceived institutional surveillance of AAA members and other student activists. She does not discuss how this representation might also work in the Asian American Alliance's favor and attract individuals seeking a radical political organization. In addition, Viola perceives a need to build community with new members and foster the enthusiasm that first years often bring to AAA. This seems to support Nina's suggestion for big sister/big brother programs that are non-hierarchical. Further, it is essential from Viola's viewpoint to educate students and facilitate learning, an idea that encourages equality because in her estimation it makes younger students feel less intimidated and instills confidence in them. This particular response does well to show how the group attempts to cultivate the personal aspects in an individual in order to gain

trust, maintain comfort, and pass on knowledge. It is in this way that the organization itself can empower individuals in accordance with its mission and thus influence members' identity via the way they feel and relate to the Asian American Alliance. Thus, there is a negotiation of positions between the group and the individual at the interpersonal level that must take place in order for new members to take on the tasks and responsibilities of membership.

Here, I would like to explore in greater depth the subject of the advancement of knowledge as institutional memory in the context of organizational education and inclusion in membership. I would argue it is crucial to the survival of the organization because it can act as an emergency manual and repair kit in times of crisis. Moreover, it ensures the continuation of the Asian American Alliance's work regardless of low numbers and the high turnover rate of a four-year institution. As Beatriz ('07) explained to me, "A ...major issue has been lack of communication ...between generations of activists[:] recently graduated seniors leave without setting up the freshman and sophomores," (Beatriz interview, 2006). In this way, students themselves see a need for guidance from older members and look to them to provide it through institutional history in regards to the movement they find themselves engaged in and the organization itself. Beatriz's statement indicates how much students depend on one another to the collective history and to share it with others. It is this collective history which then ties generations of Asian American Alliance members who may have never met, but know they share common experiences if not as Asians in America then at the very least as Asian American activists on Oberlin's campus. One such example is through the quote at the beginning of this chapter, in which the community coordinator identified a problem in the

community that seems to be fit an intergenerational trend. Another example is in the actual lived memory of Tanya, who remembers being a part of one safe space controversy and then aiding students in their efforts to deal with a similar incident almost four years later. It is also how students maintain the continuity of their struggle for institutionalized Asian American Studies; even though many younger students who will be graduating over the next two years were not yet Oberlin students during Professor Charfauros-Mc Daniel's time, she was mentioned in some form in their interviews. Nina, an alumna put similar stress on the need to remember things that happened in the past in order to prevent them from repeating, and in the cases where they inevitably repeat, such as safe space, to allow students to have precedent to guide them.

I'm also thankful that you are doing this project AISHE because these things need to be recorded and I think it's awesome that you are doing it. I mean we are "doomed" to repeat history unless it is understood. This is in part why [Rita], [Mona], [Caroline], [Tanya], and I ... did that "LEARN ABOUT AAA HISTORY" meeting where I think it did help people contextualize AAA and how it was formed, what purpose it had and then what it became....I hope that future Asian Am[erican]s that come to campus, who find themselves embroiled in this identity politics, who want a space to act on it, can find that space in AAA. And I know it may seem like repetitive shit, it may seem like it doesn't matter, but I'll be a voice that says: yea it does. All that above there (see above) I learned, all of that bullshit that I went through has made me wiser I think, and it's made me understand the varying degrees in which people "enter" and "exit" the movement, whatever it is. It's incoherent, but sometimes the chaos breeds the finest activists—and not all the same kinds either. I think I will say that [Rita], [Mona] and I have been...friends, have ridden the whole AAA thing out for four years, have wanted to give up on it ...and at points did and came back...but point is we've emerged as three really different people, all aware and conscious of "the fight" and "the power fucking shit up" and all want to deal with it in different ways (Nina interview 2006).

During her time in a leadership role, Nina was able to recognize a need to "pass down history," and did so as it had been done for her. She is realistic rather than optimistic about the cycles and circles that campus puts activists through, and therefore sees the

handing down of institutional memory as one of the most vital tools that upperclassmen can share with lower classmen. Without it in times of crisis, they might feel isolated or alone, but by having access to the knowledge that the situation is not new but a repeat of the past enables students to look at the problem in a rational manner instead of panic. They can see what Asian American activists did before them, what was effective, what was not, and why. Moreover, they can then apply these historical lessons to their own situations as students did when they fought for the return of the Asian American History position earlier this year.

On a related, but slightly different note, Albert provides another vantage point from which to evaluate the practices of this type of education. He says that starting within the group is a stepping stone for educating beyond the Asian American Alliance and expanding to the larger campus. He talks about how his learning enabled him diffuse situations that commonly arise on the microcosmic level of individual-individual interactions with people outside the organization. He states,

[T]here were a lot of learning and bonding experiences among the community at Oberlin. My awareness of the A/PA community and the issues it was facing/addressing helped me educate my friends on a personal level - if they'd ask "what's the deal with AAA?" I'd be able to answer them in a clear and informed manner - and I did (Albert interview 2006).

So community level engagement with the Asian American Alliance's history thus enables students to feel comfortable enough to face other non-community members when confronted about the group and prevent or resolve conflict. The individual therefore becomes a vehicle for larger transformational processes after they themselves have undergone the same. Again, however, each individual is unique and responds differently to this approach, with some students like Nelly and Tanya, rejecting being told what to

think or do, and resenting the condescension and hierarchy that sometimes comes with it.

As Tanya reflects, in relation to her own resistance to these types of power dynamics,

[T]he first half was a struggle against it because...with AAA and their issues, it was just a very negative experience for me with them really wanting to tell me to do things a certain way and seeing my peer willingly go along with it. And so there were three first years that were elected when I was a first year. One of them went along with it willingly and the other one quit pretty soon after he was elected. I stayed on even though I didn't want to...or I didn't just go along with what they were saying and it was a very isolating thing for me. They didn't invite me to anything so I think whether they meant to or not, they excluded me because I wasn't just going along with it....[A]s a first year, that is the worst experience ever 'cause you go there coming from a predominantly white high school and you're hoping to find a community of Asian Americans and they just will not even include you. And so I also knew a lot...I actually was the one that invited this [white] woman 'cause I didn't know... anything about the organization really other than it was the Asian American Alliance. So I had so many friends that just talked shit about it all the time 'cause they were friends with her. Yeah, it was coming from all sides (Tanya interview 2005).

Tanya describes how she questioned the authority of the other students and was deeply disturbed by what she saw happen to her fellow first-year officers, one who left and another who followed orders and agreed with what she was told unquestioningly. The three had come to the organization in a group as Albert, Amir, Dominick, Tanya and Viola all indicated in their interviews is often the case with first year students. However, while one had left, and another had accepted the group wholeheartedly, Tanya reluctantly stayed. In the end she felt that she was left out of social gatherings because she was not willing to follow the lead. Tanya's high school experiences may have as Dominick and others have suggested, contributed to her unwillingness to accept what she was being told and remained skeptical of types of information that were being disseminated because she could not relate directly to the experiences they referenced. In this way, the manner in which knowledge is presented can influence individuals in negative or positive ways

based on whether the audience can empathize with the experiences that inform it. Borrowing from Foucault, audiences will remain doubtful of the newly introduced concepts that they cannot place in reference to “a framework for the scene of recognition. (Butler 2005, 22). Indeed, according to Judith Butler’s reading of Foucault, “Self-recognition...is constrained in advance by a regime of truth that decides what will and will not be a recognizable form of being.” This regime of truth is only able to limit the subject through a framework which defines who will be able to be recognized or not and how (*Ibid.*, 22). Thus, Tanya’s inability to accept at face value what the older members told her was a result of inaccessibility—it had never been introduced into the regime of truth that informed her identity. This explains why when we first breeched the subject she stated that she felt her identity was being challenged and that “caused [her] to have a crisis.” Another point that comes out of her testimony is that of hegemonic control of knowledge and knowledge production, whereby unequal relations of power were determined by the ideologies that were being taught (Foucault 1994). That is to say that while this type of information sharing seems fairly benign, it actually works as a form of indoctrination, whereby younger members access to institutional histories are mediated by individuals in a position of power by virtue of their authoritative knowledge. Those who do not fully accept dogma are not granted the privileges that their assenting peers are. Tanya’s comment that she “knew a lot” is an assertion of her agency and rejection of the particular types of knowledge that were valued, over other forms. Furthermore, the fact that there was a struggle over ideology but that Tanya was still unaware of safe space makes one question what exactly was prioritized in terms of information sharing, or whether Tanya’s original critical stance excluded her from the spaces and conversations

about safe space. Lastly, Tanya mentions how after the incident with safe space her friends who sympathized with the young woman who was asked to leave the space then attacked it so much in conversation that it became uncomfortable for Tanya. It was a confusing a vulnerable time for Tanya as it is for any first year, but more so because of the stigma she felt after having unwittingly exposing the organization and its members to public criticism and ridicule in addition to the stigma of association that her outraged friends placed on her. In response Tanya exercised the avoidance behavior of removing herself from Asian American Alliance and Oberlin, and engaged in information control of her own upon her return.

As we have discussed in chapters one and two, the model minority stereotype is oppresses Asian American students on the institutional and organizational levels. This chapter has discussed the various problems the myth causes for individuals as a result of its influence on higher order loci. Asian American students endeavor as activists who are fighting for visibility in society and in academia. This has led them to devote their time to the institutionalization of AAS and fighting for the maintenance of structural support systems such as the MRC. In addition they are engaging in campus dialog to educate their peers about the various types of racism Asian Americans face through media (mis-) representation, cultural appropriation, and exotification. They therefore are constantly involved in a multi-pronged effort that is draining, and leave them toiling to balance their academics and other aspects of their lives. They feel a personal need for validation that many other students do not experience because they are rendered invisible both in academia and in society. Asian American student activists consequently must simultaneously try to transform the institution through Asian American Studies classes

and engage the wider campus and society on a more basic level. Moreover, in attempting to achieve these goals, they must also work within and against societal constraints of identity and often struggle to maintain momentum for the movement in an ever-changing institutional environment. The Asian American Alliance's radical politics is dependent on the collective memory of the organization and maintaining leftist ideologies. To that end, the members often find that AAA takes on many of the hegemonic notions of mainstream society in terms of sacrificing individual ideals for those that serve a purpose constructed as "for the good of the many." This in itself creates microcosms of structural hegemony and oppression that can threaten individual Asian American students in subtle psychological ways. The constraints of the larger society force students to walk a dangerous line when they deploy a strategic essentialist group identity, because the members then open themselves up to the possibility of being subjected to unequal macrocosmic power relations and ideologies on the microcosm. Unless students are willing to challenge these systems of inequality within their organization and within their own colonized mentalities, then they will continue to be marginalized and to disempower their fellow Asian Americans. Groups and movements that remain uncritical of their own ideology and hierarchy are doomed to recreate the oppression they attempt to eradicate. Moreover, organizations must be conscious of their own histories as individuals and as a group in order to anticipate, prevent, and/or handle challenges that may reemerge again and again. For the Asian American Alliance, the preservation of institutional memory and its communication to future generations is key to building solidarity networks across generations of activists and to maintaining the stability of the organization. The past also teaches important lessons and offers effective approaches to difficult scenarios such as

fighting for the reinstatement of Asian American Studies positions and dealing with campus backlash in response to safe space. Lastly, understanding the various changes that the Asian American Alliance has undergone over time enables the members to begin thinking critically about why these revisions happened and whether other changes should possibly happen as well.

Chapter 4: Activism and Academia: The Role of Anthropology

The main focus of this project has been combining my own interests of anthropology and activism. As a long-time member of the Asian American Alliance, I have spent hundreds of hours in meetings and discussions with my peers about the pressures and issues facing the activist community. As an anthropology student at a liberal arts institution, I have spent an equally lengthy amount of time in classes and outside lectures learning about how anthropology can make a difference in the communities it serves. The idea of combining activism and academia is one that is not unique to anthropology, nor to Oberlin College. It is the basis of the movements that began in the mid-twentieth century to institutionalize ethnic studies and the various departments and programs that have been created continue that legacy in the work they do. In anthropology specifically, there are notable American anthropologists who have been able to accomplish change and raise awareness about the structural inequality affecting the groups with which they worked. Franz Boas was able to demonstrate that the physical variation within populations is much greater than between populations, and thus caused a reevaluation of discourses on racial difference. Ruth Landes, a student of Boas, wrote an ethnography of Afro-Brazilian communities in Bahia that challenged discriminatory practices in the U.S. in regards to African Americans. Boas, Landes and

many others are thought of as the forerunners in American anthropology and their contributions to the field highlight a revolutionary legacy.

As distinguished lecturer for the 83rd Annual Meeting of the Central States Anthropological Society, Dr. E. Paul Durrenberger of Pennsylvania State University emphasized the role anthropologists play in effecting positive change for the people with whom they work (Durrenberger, 2006). His talk, entitled “Anthropology that Makes a Difference” was an inspiration to me and validation of the project of activist anthropology. He notes that despite the field’s rocky past in terms of its relation to imperialism and colonialism, it has been reflexive of itself and become a discipline that has affected individuals and groups in positive ways. At times, he states, anthropologists have acted on behalf of marginalized peoples as advocates for property and land rights as well as key informants on public policy and legislative reform (*Ibid.*). Other anthropologists such as Larry Nesper, author of *The Walleye War*, have talked about the ways in which anthropologists have been able to aid indigenous peoples in staking legal claims to land, resources, services, etc. in the United States judicial system and in international courts (Nesper 2006). Thus, by virtue of the professional and scholarly authority that local, state, and international governments and organizations place in anthropologists, they are often called upon as expert witnesses. This is an interesting power dynamic, whereby the anthropologist is recognized as a “cultural expert” and depicted as one who can expose absolute truth in an impartial way. However, we in the discipline have come to understand the role of anthropologists as cultural mediators rather than experts; we are able to expose underlying structures and explain cultural phenomena. We also know that there is no one truth or an “authentic” culture; the

presentation of such is a function of power as Foucault (1978; 1994), Scott (1992), Butler (2005), Espiritu (1992), Hall (1997), and many of the other scholars mentioned throughout this thesis have discussed in greater detail. It is precisely this privileged position that we occupy and the ethics that define our discipline that enable anthropologists to begin to deconstruct these inequalities of power and to identify our own positionality in relation to the informants and the various other individuals we work with in doing ethnography and pursuing anthropology. The anthropologist is therefore conscious of power dynamics and the ways in which hegemonies operate to disempower particular individuals and communities. Anthropology then provides a method by which researchers can address these issues by creating a vehicle for marginalized voices to be heard. This in itself is one of the main goals of ethnography. It then follows logically that anthropology and its methodology in conjunction with the ethnographic project provides a novel framework for change. As researchers who follow the participant-observation model, we inevitably become invested in the lives of the informant with which we find ourselves working. Moreover, our discipline stresses the ethical, professional, and personal importance of being responsible to the members of the community, of giving and taking in equal measure. The truth of this connection to a place and its people is even clearer in the case of writing ethnography from the inside, as I have done here. Thus, the very principles of anthropology lend themselves to the project of making a difference in society, whether on the microcosmic or macrocosmic levels.

The work of Boas, Landes, Durrenberger, Nesper, and others speaks volumes to this historical legacy of anthropology as effecting social change and its continuation into the present. However, the ways in which social transformations have taken place have

been constrained by the historical settings in which they occurred. How do the lessons they have to teach apply to this project? Each of these scholars was able to foreground the issues of marginalized individuals. For Boas, this meant immigrants and racial minorities in some of his early work and later almost exclusively Native Americans. In the case of Landes, her work focused on Afro-Brazilians but she was able to relate it back to African Americans in the U.S. context. Durrenberger on the other hand has worked with economically disenfranchised groups such as rural farming populations but also more specifically with African American farmers and longshoremen. Lastly, Nesper has done extensive work with Mohawk peoples in the Great Lakes region. In slight contrast with these other anthropologists, I have found the community I focus on in this paper by virtue of my own identity and my involvement in the Asian American Alliance. As Boas and the others were each able to identify unique issues, problems or aspects of the groups they were studying and did extensive background research, so did I.

Since I was approaching this from an academic angle, I began with an overview of scholarly work in anthropology about Asian American student activist groups. Here I found my first indication of why this was an important population to study on the theoretical level; there are no anthropological articles or books written about Asian American activists. This led me to look elsewhere in the humanities, where I found that the literature focused on Asian Americans, Asian American students, and Asian American activists, and came primarily out of an ethnic studies or Asian American studies context. The dearth of articles and books in anthropology dealing with this particular group is surprising and demonstrates the necessity for studies addressing Asian American student activism. The absence of published scholarly work on student activists

organizing around Asian American issues in general (even outside anthropology), is especially revealing in terms of the work in which my informants engage. If one takes into consideration the ways in which Asian Americans are rendered invisible in society through the model minority stereotype, then it begins to become clear why they are missing from scholarly literature. This study therefore serves as a starting point for addressing the marginality of Asian American student activists in U.S. society and academe. *Ethnography of the Asian American Alliance*, therefore serves a dual purpose within this discourse of anthropology that makes a difference. On the one hand, it provides a legitimized space for student activists' voices and raises awareness in the larger campus community about their issues. In addition, the theoretical framework of anthropology exposes and in some ways moves beyond the structural inequalities and dynamics of power that work together to render Asian Americans and their issues invisible in the first place. Thus, these students, who are working on their own behalf to gain greater visibility, are able to do so through the ethnography itself and are empowered by a project that has previously been disempowering by virtue of ignoring them. In terms of anthropology that makes a difference, I think that this project has been both academically and personally fulfilling precisely because it fits well with the historical struggles of Asian American student activists at Oberlin College; it legitimizes students' experiences and recognizes them without forcing them to conform to hegemonic caricatures of themselves, as Asian Americans, people of color, or student activists. It does not address them in piecemeal fashion but rather holistically, though they may at times experience identity fluidity or fragmentation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Asian American Alliance is a politically active panethnic student group that organizes around issues pertaining to Asian American identity. It began in the decade following the protests that brought about the establishment of the first ethnic studies department in the country in San Francisco State. From its inception, the Alliance has struggled to increase the visibility of Asian Americans on campus. The organization's focus on identity and representation and pursues many of the goals of the larger Asian American Movement as it deals with similar issues in the context of the mainstream United States. Thus, the Asian American Alliance can be seen as a microcosm of higher level pan-Asian American activist organizing.

As Espiritu (1992) and Lowe (1991) have suggested, the formation of these types of panethnic organizations is a strategic move that empowers marginalized groups and communities to gain visibility and to access political power that is otherwise unattainable. In this way the members of such organizations are engaging in a form of counterhegemony (Lowe 1991) that subverts existing power inequalities. However, there are costs as well as benefits to this type of mobilization, which include the alienation of particular groups and individuals and the potential reproduction of existing hegemonic power structures within the group. In addition, it may cause marginalization within the community through identity policing which silences histories and voices that do not conform to the strategically deployed Asian American identity that is being presented (Espiritu 1992; Lowe 1991; Scott 1992). This is also true of the Asian American Alliance and its members as is clear from the testimonies of individuals who have experienced marginalization based on their divergence from the prescribed norms of the group, in

terms of identity, phenotype, class, nationality, and political ideology. Kate, a mixed race Asian American felt that her identity was being questioned when she entered the space of the organization (Kate interview 2006). Nelly and Tanya both felt isolated because they would not accept the political ideas AAA espouses uncritically (Nelly interview 2006; Tanya interview 2005). Still others, international and South Asian students like Rita felt their own histories were not discussed or addressed by the group or through programming (Rita letter 2005). The choice to assert a panethnic group identity is constrained by hegemonic discourses that force the individual to recognize themselves within the boundaries of an essentialized identity that has already been constructed for them (Butler 2005; Foucault 1994). In strategically deploying this type of identity, group members sometimes reinforce stereotypes instead of challenging them (Lowe 1991).

The key to understanding why Asian American student activists are subscribing to essentialized identities even as they try to topple these ideas is their struggles for representation itself. Dhingra (2004) and Prashad (2001) and many others have discussed the effects of the model minority stereotype on Asian Americans and their experiences of racism in the United States. The image of the model minority was originally used to contrast Asian Americans to other minority groups. Whereas during the Civil Rights era mainstream society portrayed African Americans as riotous, Asian Americans were held up as the successful minority/immigrant group that was able to achieve higher levels of education and obtain professional status despite language barriers and other disadvantages. They were also depicted as mild-mannered minorities who were hard-working and self-motivating, in direct contrast to representations of African Americans as underachieving because of laziness and lack of initiative (Prashad 2001; Dhingra 2004).

This picture of Asian Americans was a vehicle for oppression which worked in several ways. On the one hand, as the model minority, Asian Americans were “like white” yet as various scholars point out they could not achieve the same success as their Caucasian coworkers in terms of salary and met a glass ceiling in professional advancement. This vision of success also remains unattainable for a large portion of Asian America who experience high rates of poverty and low rates of scholastic achievement. The model minority thus ignores the economic inequality on various levels within Asian America but specifically afflicting particular populations and groups such as Southeast Asians that arrived in the United States as refugees. The misrepresentation of Asians as achieving higher levels of education and wealth as a result of their demeanor and work ethic causes further problems in terms of isolating them from other groups with whom they share similar experiences of racism, marginalization and disenfranchisement. It thus creates artificial barriers to organizing in solidarity with other minority groups around issues of inequality. The construction of Asian Americans as able to do well on their own informs and supports structurally discriminatory policies in college admissions by denying them the same benefits of affirmative action as other historically marginalized groups. In addition, it ignores the very real lived experiences of Asian Americans dealing with racism. Lastly, the model minority myth has led to the invisibility of Asian American issues and people in mainstream U.S. culture because they are neither Black nor White, and thus occupy a theoretical third space (Ancheta 1998). They remain marginalized but without a voice because American society refuses to recognize them as such and is conceptually unable to acknowledge them outside of the stereotype.

The model minority stereotype that was invented during the Civil Rights Movement continues to pervade society at every level and many Asian American students continue to feel invisible. This is abundantly evident when analyzing the Asian American student activist movement at Oberlin College. One of the main purposes of AAA as an activist organization is the institutionalization of Asian American Studies at the College. This in itself is tied to a need for validation of Asian American experiences and histories through academia. As symptomatic of their invisibility within mainstream U.S. culture, Asian Americans remain marginal to larger discourses on American history and subaltern in other fields of academe as well. Students' articulated need for ethnic studies in San Francisco in 1962 was what Omatsu (1992) describes as an awakening for Asian American activists who saw that scholastic institutions did not teach subject matter about them. For Oberlin student activists the call for Asian American studies courses came on the tail of that movement and were articulated in the same ways, as a need to see faculty that looked like them and taught courses that sounded like their experiences as Americans who had been left out of history and sociology other than as caricatures of foreigners, exotics, or diligent workers.

This desperate search for representation and subaltern voices is what has driven the members of the Asian American Alliance for over three decades. It is a contributing reason for the poor academic performance, stress, identity crises, isolation, and burnout that generation after generation of Asian American student activists have faced. It is also what students and alumni alike have said drives them, what convinces them to set aside coursework to organize co-curricular

conferences and panels, or to write letters instead of papers. It is the personal investment that student activists feel that cause them to go to meetings instead of to bed and to prioritize their activism before other parts of their busy lives and schedules. They are forced to rely on scholarly pursuits outside the classroom because they still struggle to find themselves, their faces and experiences in their textbooks and elsewhere. In addition, they must continuously educate others and contend with essentialized notions of identity in order to find recognition for their voices on campus, in the administration, and abroad.

The sensitive nature of identity politics can be and often is draining on members engaging in them. They can alienate some for the good of the many, and can cause internal conflicts that must be dealt with in some way. These seemingly small conflicts then combine with the other stresses of student activism and cause burnout and poor retention in the community. However, the very principles that alienate can also maintain a continuity of a student organization on an undergraduate campus that sees rapid turnover of its members, or can lead to discussions that transform it and move it in new progressive directions. By exposing the issues of student activists in the Asian American Alliance, one can better understand this imagined and re-imagined community and the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of individuals. Deconstructing the model minority stereotype thus reveals how it has operated as a vehicle for oppression that extends from the larger level of society to academia and into the individual interactions of Asian American students in an activist organization. The field of anthropology itself is implicated in this pervasive influence, so that the existing

literature has up until this point excluded Asian Americans in similar fashion to other scholarly disciplines. The importance of the various lessons that can be learned from this ethnography is how individuals are able to engage with hegemony and subvert it and how anthropology can work with them in the larger project of empowering the marginalized and subaltern and “making a difference.”

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Witmer, K. (letter to Dominick and author, December 15, 2005)

**Appendix A:
Key of
Acronyms**

Appendix A: Key of Acronyms

AAA- Asian American Alliance

AAAS- Association for Asian American Studies

AARC- Asian American Resource Center

AAS- Asian American Studies

AASNOW!- Asian American Studies Now! Committee

A/PA or APA- Asian/Pacific American

A/PACC- Asian/Pacific American Conference Committee

AP/I or API- Asian Pacific Islander

ASATA- Alliance of South Asians Taking Action

CAS- Comparative American Studies

CFC- College Faculty Council

CSA- Chinese Students Association

EPPC- Educational Plans and Procedures Committee

FASA- Filipino American Students Association

ISO- International Students Organization

LGBTQ- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

MRC- Multicultural Resource Center

OKSA- Oberlin Korean Students Association

OKSACC- Oberlin Korean Students Association Conference Committee

POC- People of Color

SASA- South Asian Students Association

TWC- Third World (Dining) Coop(erative)

TWH- Third World House

WRC- Women's Resource Center, now the Edmonia Lewis Center for Women and Transpeople

Appendix B:
Key of
Informants

Appendix B: Key of Informants (Interviewees)

Albert- ('06) student activist, former member and former officer of AAA, former member and former officer of OKSA, former member of APACC, former member of OKSACC. He is a Korean adoptee. He left Oberlin after 9 non-consecutive semesters and will not be returning to finish. He has dropped out of school.

Amir- ('00) former student activist, former officer and member of AAA, APACC, and ASATA.

Beatriz- ('07) student activist, former member of APACC, former officer and current member of AAA studying abroad for one semester. She is also mixed race and holds dual citizenship.

Billy- ('07/08) student activist, former officer and current member of AAA, former officer and former member of CSA, current co-editor of As I Am. He is the son of Taiwanese immigrants.

Caroline- ('05/'06) former student activist, former member and former officer of AAA, former member of APACC, former member of SASA, former member of SAWA, former member of Desi. She is the daughter of immigrants and took time off from Oberlin as an Americorps. volunteer at a South Asian women's shelter.

Charlie- ('02) former student activist, former member of AAA, former member of OKSA, former member of OKSACC. She is mixed race. She has continued her activism after Oberlin, first working with a Korean American activist organization in California and now one in Chicago.

Dominick- ('06), student activist, member and former officer of AAA, member and former officer of APACC, member and officer of FASA, former editor of As I Am, has worked in admissions office, co-editor-in-chief of In Solidarity. He is the son of immigrants and a CAS major.

Gillian- ('74/'75) one of the founding members of AAA, former student activist, former member and former officer of AAA.

Hanna- ('02) former student activist and former community coordinator. She works in a shelter for Korean women.

Jacob- ('07) student activist, current member and former officer of AAA. He is studying abroad for the 2005-2006 academic school year. He is also a Taiwanese international student.

Jessica- ('88) former student activist and former member of AAA, has worked in college admissions, has mentored FASA. She is mixed race.

Kate- ('07) student activist, daughter of a founding member of AAA, former officer and current member of AAA, on academic leave Fall 2005. She is mixed race and a CAS major.

Maria- ('06) student activist, member and former officer of AAA, former member and former officer of APACC, member and former officer of OKSA, former member of OKSACC. She is a Korean adoptee. She is also a student member of EPPC.

Martina- ('07) student activist, member and officer of AAA, member of OKSA former member and former officer of OKSACC. She is also a Korean adoptee.

Minnie- ('03) student activist, former member of AAA, former officer and member of FASA. She is a Shansi returned scholar and mixed race.

Mona- ('05) former student activist, former member of AAA, former member and former officer of FASA, former member and former officer of FASA Symposium, former staff member and former editor of As I Am, former member of the APACC. She is the daughter of immigrants.

Nelly- ('08) student activist, member and former officer of AAA, former member of APACC, member and former officer of CSA.

Nina- ('05) former student activist, former officer and former member of AAA, former member of APACC, former editor of As I Am, former worker in the AARC. She is the daughter of immigrants. She is currently in Vietnam working with women in high risk occupations on a Fulbright scholarship.

Norma- ('07) student activist, former officer and current member of AAA.

Rita- ('05) former student activist, former member and former officer of AAA, former member of SASA, former co-chair of APACC, and formerly and international student. She has worked at the college in multicultural relations.

Tanya- ('03) former student activist, former community coordinator, former member and officer of AAA, former member of APACC, works for National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAF).

Tom- ('04) former student activist, former officer and former member of AAA, former editor of As I Am, founder and former editor-in-chief of In Solidarity, former member of the Shansi (student) committee. He was an international student.

Trinh- ('06) student activist, current member and former officer of AAA, former member of APACC, member of ISO. She is an international student from Vietnam.

Viola- ('04) former student activist, former officer and member of AAA, former officer and member of APACC, is working on starting an MRC minority scholarship. She is a Taiwanese national.

**Appendix C:
Key of Other
Important
Individuals**

Appendix C: Key of Other Important Individuals

Caroline- ('05/'06) former student activist, former member and former officer of AAA, former member of APACC, former member of SASA, former member of SAWA, former member of Desi. She is the daughter of immigrants and took time off from Oberlin as an Americorps volunteer at a South Asian women's shelter.

Dina- ('95) former student activist and former community coordinator, former member of AAA, former member of APACC. She is the daughter of immigrants and older sister of Fred.

Fred- ('03) former student activist, former co-chair and former member of AAA, works with A/PA youth in the inner city. He is the son of immigrants, was a transfer student and served in the reserve. He is also a former member of the Campus Diversity Task Force.

Janet - ('03) former student activist, former member and former officer of AAA, former member and former officer of OKSA, former member of APACC, former member of OKSACC, former AARC student worker.

Jim- ('03/'04) former student activist, former member of AAA. He is a Taiwanese national.

Kevin- former student activist and former community coordinator. He has put on a one-man show and is a contributing author to Kevin Kumashiro's book, *Restoried Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian/Pacific American Activists*.

Phuong- ('07) former student activist, former member of AAA and former member of APACC. She is a mixed race Pacific Islander. She would be the class of 2007 but left when lost financial aid.

Melvin- ('04) former student activist, former member of AAA, former member of FASA, former AARC student worker. He was one of the first CAS majors and played a major role in establishing the program as part of the academic curriculum at Oberlin. He studied away at NYU for one semester in order to complete the major. He continues to work in the field of A/PA activism.

Samina- ('03) former student activist, former member and former officer of AAA, former member of SASA. She was international student who graduated away.

Samona- ('07) student activist, member and officer of AAA, also a member of SASA.

**Appendix D:
Full-Length
Tran-
scriptions**

Appendix D: Full-Length Transcriptions

Albert's Interview (Spring 2006)

AS: Name

AL: Ok Aishe, here ya go... Albert

AS: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

AL: 5.5, including one year out of Oberlin. Bottom line is I spent 9 semesters there, through Fall 2005.

AS: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

AL: Hell no.

AS: What prevented you from graduating earlier?

AL: Short answer? I'm a lazy bum. Long answer? I didn't apply myself the way I should have, lacked personal motivation, was easily distracted from work, and didn't take work seriously. And that was just in the beginning. Later it was a combination of the above factors, insomnia, depression, anger, and video games.

AS: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

AL: I was a member of OKSA from the fall of 2000 on and a member of AAA from the fall of 2001 on. I served as the historian for OKSA in the fall of 2001 and co-chair for the 2003-2004 school year. I was a historian for AAA in the spring of 2003 and a co-secretary for the 2003-2004 school year. I also helped plan and organize any and all OKSA and A/PA conferences that happened during my time at Oberlin, including speaking on panels in the 2002 and 2004 A/PA conferences. I was also a fixture at the MRC for several years running. In short, I was pretty damn involved.

AS: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

AL: well, in no particular order - being taken seriously by the rest of campus, ie being recognized as both a broad community and a collection of smaller communities and getting away from the "all asians look/act alike" view, getting the administration to listen to what we were preaching (although what we were preaching was kinda muddled), the fallout after 9/11, the restructuring of the history and CAS departments, the whole Charforous(sp?) situation, the diversity task force and the need to build up relationships with other POC groups and communities on campus (how are we doing on that by the way?)

AS: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

AL: what are the challenges of all activists? being heard and taken seriously not only by the people who you are activisming against (ie the administration) but also by the people around you, the general community, and making them all listen and care. For our community in particular, differentiating between the various groups within the community, making sure Koreans don't get lumped in with the Chinese and perhaps emphasizing the "American" in "Asian American" for example. When the CFC was meeting to discuss the positions left open by Maeda and DiCenzo, and when one of the professors suggested having David Kelley teach Japanese history in addition to Chinese history, I wanted to throw a shoe at him. to be fair, I think Professor Hogan did too. Things like that. if people don't take you seriously, or ignore you, or deny recognition, what chances do you have of them listening to your agenda? It's all very frustrating. On the other hand, in this latest episode, the A/PA community pulled together beautifully with a broad range of campus (CAS, History, Sociology majors, other POC groups) to protest the lack of retention of Maeda's position. That's one time where I feel our activism actually made a tangible difference both in terms of the CFC's decision (while not satisfactory at least a better one than previously) and how seriously we were taken by everyone on campus. This was before your time, but the 2002 A/PA conference focused on the aftermath of 9/11 and its potential effect on the A/PA community. I thought it was great that we jumped on it quickly and I'd like to think the conference managed to raise awareness of how the attacks and their fallout would affect both East and South Asians.

AS: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

AL: I don't know if I really understand this question. what struggles are you referring to? what struggles do you speak of?

AS: How were they resolved? What was the result?

AL: see above

AS: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

AL: I think there was a lot more internal friction than some might think. There were so many people with so many different backgrounds and so many different agendas for there not to be some clashes. I personally observed a bit more "whitey" bashing than I would like to admit. It hit me because, well, my family is white and I was raised white. There also seemed to be different levels of tolerance, as in what is acceptable as a joke and what is offensive? Maybe different levels of sensitivity would be a better way to put it. These issues could be (and were) resolved by dialogue. Who knew that approaching something and talking to them about something that bothered you could be a painless and constructive process? Someone should really let people know this. Then there's the whole issue of trying to build up relations between college and con students, but it seems

a bit one-sided, because the conservatory students aren't all saying "hey! let's get out of the practice rooms and interact with the college students! screw practicing for my recital!" Maybe not like that, but you know what I mean. Plus the fact that a lot of Asian students in the con are international students and don't really give a fig about Asian-AMERICAN issues because they don't think they apply to them.

AS: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

AL: personal struggles? what about devoting all of your time to A/PA or other POC causes and not having time for sleep or class? we've all been there. Some people get so caught up in their idealism and their desire to make a difference that they don't leave time for the rest of their life. You talk about investments...members of the activist wing of Oberlin's A/PA community are some of the most driven and selfless people I've met and I've seen them move mountains. The flip side is, at what cost? what's the good of devoting all of your time to promoting change in your institution if you don't do anything else and you leave said institution as a result? For me personally, I often felt disillusioned, asking myself if anything we did really mattered and if anyone would listen to us. (personal agenda following) a progressive society can only be so progressive. Stereotypes and racism are too finely ingrained in our consciousness, it's impossible to rid ourselves of them fully, and to some point they'll always exist. What can we do? we have to roll with it. What's the good of education if people don't listen? How do you get them to pay attention in the first place? (end personal agenda) That was something I struggled with, and I think other people did too. In some way, I guess I'm asking "was it worth it?"

AS: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

AL: they could be polarizing - the safe space issue comes to mind, and I don't think that was ever fully resolved. On the other hand, a common commitment to activism could bring people together. Staying up all night drafting an angry letter full of outrage, vitriol, and invective? planning meeting after planning meeting? impromptu late-nite dance parties? there were a lot of learning and bonding experiences among the community at Oberlin. My awareness of the A/PA community and the issues it was facing/addressing helped me educate my friends on a personal level - if they'd ask "what's the deal with AAA?" I'd be able to answer them in a clear and informed manner - and I did.

AS: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

AL: fair to middling. It often seemed like students would come to a meeting or an event during their first year, get scared and run off, and return later when/if they felt they needed the community to cope with Oberlin or with themselves. People came and went, but the core group stayed the same. Occasionally someone who had been involved in the community to a large degree (or even a medium degree) would scale back their commitment as the rest of their life became more hectic - since oberlin is, y'know, an

academically rigorous college and people seem to have lots of work - but they would sometimes come back once life calmed down a bit. Some people I talked to about their diminishing involvement cited disillusionment, as in they didn't know exactly what the community was trying to accomplish and didn't see how it affected them directly, for example. It's tough man, people be scared of politics.

AS: Is there anything else you would like to add?

AL: the Oberlin A/PA community that I was involved in during my time there included some of the most intelligent, inspiring, amazing, infuriating, and warm-hearted people I've ever met. I may not have always agreed with everyone, but I never questioned anyone's commitment or conviction. I miss 'em.

Ok Aishe, there ya go.

AL (2:47:28 AM): I need some clarification on a couple of questions though

AS (2:47:44 AM): okay shoot

AL (2:48:18 AM): specifically, questions 7 and 8

AS (2:48:51 AM): ok

AL (2:49:31 AM): 7) how were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did? what struggles do you speak of?

AS (2:52:46 AM): Well in 6 you listed some issues, some struggles if you will...7 is how were they framed..it's the college's fault that maeda left or it's maeda's fault that he left...idk how did they become public...well usually the as. am. community has its own issues and the rest of campus at large is generally not aware of them...so how did the rest of campus get aware of them if they did at all... how's that?

AL (2:53:13 AM): ok...I guess I can roll with that...did you get my email?

AS (2:54:53 AM): yes i did thank you. you want to send another one or you want to tell me now?

AL (2:57:36 AM): the major issues with campus wide consequences were made public by the college itself or by that bastion of journalistic integrity, the Review (at least it wasn't the grape). More personal or at least seemingly minor issues, not as widely applicable, tended to go unnoticed by the campus as a whole, even after In Solidarity started up, because how many people outside of the POC communities actually read that? their loss. I think that when the A/PA community went public with a concern or a platform it did so as a uniform or majorly uniform front, which is good both for cohesion and for being taken seriously.

Amir's Interview (Spring 2006)

1. Name
 - Amir
2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.
 - Fall of 96 – Spring of 00
3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?
 - Yes.
- a. What prevented you from graduating earlier?
4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?
 - I was involved w/ APA student groups – I was an officer in ASATA, AAA, and treasurer of the APA conference once
5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
 - The push for Asian American Studies was a major focus of what the APA groups I was a part of was working on
 - Maintaining the viability of spaces dedicated to students of color. For example, there was some worry that Third World House would be shut down. Also, there seemed to be a feeling around campus that places like TWH, TWC, etc., were separatist. We wanted to make sure that students of color still had places like these to go to.
 - The hiring of the Dean of Students, I forget his name now, but he was from Dartmouth (I think he's since passed away). There was a concern that he was not going to be sensitive to the needs of students of color, among other things. That was when the students took over the administration building.
6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?
 - I think Oberlin now has an American Studies program, right? My senior year was the year right before it was established. I think its establishment is due in large part to the push by the APA community for Asian American Studies.
7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?
 - The APA conference was a major tool for expressing the need for AA studies. We also had speak-outs, we hosted speakers, coffee houses, demonstrations regarding all the issues discussed above.
8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

- I think the establishment of the American Studies program was a resolution to the push for AA studies. The general feeling I got from APA students was that this was a pretty acceptable solution.
 - Issues regarding TWH and TWC were never really resolved while I was there. The membership continued to dwindle each year and I think fear that one or both would be shut down never abated.
9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?
- there were always issues about how radical/militant people within the POC community should be. This was a big issue and it was always dealt with poorly. I think this is also the reason membership in places like TWH and TWC kept dropping. The way people dealt with these issues seems so silly now. But when you're in the Oberlin bubble, little things become exaggerated. Bad social skills practiced by a small group of people can really bring everyone down.
 - another issue was interaction between international students and American students. International students really didn't seem to care much for the issues American students within groups like ASATA, AAA, etc. were hoping to work on. This division is understandable and I don't think the fact that it existed was that much of a problem.
10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?
- I suppose one struggle was juggling time between activist-related work and school work. Activist work was very time-consuming, and most of the time, students were on their own. There were some administrative resources students could turn to, like the MRC, but not much outside of that.
11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?
- not exactly sure what you mean by this.
12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?
- I don't remember exactly. People were interested in AAA depending on what it was doing. As students moved up in their years at Oberlin, their participation lessened. But that's understandable considering the amount of work that is sometimes involved. I do remember, however, that there did seem to be more overall involvement in AAA during my first and second years. I'm not exactly sure what the decline could be attributed to.
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Beatriz's Interview (Spring 2006)

A: Name

B: Beatriz

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

B: plan on 4

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

B: yes

A: What prevented you from graduating earlier?

B: I had the option to graduate a semester early but I decided that there were still a lot of classes that I wanted to take in various departments.

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

B: I was an "active" member of AAA for 2 years. Conference secretary in 2004 and AAA secretary 2004. I'm also a member of TWC coop. Right now a large part of my time is being devoted to taiko drumming. I lead practices for both the community group and the newly formed youth group. The taiko group is sponsored by the Cleveland JACL and is an important outlet for many Japanese Americans living in the Cleveland area.

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

B: This is such a broad question I don't know where to start. The largest problem in my mind has been retaining professors that teach classes related to AA studies. And in conjunction with this problem getting the college to recognize that these classes are an integral part of not only the CAS major but also the larger college curriculum. A second major issue has been lack of communication between various AA activist organizations on campus and also a lack of communication between generations of activists (recently graduated seniors leave without setting up the freshman and sophomores).

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

B: Protesting the cut of AA history prof.

A: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

B: There was a successful protest in Cox in the fall that brought a lot of attention to the issue.

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

B: I went abroad before I heard back on any of the results.

A: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

B: There have been many internal issues between AAA and Shansi as well as AAA and other AA activist organizations. I don't think that these issues have been resolved but they have been "addressed".

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community? How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

B: I have seen a lot of activists burn out. I think I'm included in this category. Although I'm not an "active" member of AAA I think that a lot of the issues that the organization takes on are important and I'm glad that they are being addressed.

A: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

B: Retention has been terrible which means that the officers do a ridiculous amount of work and usually end up burning out.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

B: No. I did it really fast.

A (4:05:58 PM): thanks so much really!

B (4:06:07 PM): I can do it again and spend more time on it if you want me to

A (4:06:17 PM): let me take a look at it first...how about this though...answer here this clarifying question:

What do you mean by trouble/issues with Shansi? Can you give me a little more detail here?

B (4:14:14 PM): that was in ref to the meetings that we had in 2005 with Anu and Sylvia about possibly forming a committee between AAA and Shansi or having a liaison that would act to communicate between the two groups.

If I recall correctly it was because Shansi was frustrated with AAA for accepting grants to sponsor conferences yet still not supporting their actions.

My knowledge of what the actual conflict was spurred the start of the meetings with Anu and Sylvia is lacking but I remember being extremely frustrated because the meetings never produced any products.

A (4:16:34 PM): okay whatever you can give me is good

B (4:17:25 PM): To this day I'm still not sure why it was so important for AAA to have a liaison to communicate with Shansi through I think the lack of communication between different generations of activists was especially evident in the AAA/Shansi meetings and evident again when we were having problems with AA studies profs being supportive of AAA officers. I can't remember the prof.'s name right now but she's the one that got fired. anyways I think a lot of people in my grade and below had no idea about what had happened but it was obviously important to know in understanding why the profs acted the way they did. Does that make things any clearer?

A (4:23:21 PM): yes. Thank you. You have been most helpful!

Billy's Interview (Spring 2006)

Interview Questions:

1. Name
→ Billy
2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.
→ (fall) 2003-2007 (spring)
3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?
→ Spring of 2007? Most likely Fall of 2007
- b. What prevented you from graduating earlier?
→ Stress, Depression, overload
4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?
→ At first I tried entering CSA first to get a feel of what student organizations were like, then I got pulled into AAA which made me a minion in the A/PA conference of 2004 by default. Unfortunately I suffered academically, not solely on A/PA student orgs, because of the amount of time I had devoted outside of my classes. I was advised to drop the amount of student involvement and so I decided to leave CSA and to reduce the amount of my involvement within the A/PA community.
5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
→ Some of the major issues that I remembered were bringing A/PA studies to Oberlin, Marginalization, Social injustice (Vincent Chin), Political inequalities (Patriot Act, Clear Act), conflict within community boundaries (POC discrimination and Brown on Black crime), Internalized Colonial Minds, Queers

within the POC communities, the “P” in A/PA, Vocational equalities, and a lot more.

In one of our conferences alone, “Changing faces, facing changes, reinforcing our commitment to the A/PA movement,” we had dealt with many major issues. In this conference we re-instated our goals to advocate and the bring a A/PA studies department to Oberlin as well as our position in the recent issues concerning the A/PA community.

6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

→ A lot of the challenges that A/PA activists faced were the trivializing of our cause especially by POCs (The review and the Asian American Historian Position), marginalization, maintaining activism in school, spreading awareness within our communities, and trying to stay sane and awake while working on A/PA activist issues.

On the other hand there is a good amount of work done, but still there’s a lot to be done as well. Among them, I see is that there are a lot of programs out there as well as the issues that we are dealing with now. We’ve helped to bring Comparative American Studies to campus, an Asian American Historian position, Vincent Chin Week, the A/PA Conferences themselves.

7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

→ A lot of the struggles were brought to the MRC or to AAA to be broken down and analyzed to be presented and resolved. A lot of issues that became public were made into panel discussions or through meetings with the dean or the conference.

8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

→ Often the issues would be talked about in AAA meetings or through dialogue with the MRC. As a result there was a better understanding for the most part by the people of these organizations. Afterwards sometimes there would be a second or third talk.

9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

→ Some of the internal issues were marginalization and divisions within the community. Sometimes certain issues would be trivialized in organization while other times there are problems in mobilizing the organization to work or to react.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

→ Boy, a lot of the personal struggles and investments that I saw from within the community were phenomenal. A lot of the people sacrificed a better part of their college life going to as many notable events as possible. Some people joined as

officers to commit their time to structuring and maintaining the tools and support structures provided to them then now.

11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?
→ To some people it created rifts and divides among those that didn't take certain issues seriously while others took them by heart. Some people just didn't really care to deal with the main issues seeing the complexities and difficulties tackling them.
 12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?
→ Retention in the AAA has been troublesome due to the constant breakdowns in commitment in our community members due to the workload that is being put into the organization.
 13. Is there anything else you would like to add?
→ Not at the moment
-

Charlie's Interview (Spring 2006)

1. Name
Charlie

2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.
Fall 1998 – Spring 2002

3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?
Yes

c. What prevented you from graduating earlier?
I needed to fulfill all my requirements

4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?
I was a member of AAA and OKSA from 2000-2002, held a leadership position in the 2000 APIA Biennial Student Conference, helped organize the 2002 APIA Biennial Student Conference and 2001 OKSA Conference and worked on the APIA Heritage Month committees. I also was involved in planning the 2002 post-911 anti-war/pro-immigrant rights march, the Student Senate, the 2002 sexual assault awareness forum, was a resident/member of TWH/TWC in 2000, helped with the Comparative American Studies campaign and pretty much did whatever else I could fit into my schedule.

5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
- Getting APIA Studies

- **The retention of Prof. Antoinette Charfauros-McDaniels**
 - **Attempts by the Administration to restructure/downsize the MRC**
 - **Attempts by the student body to violate AAA "safe space" status**
6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

Challenges:

- **The loss of Profs. Moon-Ho Jung and Prof. Antoinette Charfauros-McDaniels**
- **Avoiding internal/TWH/TWC drama**
- **Enabling diversity of thought/activism within activist circles**

Accomplishments:

- **The establishment of Comparative American Studies**
- **The hiring of Rachel Beverly as MRC Director**
- **The establishment of tenure track APA Studies positions in History & Sociology**
- **Successful programming with Heritage Month & Biennial Conferences**

7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did? **Most of the in-fighting didn't become too public. When Prof. Jung left, there wasn't much protest since he made the decision to leave for personal reasons but when Prof. Charfauros was forced to leave, that really became a mess! AAS got involved by boycotting the school search for her replacement, there were a lot of frantic meetings and discussion among students, staff and faculty as to how we should respond.**

8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

Ultimately the students chose not to pursue action to oppose Prof. Charfauros' firing in order to preserve the 2 tenure track positions. This caused some internal division & a great deal of disappointment on the part of Prof. Charfauros. Eventually AAS ended their boycott, but it was pretty ugly. Prof. Charfauros left the school and other professors were hired in her and Prof. Jung's place.

9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

Internally, there were issues surrounding individual identity development and how individuals chose to manifest those issues. Sometimes there were ideological debates which caused friction/conflict. Sometimes these were interpersonal issues which were resolved between those involved or sometimes they divided the community along ideological lines. Many times, the "minority" voice chose to remove themselves from the community in order to avoid contact/communication with the other involved parties. I don't remember any intervention of other community members to mediate conflicts.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

I witnessed and experienced a lot of identity struggles for the APIA students in terms of queer/trans identity, mixed-race identity, ethnic identities. I think students became personally invested in the struggle for APIA Studies as a way to validate not only the academic legitimacy of such programs but also as a way to validate & understand their own identities as APIAs.

11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

I felt and still feel that the Oberlin activist community did not allow enough diversity of ideology within its circles. Activists who were involved in traditionally non-POC movements or who were in relationships with non-POCs (or even POCs of another race/ethnicity) or who articulated opinions not in keeping with the majority thought were often made to feel inferior, unwelcome, and otherwise alienated. This bred an environment of oppression as far as folks being able to give voice to their opinions/experiences/thoughts and led to much of the interpersonal conflict within the POC/APIA communities.

12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?

There was always a small, but stable number of students who were involved with AAA. I think we always felt that we needed more hands to spread the workload, but at the same time, I also felt that if the organization met students needs, then that was fine. If the organization didn't meet students needs and there was a movement to create/ redefine AAA, then that may have been something that should be considered. In essence, I felt that the organization should reflect and meet the needs of the students instead of becoming an institution out-of-touch with the community it sought to service. At the same time, I continued to work on and encourage programs which were progressive & critical of the status quo because those were the programs I was interested in and I personally felt fine with AAA as it was.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

In the end, I view Oberlin as a good training ground but as someplace that once you leave, you should grow from. The things that were done & said there should not continue to dictate your future lifestyle/choices but should be viewed as experiences that can help inform them. I'm not the same person I was when I graduated from Oberlin but I will always be grateful for the education & training I got when I was a student there.

Dominick's Interview (November 1, 2005)

A: Today is 12:01 on November first. Could you please state your name for the record.

D: Dominick

A: and what year are you?

D: I am a fourth year.

A: What year when will you graduate Oberlin?

D: May 2006.

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

D: Yes.

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

D: I have been involved in Asian American Alliance and the Filipino American Student Association since I was a first year. And sophomore and senior years I have been involved with the planning of the Asian/ Pacific American students' conference.

A: Have you had any leadership positions? What positions have you...been a member? In what capacity?

D: I have been co-historian of the Asian American Alliance first year, staff member of As I Am, the Asian and Pacific Islander literary magazine, ever since I was a first year, editor as a junior and a senior, liason of the Filipino American Student Association as a junior and a senior, co-chair of the Asian American Alliance as a junior, and co-chair of the A/PA conference as a senior.

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

D: The first one when I was a first year was bringing back an A/PA or AA sociology position. You want me to explain that?

A: Yes. Please.

D: As in explain it or just what I feel about it?

A: All. Everything.

D: So there was...pretty much there was miscommunication between the college and national organization and a professor who did not get her tenure leading to trouble within our community and leading to eventual fixing of it. I guess I could put it (distorted mumbling)...

A:...And why did she not get her tenure?

D: She did not get her tenure because she did not complete her dissertation

A: Were you here when this was happening?

D: No, that happened the year before I came.

A: Why didn't she complete her dissertation?

D: She was apparently a big mentor for people in the Asian American community and she had a large course-load, she had to finish her dissertation, and she served as a mentor to the student population. So, all of that put together was a lot of stress.

A: (Move this closer).

D: This is why she did not complete her dissertation.

A: And what happened when she didn't complete her dissertation?

D: When she did not complete her dissertation the college let her go, basically, and when that happened she contacted members of the Association for Asian American Studies to let them know that they probably shouldn't apply for a replacement of her at Oberlin College, leading to what was known as a boycott of Oberlin even though it wasn't an official boycott from the Association itself, many others Asian members did boycott the College.

A: And what was the outcome?

D: My first year members of the Asian American community decided to bring Dana Takagi who was at the time president of the Asian Amer...Association for Asian American Studies to clear up the whole mess. Just...She presented a talk on the state of Asian American studies in the country and also served as someone to, like I said, to clear out any miscommunication and misperceptions of the Association's official stance on letting Ms. Charfauros go. So the boycott, quote unquote boycott was lifted after Dana Takagi came.

A: What... Who lifted it and why?

D: It...it was lifted by Takagi...it...I mean there really wasn't any real boycott but then after coming here she saw the students' needs and the college's needs for an Asian American studies position. So she basically went back to her organization and let them know that we needed someone over here to teach us and it'd be okay to apply for the jobs.

A: And how did this effect students?

D: Well, it caused a big mobilization. Students mobilized heh during times of crisis and this is very evident during the 2002-2003 school year. Students lost a great mentor with Miss Charfauros and were looking for someone else to take her place. So, they went out looking for someone.

A: Were they successful? What was the end result?

D: They ended up... Well, the College wound up hiring Professor Pawan Dhingra, who the students had a hand in choosing.

A: Is that in any way significant, that they had a say in the choosing of this professor?

D: Course. You know at other institutions I don't know where when...

A:...I mean in in terms of Oberlin.

D: In terms of Oberlin yes because of... Well, in terms of Asian American studies in general because Asian American studies and other area studies are so crucial to identity and having someone who you identify with teach you, you get that in an academic context but also relating with your personal level and kind of like relates personal experiences and academics together.

A: And how did this effect community members from what you saw personally and emotionally?

D: The hiring of Professor Dhingra or...the whole process?

A: ...the whole process.

D: Well, the whole process was draining...being a student activist, being part of multiple committees and trying to be good students in general at the institution where you don't always get the support that you would assume you'd get kind of tends to have a hard load on you.

A: And you said this was just the first issue. So, the other issues?

D: In gen...the time I've been here?

A: Yes.

D: One that has been dealt with recently is the use of the rubric of Asian/Pacific American...In 2000, two years before I came, the United States census separated Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders into two groups yet Asian Americans still consider Pacific Islanders to be a...the same part of each other . So, students who come to Oberlin can identify as being Asian American or Pacific Islander yet within the Multicultural Resource Center, which is where many organizations run and students of color as well as

other minority students can get help, the community coordinator's position's name is called Asian/Pacific American Community Coordinator. And within that rubric, Asian and many different Asian groups are subsumed and their voices taken away, but even more so Pacific Islanders are not given a voice and that's an issue that, that's kind of been teetering back and forth. People didn't always pay attention to it but recently it's become an issue that they're looking at and more. So after we hired Professor Dhingra to replace Professor Charfauros, there were two Asian American studies positions at Oberlin College and then two more were added by the English Department, the Asian American Alliance and most of the Asian American student communities didn't really have anything to do with that, it was just kind of cool that we got new people. But in the two positions that we did have a hand in helping get the sociology position and history position... sociology position... he went on leave, he and the history position were supposed to go on leave at the same time, yet the history professor, Daryl Maeda, decided to leave Oberlin for the University of Colorado at Boulder, leaving us without a studies position, an Asian American studies position within history. So, even when we thought we were going to get it back in two years, when he came back, but then we totally lost it. So, that was... that's another issue that we were dealing with this year.

A: Why did he leave? Why did Daryl leave? Do you know?

D: I believe it was just better job offer over at Boulder.

A: Had that been an issue in the past?

D: Yes. Oberlin has trouble retaining faculty of color.

A: And why do you think that is?

D: Lack of support system for faculty of color.

A: What do you mean?

D: I don't know. Well, for one, area studies aren't always received as being legitimate in an academic arena...

A: (*Sneeze*)

D: Bless you.

A: (*Sneeze*)

D: Bless you.

A: (*Sneeze*) Thank you. (*Sneeze*)

D: Bless you.

A: Thank you.

D: What did I say?

A: You were saying that one, Area Studies are not always seen as being legitimate in an academic...arena.

D: ...Arena. Are we starting again? Same word. ...And therefore, you know, even though they're you know all colleagues all professors, these certain professors might not be seen as on the same level as people in philosophy, history, biology etc.

A: So it's not...there're not being supported by the administration or by their other, by fellow faculty members?

D: Administration actually seems to have support for Asian American studies, I feel.

A: How so?

D: Their...the adminis...well at least the president seems like she supports if not wholeheartedly at least very highly and partially...is that a word? Scratch that. The president has support for Asian American studies at Oberlin and she has shown support for the community even though it might not be in the capacity that students want it to be at, nonetheless support.

A: What kind of support has she shown in...in your estimation?

D: One for one wanting to work with Dana Takagi when she came to declare the whole mess of the supposed boycott. For one it's bad P.R. for the school, but also there are other things she could have been taking care of and she actually did care to meet with this figurehead of Asian American studies and did help clear up that mess.

A: Other than the ones you have already mentioned, what were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA activists during your time? They don't have to be major ones. The can be small ones.

D: Accomplishments?

A: Yes...or even challenges, just things that they haven't even worked out yet.

D: One challenge would be involvement of students within the community even though students may identify as being Asian American and/or Pacific Islander or Asian.

A: Do you mean getting them involved in...

D: Getting them involved in the activist community on campus or even...no, no scratch that...just the activist community. That's one.

A: And do you think that is a crisis of engagement, that you're/your organization is not engaging them or do you consider that something of/on their part they do not want to get involved in.

D: Well I wouldn't so much call it a crisis. I mean...

A: Sorry, my word not yours.

D: Yes. Ah! The Asians are not coming! I believe that the organization has tried its best to engage students of all backgrounds, not just people within the community to participate in events and dealings that the organization has. Sometimes it just seems that it is a lack of student interest, other times it seems that it's personal, that students have identity issues that they don't know how to deal with. One big issue related to this is in addition the issue of mixed race and who belongs in the space of the Asian American activist community and who doesn't and while I personally feel anyone who identifies as being Asian or Asian American or Pacific Islander, Pacific Islander American has a space in the Asian American Alliance or other Asian American activist communities. But others in the past have felt that if you don't look a certain way, act a certain way that you do not have a place.

A: So, how's the organization dealt with that since you've been here? How has the organization as a whole either reached out to particular groups or purposefully ignored them or not addressed their issues?

D: Well the unwritten rule of the Asian American Alliance is that it's a safe space, meaning it's a space only for people of Asian American and apparently also Pacific Islander communities.

A: So a self-selecting group?

D: In a way. Like I said, it's technically for anyone of that community. So I guess you could say self-selecting, I don't know because it's not necessarily like "You, you, you, and not you. You're not Asian enough." Although in the past that's how it's worked.

A: So, in recent years...

D: ...In recent years

A: ...People haven't called out other people and said you don't belong.

D: Yes, it has happened. I wasn't present at the moments that it were...it did happen. You might want to interview other people for that, but it did it has happened and that's an issue the community has to deal with, 'cause you know falling in the same into the same stereotypes that the majority community has of us. Basing Asian-ness on phenotype doesn't necessarily work very well.

A: So basically, it seems to be overwhelmingly mixed race people who do not feel they fit into Asian American Alliance?

D: Mixed race people, people who did not maybe did not grow up in a low-income community, possibly people who did not grow up in an immigrant family or within an Asian American or Asian neighborhood, the activists are...or I should say the perceived rhetoric of the Asian American Alliance is having a specific identity, as an Asian American, someone who is oppressed, low-income, had to deal with a lot of struggle and some who are Asian American didn't necessarily have to deal with too much. It's fine but this space is not for them because it's for...

A: So it's only for Asian Americans?

D: Yes. As I said it's a safe space.

A: So it's not...

D: Well, Asian Americans, Asians, it's people who share the experience of being Asian in America. At first the organization was primarily for East Asian Americans, it expanded its definition in part to have people of South Asian descent, Southeast Asian descent, then it added Pacific Islanders so the organization has grown in its definition of who it accepts.

A: And since then has the constituency increased in the numbers of South Asians who've attended and Pacific Islanders or have you seen no Pacific Islanders coming in?

D: From what I know there's been one specific Pacific Islander who came then transferred. In terms of South Asians, from what I understand the involvement has been mixed, sometimes there's been many, sometimes there's been few. And but that doesn't mean that even though there's there are few who really don't hold any positions or leadership roles, there have been three South Asian women who have all been co-chairs in the last seven years; two South Asian American, one international. So...

A: Are there any other challenges or accomplishments that you'd like to talk about? No? Ok. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did? These various struggles.

D: The media is one outlet.

A: What do you mean by media?

D: Media being newspapers.

A: The campus newspapers?

D: Campus newspapers. For one, The Oberlin Review—letters being written to the Review, the formation of In Solidarity.

A: What is?

D: The Student of Color newspaper on campus.

A: When was that formed?

D: That was formed in 2003, the fall of 2003, by a former co-chair of the Asian American Alliance, Thomas, who felt that The Oberlin Review was not covering student of Color issues so we needed our own outlet, causing the formation of In Solidarity, a joint effort for many communities of color. Also, As I Am has served as an outlet although it is ignorant and PLLT! As I Am is a literary and arts magazine but it started as kind of an underground-style activist 'zine. So while people put their creative pieces in it also has a lot of criticism and radical expression regarding issues that pretty much deal with on-campus.

A: Only on campus?

D: And the world and the country in general, but like since you're asking about campus, they do talk about campus a lot and also one letter that went out to The Review also went out to the Association for Asian American Studies and was printed in the AAAS newsletter so I guess ALL the members saw what we had to say about that issue back then.

A: How were these issues resolved and what was the end result? If they had, if they had an end result. This may not apply.

D: Well, probably shouldn't...I'm not going to talk about any specific issue but the fact that there're student activists proves that the student activist communities that have activism is what cause things to get done. Activism probably, letter writing, petitioning, bake sales...

A: How do bake sales?

D: Things like bake sales are used for publicity. Maybe bake sales isn't the best example but getting the word out through displays. Okay here's a specific example...would be the arch.

A: The arch?

D: Oh the arch... Shanxi... Well it's not the Shansi. The memorial arch on Tappan Square was put up. Let someone else talk about the arch.

A: Well, no one else has told me about the arch. (whispers) Bastards! (laughs).

D: The memorial arch was put up in memory not in commemoration in memory. It is the same thing, isn't it?

A: Yes.

D: Did you get all that? Okay. Starting over. The memorial arch was placed in Tappan Square in memory of a number of Oberlin graduates who went over to Shanxi, China as missionaries. They were massacred and killed because they were caught in the middle of the boxer rebellion. They, their families, their dog maybe...regardless, they were killed and the national organization that they went with which I believe was ABCFM.

A: ABCFM?

D: American-Born Christian I forgot.

A: Okay.

D: I'll look it up for you. Well, they devoted the arch to the college and I don't know why they started but the college of Arts used the arch for the center for commencement exercises.

A: So doesn't that mean graduation?

D: Yes ma'am. And students who walk through the arch vary in perception. However, in the late sixties/early seventies, through radical movements, through the Vietnam War, etc. students began to see the arch as a symbol of imperialism and stopped walking through the arch. Being problematic so that they had to walk around the arch in protest of what it represented. Walking around the arch symbolized recognizing alternative histories, not just the one mainstream history and since I've been here students have right before commencement put up displays in A-level of Mudd Library explaining what the Arch is, what the boxer rebellion was, why the arch represents imperialism.

A: And how does this relate back to AAA and Asian American students?

D: Asian American students do stuff. (Laughs). I do know but it...you know. It's coming... Brief response?

A: Sure. Give me a sec. (Clicking) Am I allowed to record this again? My question is how does the Shansi arch...what does it have to do with Asian American Alliance and Asian American students?

D: Well Asian American students are in and Asian American Alliance are the main educators regarding the whole issue. As I said they're the ones who put up the display in Mudd that's why they have to do with the issue. And recently there was this dialog between Shansi and the Asian American students within the Asian American Alliance.

A: Shanxi, China?

D: Shansi, the Oberlin, the Oberlin Shansi, the organization that the arch is often connected with, even though the arch doesn't belong to them. You just represented it as the Shansi arch, but it's the memorial arch. Shansi's name is connected with it because the people that came, the people that it's dedicated to came from what was an organization that is now Oberlin Shansi but this arch does not belong to Shansi. It was donated by people who sent it or whatever that organization is. Did I answer that question?

A: I guess so. And how were these issues resolved and what was the result? You got into the memorial arch. You said before that activism broadly, letter writing, petitioning, bake sales, publicity, displays, and then you went into the arch. Is there more you want to elaborate on?

D: Well, well in terms of the arch, results, the results of dialog, one of the reasons that the Asian American Alliance does this and does all the stuff it does is because there simply is no voice for Asian American students on campus. Well, there's a voice, but it's provided by activist groups such as the Asian American Alliance. Issues that...

A: So is it a wider campus dialog or is it an internal dialog between AAA and particular, Shansi or other administrative groups, or...

D: It's all of them. AAA serves as the voice for...

A: Go head.

D: Leader tape is done?

A: Hm?

D: Leader...

A: Yeah.

D: Asian Americans Asian American students...

A: Are the voice...

D: Voice. Asian American Alliance is the voice of Asian American students activist students on campus. So, it serves to communicate to other students, the campus in general, the administration, student groups...

A: Has there...

D: Other groups...

A: Been any issue, ever been any issue where people have decided the Asian American Alliance doesn't represent me? So they should shut up or...

D: Yes. As I said you know not everyone feels that AAA's a space for them and AAA, while AAA serves as a...I said that it serves as a voice of the Asian American activist community. I...at least I don't think I tried...at least I don't think I said that it's a voice of THE Asian American community. It's problematic to say that there's AN Asian American community on campus because that just has so many implications and so many different things. So, I guess that often times people see these groups as being the sole voice thus relating ALL Asian Americans to the Asian American Alliance whereas only a few key people are involved in it and only those few people say that it is their voice. But because of miscommunication it's perceived as being for everyone. It is for everyone but it is perceived as being the voice of everyone.

A: Okay. Moving on...What were some of the...unless you have more to say...okay. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved or addressed? This is within the community exactly.

D: One would be, I guess one would be the issue of multiracial people. I guess it was resolved because people of multiethnic descent became leaders of the organization and thus those issues came to the forefront.

A: How did they come to the forefront?

D: 'Cause the leaders brought them there.

A: How so?

D: Well, being that they were of multiethnic descent and saw that the/those issues weren't being discussed to the extent they...that the leaders thought they should be, they used the organization as an outlet to organize panels etc., to have those issues discussed.

A: And are these for the whole community or for/just for AAA?

D: The issues...the panels are for the whole community but internal dialog has to happen within AAA for...I mean obviously organization of the panel within the community before it could be displayed to everyone else. And I guess broader than that issue's something that's always dealt with is "What is AAA and who do they serve and why are they here?" There's always this introspection, very exhaustive introspection of oh, what the organization is for and who it serves. And that's an ongoing issue that has to be resolved and I don't even know if it can be resolved. The use of "Asian American" and now "Asian/Pacific American" is so problematic anyway that people will always feel left out or too much a part of or never a part of or only partly a part of that dialog will just have to keep going.

A: What about minorities within minorities? How are they addressed?

D: Again, events, discussion; i.e. queer people within the A/PA community, oh, Asian American community and that...what would make that group happy?

A: Sure.

D: Okay. In the same way, in a sense, you could say that multiracial students are a minority within a minority because, well...

A: Have queer people felt comfortable in the community at all times? With the, when they were in AAA...

D: I can't answer that directly. I mean queer people I have known have felt comfortable in the space.

A: And has AAA addressed it internally? Issues queer issues of queerness in the A/PA community? Had internal dialogs?

D: From what I remember there haven't been actual internal dialogs but there have been movements to bring speakers to campus for the whole community to address issues.

A: And why do you think that was different than say the multiracial, multiethnic issue?

D: I don't know. I mean they deal with different things.

A: Okay.

D: That's best.

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

D: Well, people come in with different agendas, as students tend to do with...as Oberlin individuals individualists at this school people tend to do. There've been people who were vying more for multiracial/Hapa issues. Others more queer issues, others South Asian issues, others Pacific Islander issues, I mean everyone comes in with some...comes in or into learning about something and wants to make their issues not the most prominent but you know important within the activist organization...

A: To make their voice heard.

D: Yes.

A: To gain visibility.

D: Mmhm. And you know I can't say that any of them have ever been silenced. AAA serves as an open forum so everyone gets their voice heard even though we might not be able to bring speakers of all those things on campus or have internal dialogs about all of them. You know it's all heard.

A: So they have been very effective, AAA has been very effective in being a forum, an open forum for its members to air grievances and other things?

D: Yes.

A: What about international students? How have they been incorporated into it?

D: Well recently international students...students of Asian descent...

A: Sorry, I just thought about that and I was on the last question.

D: Students of Asian descent although not of Asian American descent have been joining the organization, as I said the organization was originally founded for Asian Americans but then people started realizing that whether they were Asian national or Asian American, you can be treated the same way on the street. So, there were shared experiences between international students, people from Asia, and Asian American people from the United States. So, it became a place for them because of that shared experience.

A: So it's organizing around a shared racialization within a United States context?

D: In terms of that specific issue, but then people with that are international students also do get into, become interested in actual Asian American issues also. That is the primary purpose of our organization I feel and the way it should be the primary focus of the organization.

A: And did that happen organically or did AAA start recruiting these people?

D: I feel like it happened organically. I mean it wasn't like, "Come, international students, come." It was more you worked with the same people in different places and they become interested in the organization. Man, I believe the listserv for the community does not just involve Asian Americans it involves anyone who identifies as having Asian or Pacific Islander blood. So, no matter where you're from, you get the emails.

A: Going back to the question I asked most recently which is personal struggles and investments, is there anything else you want to add to that?

D: No.

A: Okay. Sorry, just a few more. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know, personally, like on the emotional level, like everyday going home?

D: It's draining. But that's what you go to Oberlin for.

A: And how does the fact that it's draining affect members or people that you've known, that you're close to?

D: It causes...the draining, it causes burnout but since the activist community is voluntary, it definitely shows heart within people who do it so while we might complain that it's draining and we're burnt out and all that kind of stuff, we know that it's important and that we care about it....

A: Have people left...?

D: It makes us stronger....Well, yeah. You can only do so much so your heart couldn't believe it. Your heart could fail. Okay that's not the proper way to say it. Your heart doesn't really fail. They don't get heart attacks from being activists. Well, not physical ones.

A: Has this caused problems in retention? Has it...How has this affected the leadership of the community? How's this effected, has a hand in these times of burnout? How's it affected members? Has there been any correlation?

D: Yes. Burnout does cause people to leave thus making retention rate low.

A: And does AAA have a problem with retention?

D: AAA has a problem with membership in general, as we discussed earlier, most of them a, who doesn't feel they belong, doesn't feel they belong...

A: And you feel that's an issue of demographics and people...

D: That's an issue of demographics...

A: ...feeling that the space is theirs...

D: ...demographics and that's...that's true...but then when you have so few people doing all the work then certain people will burnout faster, that leads to less which is why commonly recruitment is always about an issue that AAA has to deal with. It goes through ebbs and flows depending on what's going on, what kind of issues are effecting the community, sometimes there'll be a lot more because there's so much more to fight for, so much more that we have to work for that there'll be this boom in whose joining the organization and what's going on and when there's lulls and people don't feel it's really important that issues be discussed and things will drop. It just depends on what's going on.

A: And are there other problems effecting the population...that is joining Oberlin AAA or have there been...

D: Well, see all of the racial and ethnic demographics have remained pretty much the same or grown. Asian Americans are the largest minority group on campus. Asians and Asian Americans together and I believe Pacific Islanders are also included in that specific... Yet the people of lower income, people of immigrant communities grew up with certain experiences that AAA has said to have...is said to fight for, etc. are not at the premium. Does that make sense? Are not the people that are being accepted anymore. They are being accepted but...

A: ...to Oberlin or in the...?

D: To Oberlin, the demographics of people who are being accepted are more upper middle and higher class in terms of general economic background...

A: And how has that effected...?

D: Well, I can't say specifically how it's affected the organization. I mean people are coming in with different ideas and different agendas than what the organization has fought for in the past and others just don't feel that it's a space that they need because they didn't have that experience growing up because of their more privileged background. So.

A: Here's a question. What is the worst thing that has come out of the burnout for individuals in AAA? What are the worst impacts of it? And the mild affects? If you gave me a scale from 1 to 10, what's 10 on the burnout scale?

D: Ten on the burnout scale is having to fail out of school or...

A: And has this happened?

D: I believe so. If not failing out of school, you know, failing classes and having to stay longer or take extra classes the next semester.

A: And is this something that just effects AAA's activist community?

D: This is activism in general. Students everywhere, no matter where you are, when you get involved, you get over-involved.

A: What's one on the burnout scale?

D: Missing lunch.

A: Once? Twice? Everyday?

D: (Laughs.) Once.

A: And what's like midrange, five?

D: No sleep.

A: For how long?

D: Let's say half a week.

A: Hmm. Interesting. So, is there anything else you would like to add?

D: No.

A: You sure?

D: Yes.

A: Nothing else you'd like me to know about AAA? Issues or...?

D: No..

A: Okay. Thank you very much. (End recording).

Gillian's Interview (March 22, 2006)

Hi Aishe

I wrote answers as I read questions so you'll see that for some there are no answers because I effectively answered the question already.

I hope this is helpful.

Gillian

1. Name

Gillian

2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

1971-1975 I finished in December 1974 and graduated with the class of 1975

3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?

Yes

d. What prevented you from graduating earlier?

4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

AAA was just forming in 1971-72 when I arrived on campus. We had our founding meeting that fall. Donna was a senior and she took me under her wing (she's at NYU now as a senior administrator working directly for the president). Another student (male - last name Lee?) also mentored me and he was doing oral histories with Chinese immigrants. One vacation he came to my home in NYC and interviewed my parents. As a result of these friendships I was just solidly active all my 7 semesters at Oberlin. Tom Hibino was the APA coordinator in the years I was at Oberlin. I was an active member, president for a brief time (probably less than a full year) and helped convene the organization in 1972-73.

5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

Our total list of identified AA's was around 35. The identification of potential student members was largely done by last name in an era when very few women retained their original last names after marriage. The goal was to get as many of those people involved as possible. We were mostly concerned about distinguishing APA issues from East Asian studies. You have to recall that the major texts from Berkeley were just being published about this time and Asian American studies was just getting started at major institutions in CA. Almost all of us took Chinese or Japanese language and most of us were first generation born in the US. The very few students who were biracial were generally not involved and it was hard to know how to make an organization that could include foreign born students from Hong Kong and Taiwan, students who were from rural parts of the south and who did not identify with a community, students from NYC who were activists, and biracial students who were not easily identified by name. We mostly gathered around food and cooking for talk and community.

6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

We populated college committees. I sat on the budget review committee of the college in 1973-74 and along with other minority students helped ensure that we weren't lost in the budget crisis of the day. We helped support the creation of the first Third World Dorm (Baldwin) which opened in 1974-75. Until then South Hall was the only theme dorm based on heritage and it was the African Heritage House. At graduation we refused to walk through the arch and stood with our backs to the speakers as we moved in our places (the class of 1975 opted NOT to have a yearbook or to wear caps and gowns). We were visible enough that I recall being invited to dine with the Trustees once during my years as a student. Because China was closed to the US for study, the Shansi program was in Taiwan in those days and it was a struggle to clearly state why Asian American students were questioning missionary work and the historic roots of the program.

7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did? I'm not sure that you would find any of our struggles in the Oberlin Review or other publications of the day. We were a very small minority well over shadowed by the African American community. People who were our friends who were not APA

knew about our issues, but I'm not sure how much we knew what we were starting or where it would go.

8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

I think the most amazing thing is that the AAA survived and that Donna and I returned in 1992 for a 20 year anniversary. Resolved is not a word I would use. Everything was just a small step on the way to educating others, ourselves, and making Oberlin a more conscious place for Asian Americans. The concept of APA was not yet in the language or evolution of Asian American ideas. The fact that the Shansi program continues is an indicator that things don't really 'resolve.'

9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

See above – it was really just getting together. I think the biggest rift was economic. There were a fewer students who were from financially needy backgrounds and they really resented those who were not on financial aid. In those days many fewer students were on financial aid and the differences between students who worked and those who didn't have to be a bigger issue in general on campus. The economic rift was greater than the American born – foreign born rift and bigger than even country of origin.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

I left Oberlin thinking I was pretty radical. When I arrived at Stanford in 1975 I found that even in CA I was pretty radical. So I think it helped me establish myself as an activist.

12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

14. How was AAA formed? What was its purpose? Whom did it serve?

I think it's hard for students today to understand how a mere 35 students can create an organization that is racially distinct. We struggled with not wanting the number of white students who were Asian Studies majors overwhelm those of us who were the Asian Americans. We did not distinguish between SE Asians, Indians, and East Asians – there were too few of us – and we included foreign born Asians. I remember that the student teachers from Taiwan who lived in the Asia House apartments and taught Chinese thought we were interesting because they didn't get why racial identity was an issue at all. We wanted to highlight the issues relevant to Asian Americans which were largely immigrant issues. However, since most of our parents were college educated and well off it seemed a bit of a disconnect – hence the rift with students who really were struggling with being the children of poor non-English speaking immigrants.

15. What were the demographics of the original members?
 16. What were some of the major issues that were taken into consideration at its formation?
 17. How did the Midwest Asian/Pacific American Conference come about?
I really don't remember, but I don't think it was hosted by Oberlin until after I left.
 18. Is there anything else you would like to add about the inception and development of the Asian American Alliance?
-

Jacob's Interview (Spring 2006)

1. Name
 - a. Jacob
2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.
 - b. 3 Year, May 2007
3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?
 - c. no
- e. What prevented you from graduating earlier?
 - a. Chose to study abroad over graduating a semester early
4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?
 - d. AAA, AsIAM
5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
 - e. To be honest, I really don't know at this point.
6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?
 - f. Students are very active with issues such as "safe space" – or professor leaving...
7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?
 - g. A lot of writing in the school newspaper I remembered
8. How were they resolved? What was the result?
 - h. Was it ever resolved completely? I don't remember actually.
9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?
 - i. none
10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?
 - j. none
11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?
 - k. none
12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?
 - l. Fairly steady
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Hi Aishe,

This is probably the worst respond you are getting. I sincerely apologize. I really have been away for too long to have a clear idea on what's happening/happened exactly with AAA. (Ah, don't hit me). Since the majority of the questions focus on "struggles" + I personally do not like to get myself involved in chaotic events and have been lucky to find myself not in those situations, I really cannot provide detailed answer to your questions.

Jacob

Jessica's Interviewee (March 23, 2006)

A: Name

J: Jessica

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

J: 4 years grad 1988

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate? What prevented you from graduating earlier?

J:

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

J: From 1984-1988 was involved with AAA at the time it was really the only organized APA group on campus.

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

J: During that time the bulk of our 1986 and 1988 years were spent organizing conferences. Other major activities were teaching the "Intro. To APA experience" EXCO class. In 1988 there appeared to be critical mass of Korean American students and they began to organize and discuss the creation of a Korean American student organization. Also that year there was anti-Asian graffiti on Alevel which ignited discussion and a KKK banner hung from Wilder. The entire campus got involved in a series of campus-wide and student-org. wide activities.

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

J: Always present was the concern that first years recruited were less involved than the upper class students, but of course that's the perception because by sopho or junior year, folks were involved.

A: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

J: Much of what we did was within AAA, but the conferences and larger programs were open to the entire campus.

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

J:

A: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

J: International Asians vs. Asian American experience. More APA faculty and staff? Would creating separate Asian student organizations take away from AAA? Active vs. non-active students. Who is more socially aware and active than others? Was AAA getting too political? Should we be a social organization? AAA was too social and should be more political...

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

J: Personal struggles? Friends and allies who were they? Could I get my school work done?

A: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

J: During conference times, we were exhausted, not doing our school work, focusing only on what we needed to get done.

A: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

J: I don't know.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Kate's Interview (Fall 2005)

aishe, answers below, good luck, lemme know if you need anything else.
they're kinda rushed answers so just tell me if you want me to write
them out in complete sentences for quoting purposes.
love kate

On Nov 9, 2005, at 6:25 PM, Ashley Suarez wrote:

> Okay, so here we go. Please use explanation of acronyms the first time
> you use them just as if I didn't know what I you were talking about,
> and
> please be detailed because it's about hearing your version/side of the
> history. Thanks so much i love you both tons.
> -Aishe

A: Name

K: Kate

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

K: Currently five semesters, four on campus, on track to graduate spring 2007.

A. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

K: member of AAA for one semester (spring 2005), submitted to AsiAm fall 2004, spring 2005 wrote for In Solidarity spring 2005 member of TWC ever semester at Oberlin. I haven't been all that involved in AAA because when I went to the first meeting of my first semester of my first year at Oberlin, someone stood up and asked all of the self-identified allies and non-Asians to leave the room. While I stayed, because I felt like I identified as an Asian American, it definitely made me question my whiteness. Then a few weeks later I went to a meeting for the formation of In Solidarity because they were looking for writers Of Color and I am a Creative Writing major who is also Of Color. But at the meeting the person in charge asked me to leave because he said it was only for People of Color and said I didn't look like I was of Color. He asked me to identify myself and when I said I was Chinese American, he didn't believe me. That was the end of my involvement in the AAcommunity at Oberlin for a year and a half, until my sophomore year room mate convinced me to go to a meeting in spring 2005, where I became active again for that semester.

A: What do you see as some of the major of the A/PA community during your time here?

K: I don't get this question. Maybe reword it and ask me again?

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

K: Fighting to keep the AAhistory position that was filled by Daryl Maeda, trying to maintain positive relations between Shansi and AAA, trying to maintain positive relations between APA faculty and students, trying to maintain positive relations between AAA and SASA, the reenactment of the Taiping Rebellion, too many to name...

A: How were these struggles expressed/ how did they become public, if they did?

K: Rumors are the devil, and a lot of shit got passed around that way. A lot of rumors were published in The Oberlin Review, as well.

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

K: Lots of lengthy meetings, lots of emergency meetings at TWC because it is a safe space for POCs.

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

K: There were/are a lot of identity problems between Asian Americans of mixed race, and those who are "100% APA" I feel like a lot of the very involved, very activist members of the APA community often find themselves making a hard decision between whether to dedicate themselves to AAA or In Solidarity or varsity sports or an instrument or a lover or running TWC or... Basically, we're "running" a good portion of the of color community and we have a hard time balancing our commitments

A: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

K: My racial identity was attacked a lot during my first year of college and it not only hurt my self esteem but it made me feel estranged from the community.

A: How has retention been over the past 5 years within AAA?

K: dunno, i've only been involved for one semester.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

K: Yes. I really don't like [thomas] because of the way he thought he knew everything and could save the world singlehandedly. sometimes i wish i'd had a mentor in the community to talk to about it because he really damaged my self identity.

oh, and my mom was a member of AAA during its first years in the 1970s and they pretty much had all the same problems, except instead of it being between full blood APAs and mixed race APAs, it was between the first and second generation APAs.

Maria's Interview (Spring 2006)

A (12:31:49 AM): can I interview you?
M (12:31:55 AM): yes you may
A (12:32:02 AM): please state your name for the record
M (12:32:09 AM): Maria
A (12:32:28 AM): how many years were you a student at Oberlin when will you graduate?
M (12:32:51 AM): this is my fourth year but I spent all of last year in Korea
M (12:33:01 AM): hopefully I'll be graduating in December of this year
A (12:33:16 AM): is this the year (time) you intended to graduate?
M (12:33:40 AM): no. I didn't do a good job planning for my math major
M (12:33:46 AM): also I have no direction in my life
A (12:34:13 AM): okay. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the a/pa community?
M (12:34:41 AM): hmm. I was treasurer of AAA one year (my freshman year) and I was co-char of OKSA my sophomore year...
M (12:35:13 AM): oh yeah, A/PA conference co-chair with [Dominick]
M (12:35:16 AM): oops, a/pa
M (12:35:39 AM): what else? Oh yeah I was here for winter term for OKSA conference my freshman year
M (12:36:57 AM): and...
M (12:37:14 AM): I think that's it. Other random OKSA stuff. Oh yeah organizing the Korean language winter term
M (12:37:15 AM): thing.
M (12:37:30 AM): I have kind of been going to Shansi meetings this year
M (12:37:45 AM): but they're frustrating and boring and now I have a time conflict...
A (12:37:56 AM):
What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
M (12:38:02 AM): oh Jesus.
M (12:38:33 AM): with the students, probably beougie [bourgeoisie] rich kid Asians
M (12:39:11 AM): Asia House is filled with apolitical (not politicized?) Asian kids
M (12:39:25 AM): and a lot of white philes... nobody seems too concerned with this but me. Hm.
M (12:39:41 AM): also, burn out for the upper classmen.
M (12:40:42 AM): and for some reason all the Korean boys, and many of the As Am's have had problems passing their classes,
M (12:40:50 AM): but I guess that isn't really a major issue...
M (12:41:14 AM): regarding the faculty staff administration problems - which BY FAR outweigh the student problems...
M (12:41:16 AM): fuck/
M (12:42:33 AM): no administrative support, constantly having to justify my existence, "Asian" race category not treated with the same sensitivity that other minority groups receive
M (12:43:01 AM): the As.Am faculty keep running away because they don't get the support that they receive from the college

M (12:43:22 AM): administration pitting Asian American studies against af.am, gaws, etc

A (12:44:41 AM): okay to start, can you explain why you are upset about white "philes" who are they?

A (12:44:55 AM): why do you view Asia house as a problem?

M (12:45:46 AM): who are white philes? It's hard to pin a specific definition. The typical image consists primarily of white boys who like anime and karate and Asian girls...

M (12:46:40 AM): Asia House is a problem because it's not like any of the other program houses.

M (12:47:01 AM): you would never see white RA's in Af. Heritage house or TWC

A (12:47:02 AM): how so?

M (12:47:07 AM): TW House*

M (12:47:25 AM): also I thin kit has questionable admittance practices.

M (12:47:43 AM): [Jean], the co-chair of OKSA this year was turned down from Asia House last year

A (12:48:11 AM): why? Was it full?

M (12:48:13 AM): I don't know what I'm saying it's late.

M (12:48:34 AM): I don't know. Ask that big haired kid that smokes his residents up.

M (12:49:37 AM): also I suspect that many people apply to live there because it's a nice space.

M (12:49:56 AM): there haven't been any programs coming out of that house in ages.

M (12:50:23 AM): if you ask the residents they're like 'what? programs/ we ate Asian food last semester'

M (12:50:43 AM): [Toni] said in the AAA meeting tonight that at the last dorm meeting only 1 person showed up

M (12:50:52 AM): what the hell is that?

A (12:50:57 AM): is this problem just in Asia house or elsewhere on campus?

M (12:51:40 AM): also, part of the mission of the house is to promote awareness of Asian American issues.

M (12:51:53 AM): is what a problem just in Asia House?

A (12:52:10 AM): ppl being aware and participating in the program

M (12:53:04 AM): I'm not saying that Asia House is the only place where obies aren't interested in Asian issues. It's just a really weird place, because they claim to but apparently don't. It shouldn't be Asia House, it should be East Asian studies house if that's what they're all about/

M (12:54:01 AM): and I do personally question, probably unjustly, any non-Asians who want to live in Asia House. The argument is 'for people to share an understanding or awareness of Asian stuff' and whatnot. But that pretty much assumes learning from Asians who are living in Asia House.

M (12:54:51 AM): so then residents become fixtures for the white people/non-Asians to use to enhance their own Obie experience or whatever, at the expense of their human qualities.

M (12:55:16 AM): actually, that's possibly an optimistic look. The truth is that shit doesn't happen in there.

M (12:55:56 AM): and Asia House has this tradition so it's hard to fight. Not like TWH where people go there to be with other activists and talk about real issues, share in experiences.

M (12:56:41 AM): also, Asia House pretty much implies East Asia house. Is there any discussion or concern about the definition of Asian?

M (12:56:48 AM): I guess I don't know, since I don't live there

M (12:57:01 AM): I'm personally biased, though.

A (12:57:40 AM): what is the problem with rich Asian students?

A (12:57:56 AM): why are upper classmen burnt out?

A (12:58:20 AM): why do you think the Korean boys are having trouble or Asian Americans in general?

A (12:58:52 AM): what are the faculty and admin. problems?

A (12:59:12 AM): why do you feel your Asian identity is less legitimate than other POC identities?

M (1:00:07 AM): there's nothing inherently wrong with rich Asians. I'm probably one of them. It's just that 'diversity' on paper is a lot different than 'diversity' in terms of thought and opinion. 10 suburban Asian kids from SF who are all majoring in bio to become doctors is a lot different than 10 urban Asian kids on full finaid/scholarship who are interested in social justice

M (1:01:13 AM): I guess it's that the history of Asian Americans on campus is really progressive, some might even say radical. And I see it as my responsibility, as an As.Am with agency to help those (in solidarity) in my community who aren't.

A (1:01:28 AM): how does this affect the community?

A (1:01:35 AM): I mean the rich kids

M (1:02:24 AM): upperclassmen are burnt out because it takes a lot of thought and energy to constantly have radically different approaches to life, race relations, *how we view the world*, and then to do stuff about it...

M (1:02:44 AM): does that make sense? Probably not

M (1:04:25 AM): there's no sense of solidarity when everyone is studying biochem, and not challenging the fact that they're being used by a white dominated, patriarchal society...

M (1:05:39 AM): so these things that are important, like the extreme polarization of economic status in Asian America for instance, don't get attention.

M (1:07:01 AM): like, I went to a Korean church every Sunday for my first 2 years at Oberlin. I was like 'wow this is what it's like to be Korean'. Fuck that. Cleveland Koreans are rich motherfuckers; all of them are doctors/lawyers/brain drain descendents.

M (1:08:08 AM): and it's sick. Because of the unapologetic materialism, obsession with a false sense of 'Korean pride' with only some foggy emotional understanding of the Korean or even Asian diaspora today.

M (1:09:29 AM): this is what I'm talking about; my entire way of looking at things is completely different from most of the people I know outside of Oberlin. If we are good people, believe in justice, Christian even, etc, then we want to relieve people of oppression, help those in need, blahblah. This is a tangent beware.

M (1:10:10 AM): and most people don't care. Or maybe they care 5 minutes a day, in their big SUV while they're driving to their consulting firm so they can live in a condo and have nice things...

M (1:10:25 AM): I'm insane

M (1:12:27 AM): Asian identity less legit than other identities: well, superficial examples of this would be the Abercrombie and Fitch t-shirts a few years ago, the gay or Asian uproar, offhanded remarks about Asians being practically white...

A (1:13:48 AM): I see so you mean that Asians are not taken seriously?

M (1:13:49 AM): more pertinent to Oberlin, let's see. For the McNairs, I don't think being Asian is a qualifier. Not that I mind, since those would probably be awarded to the bio majors I talked about earlier, if they did... (I could also be wrong about this...)

M (1:14:04 AM): that isn't a big concern really.

M (1:14:48 AM): let's see, broadly, the '30+ year struggle for As.Am studies on campus'

M (1:15:07 AM): Prof. Charfauros McDaniel's debacle.

M (1:15:36 AM): it took AAAS, a national organization, to step in for us to clear taht one up.

A (1:15:49 AM): are you saying that when As. Ams are actively fighting oppression that they are not taken seriously by mainstream groups?

M (1:16:04 AM): the way Daryl's position was handled by the administration

A (1:16:06 AM): what do you mean As. Am. studies is pitted against other depts.

M (1:17:02 AM): I don't know if all As. Ams are actively fighting oppression. Actually they aren't. But some are. And the rich ones ignore the oppression and give a false impression of Asian America, which prevents the truth from coming out.

A (1:17:15 AM): ok

M (1:18:00 AM): and also, more influentially, white dominated society has an image of Asia in their heads that is promoted everywhere (cough cough Mikado), implicitly if not explicitly.

M (1:19:22 AM): Asian American studies is pitted against other departments that are similarly not fitting the 'traditional' academic curriculum

M (1:19:56 AM): so basically all ethnic/minority studies are competing for resources.

M (1:21:43 AM): this isn't necessarily an intentional thing. 1) a lot of people who are old/belong to traditional departments just don't think of ethnic studies, American studies, queer studies, etc as legitimate academic fields. So already we have to convince the powers that be, that what we care about is important.

M (1:22:44 AM): and then 2) there are limited resources, I realize, and many people don't realize that these different fields also have different methodologies - I don't think I even understand the complexities of that - so they're all lumped together as 'social scientists' or 'humanities' ...

M (1:23:54 AM): so then all of these depts., areas of study are pooled together and structurally forced to compete for the limited amount of money or FTE's [full time positions] or whatever

M (1:25:06 AM): about Korean boys. I don't know what the deal is. This is a historical problem with Oberlin and Korean boys not graduating in time or getting expelled completely.

M (1:25:59 AM): I talked to [Hillary], who was a student here before [Hannah] (so like the late 90s?), and now she teaches Korean at UChicago. she said that was a problem when she was here too.

M (1:26:39 AM): I don't even know why it's like that. Maybe because there is not a tradition of long-term Asian American male mentors on this campus.

M (1:27:35 AM): look at the history position. Daryl lasted less than 4 years. Moon Ho Jung, under 5. When was the last time there was a male A/PACC?

M (1:28:22 AM): I guess now there's Dhingra. This is his 3rd year. But he's on sabbatical all year! And not tenured.

M (1:28:42 AM): and Kamitsuka. But he's in the religion department.

A (1:30:11 AM): so you may have answered this in part or in whole but the next question is:

A (1:30:13 AM): What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

M (1:30:24 AM): Jesus. Graduating

M (1:30:43 AM): haha

M (1:32:25 AM): challenges: maintaining a strong base of As. Ams in AAA.

M (1:33:05 AM): and obviously this year with the history position.

A (1:33:22 AM): what do you mean this year history position?

A (1:33:39 AM): why do you have trouble w/ retention in AAA?

M (1:33:59 AM): well. How much detail do you want? After Daryl left, his position was sent to EPPC (I sit on that board, it's dumb) and CFC to be reviewed

M (1:34:19 AM): CFC, which makes the decisions (EPPC informs CFC), decided to eliminate the position

A (1:34:47 AM): and what happened after that?

M (1:35:07 AM): due to 'a number of factors' most of which were vague or never mentioned. Except for the argument that the classes weren't ever filled to capacity.

M (1:35:50 AM): I heard that one over and over again followed by 'among other reasons'. But that's the only argument anyone repeats over and over again.

M (1:36:58 AM): and then we 'won' a 1 year non renewable temporary position. Fuck that. Nobody qualified wants a position that doesn't offer tenure, at a college with a short term history of not valuing Asian American studies

M (1:38:06 AM): next.

A (1:38:22 AM): How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

M (1:39:07 AM): what struggles?

A (1:40:26 AM): the ones you talked about

A (1:40:45 AM): professors being replaced or not replaced

M (1:41:27 AM): well, everything was pretty much talked about, mobilized around starting internally with Asian Am. community here.

M (1:41:50 AM): but then when it became evident that the position wasn't returning, CAS got involved.

M (1:42:02 AM): CAS students, I mean. I think CAS has been involved all along.

M (1:42:10 AM): (as a department)

M (1:42:55 AM): and then the review jumped in. because students were up in arms, I guess. You know you've made it big when the review notices you. And then misinterprets the situation and fucks shit up.

A (1:43:36 AM): What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

M (1:44:14 AM): internal issues? I can really only talk about my own personal beefs that I have with people.

A (1:44:43 AM): okay go ahead if you don't mind
A (1:45:04 AM): What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?
A (1:45:09 AM): How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?
A (1:45:20 AM): How has retention in AAA been during your time?
M (1:45:31 AM): mostly, I'm a crazy bitch and won't accept anything less than the radical left of center mix of idealism and bitterness that I subscribe to.
A (1:45:32 AM): Is there anything else you would like to add?
M (1:48:43 AM): so, personal struggles revolve primarily around my perception that As.Am students now are less politicized, and more selfish and generally tools than they were when I was a freshman. Maybe it's indicative of my own failure as an upperclassman to educate the first years or something. For instance, I have a hard time being near [Nelly] without wanting to yell at her because the way she perceives the world is so starkly different from mine.
M (1:51:16 AM): mainly the republicanism. but also unabashed materialism, desire to become a doctor despite having little if any true passion for science (this is my perception, I could be wrong), a superficial sense of ethnic solidarity based almost entirely on phenotypical similarities.... I don't know why I'm singling her out. Plenty of others fit the bill.
M (1:53:15 AM): it seems like people float in and out with each semester depending on how involved they were the previous semester. There's a strange but conspicuous gap in the demographic this year where the sophomores should be.
M (1:53:24 AM): my guess is that they're in Asia House.
M (1:56:28 AM): regarding AAA issues affecting me. Apparently I've become short tempered and jaded. Clearly.
A (2:26:37 AM): okay thanks!
A (2:27:09 AM): p.s. can I use this in my work? I'll keep it confidential. (I just need it said somewhere in the interview)
M (2:27:13 AM): yes

Martina's Interview (Spring 2006)

A: Name

M: Martina

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

M: 2004-2008

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

M: I hope so!

A: What prevented you from graduating earlier?

M: N/A

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

M: I was involved with the A/PA community with my participation in OKSA, AAA, "As I Am." Co-Secretary and Co-Chair of AAA, Co-Historian of OKSA, and staff member and Co-Editor of "As I Am" I was also part of the planning committee for the OKSA biennial conference and involved with the Asian Studies NOW campaign.

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

M: The major issue that I have seen here during my two years as a student is Oberlin's struggle to keep the Asian American History position open. I also think that it has been a challenge to retain faculty of color at this institution. While not directly under the heading of Asian American studies, the struggle to bring the Korean language to this school is also an issue of the A/PA community because it is members of the A/PA community that are working to petition Korean at this school.

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

M: Members of the A/PA community held a silent protest about the college's decision to terminate the AA History position. They were able to bring it back (for the time being). During winter term of 2006, there was a Korean language class held at Oberlin with talk of the professor coming back and teaching Korean during the 2007 winter term. Also, there is a Korean language EXCO currently being held (2006).

A: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

M: As stated above, a silent protest was held in front of Cox. There was also dialogue between faculty and students about the issue of the teaching position. Prior to the protest, members of the community attended an open forum meeting with the Board of Trustees to ask them to reconsider the decision made about the teaching position.

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

M: President Nancy Dye overrode the decision about the termination of the teaching position, and it has returned on a very precarious semi-permanence that is dependent on student enrollment and the college's long term plan and financial stability.

A: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

M: The biggest struggle I see with the community deals with attracting and maintaining active members who care about the state of AA studies at this school. While not directly dealt with, organizations such as AAA try to design meetings that will attract members and foster sense of community.

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

M: With events such as the protest, the biggest personal struggles and investments came from the members who are all-around active and involved people. It wasn't a question of investment, but whether an individual could prioritize in such a way that it would benefit the community while retaining sanity.

A: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

M: The struggle for the AA History position has made me realize what wonderful people this school has. People who come together and aren't afraid for standing up in what they believe in. While the AA History is not a done deal, and it must still be addressed to remind the college that we do want this position here at Oberlin, the fact that we were factors in keeping it for the time being is very amazing. In regards to Korean at this school, the fact that the EAS brought a professor here during winter term to teach language shows that they are addressing (or at least gesturing towards) the weaknesses in the department.

A: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

M: Retention has been small as per usual, but I believe we have a dedicated bunch of retainees. (Oh, gosh, did I just say that!?)

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

M: No

Minnie's Interview (March 22, 2006)

A: Name

M: Minnie

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

M: 4 years.

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

M: Yes.

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

M: I was a member of the A/PA community. I went to several of their events throughout my four years and participated in some of the AAA meetings. I also was involved with the A/PA conference—I was one of the co-treasurers. I also participated in the A/PA community through P-Noise (later known as FASA.) I was an active member of this organization.

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

M: It seemed that some of the major issues were 1) retention of faculty and students of color 2) establishing a CAS program 3) securing a more permanent A/PA coordinator position 4) publicizing, educating about, and addressing issues affecting the A/PA community both in Oberlin and in America (discrimination, injustices, structural racism etc.)

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

M: One major thing that seemed to come up was the lack of institutional support for people of color (faculty and students) on campus. Some major accomplishments were the CAS program and also the APA conferences.

A: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

M: Struggles became expressed through a variety of ways. They became expressed through dialogues within and outside the APA community, ASIAM, letters in the Oberlin Review, armbands, protests, conferences/symposiums, lectures, flyers, dances, speak outs/spoken word, dialogues with the administration, and petitions.

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

M: The CAS issue became resolved through the implementation of the CAS program. As for the issue of a more permanent A/PA coordinator, I believe the shorter term A/PA coordinator/liason position seemed to be the resolution. The retention of faculty of color I don't believe was really resolved—we still lost Chaurforous and other faculty of color. As for issues of racism, discrimination etc. I believe the struggle to publicize, educate and address these issues was/is ongoing.

A: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

M: Some of the internal issues in the community seemed to be leadership. I remember several times there were problems finding people to fill the AAA positions. Another internal issue seemed to be the coordination and inclusion of different groups on campus. I remember that for a few years there were problems getting South Asian representation in AAA, which was in part due to the internal problems that SASA was facing. I'm not sure if this issue became resolved by the time I left.

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

M: The main type of personal struggle I observed were the struggles of those coming into their identities as APA. One thing that particularly struck me was that I saw several individuals struggling with their identity and expressing it through anger. I saw quite a bit of dedication on the part of APA members. Through out my four years there seemed to be a core of students that worked hard so that APA would have a presence on campus. This core group of students also worked relentlessly towards resolving issues facing the APA community.

A: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

M: The issues of the activist community affected people around me to varying degrees. Some people took up arms and became very involved while others worked on the periphery to support the different causes. The CAS program affected many of my friends by enabling them to take more classes on issues that they were keen to learn about. The faculty members also became a form of support for several of my APA friends.

A: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

M: Of the people I knew in the AAA community I can think of two people that dropped out. As for faculty members I think we probably lost about three.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mona's Interview (Spring 2006)

A: Name

M: Mona

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

M:

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

M:

A: What prevented you from graduating earlier?

M:

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

M: organizations/bodies/spaces included AAA, FASA, In Solidarity, MRC, As I Am

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

M: identity! haha ironically a group organized around perceived shared ethnic/racial/cultural/political identity was itself going through an identity crisis. questions that were unanswered at the time i graduated included: purpose/goal of organization (re: APA studies, for example), role of "p," inclusion of international students

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

M: fasa was chartered! fasa garnered the momentum to organize its first banquet and then its first conference a year later.

A: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

M: via responses to "crises," such as faculty retention. forums like As I Am (which comes into mind immediately just because it was something i was involved in) were used as a public education and self-organizing tool... there are other examples i'm sure

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

M:

A: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

M:

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

M:

A: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

M:

A: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

M: the organization has always been clique-ish, since before "my time," so folks have always found reason to leave and/or feel unwelcome. but membership was steady during the years i was there.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

M: sorry i couldn't answer all of the questions! i'm filling this out while i'm supposed to be getting to ready to go to work!

Nelly's Interview (March 24, 2006)

A: Name

N: Nelly

A: Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

N: 2nd year student

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

N: No

A: What prevented you from graduating earlier?

N: n/a

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

N: During these last two years I have been involved with AAA, CSA and helped with APAHM

A: What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

N: The A/PA community operates by the lines bordering their respective organization. This can include political, social and ideological perspectives that may clash with other community members thus creating tension and distraught in the community and the community's relationships. This also dichotomizes community members identities, one as a partial idealist, and one as a sympathetic friend/peer, which are both exhibited accordingly depending on the environment and context.

A: What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

N: They don't know what they want. Or at least, they think they want something that may have been a tradition or because somebody/something/history said it was the right thing. The students of the community have changed in the last 35 years and it is time to efficiently utilize the resources allocated to us, but only in ways that are beneficial and necessary to us. It is a waste of time, energy and effort on something that is unattainable, not because it can't be funded by the school necessarily, but because of lack of student interest.

A: How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

N: Most of these struggles are expressed in confidential, intimate, one on one conversations, or something similar. If these struggles become public, they would either be ignored or else considered for a few minutes and then put away. This is where the concept and use of safe space becomes blurry because students of the A/PA community begin to feel uncomfortable in that space they're suppose to be able to claim as their own and feel comfortable in at all times.

A: How were they resolved? What was the result?

N:

A: What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

N: Differences in belief, etc. Read answers above

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

N: My differing political and social beliefs

A: How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

N: It made me want to drop out of the community. Communities are supposed to be institutions you share interests and feel comfortable about. I greatly disliked being part of the community overall. Just the vibe of it turns me away. I am however friends with other members of the community, but only outside of the community. I dislike socializing with them when there are clashing agendas and no chance of cooperation.

A: How has retention in AAA been during your time?

N: Not very good. I think first year students are always the most committed. I was very committed my first year and know there are also other committed students this year. However, as I continue on with my studies at Oberlin, I realize what I'm here for, and what to do. And I can only be responsible for myself. Therefore I continue to keep in contact with AAA and help/attend events but not much more than that.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add?

N: Please honor my answers and keep this confidential. Thanks.

Nina's Interview (Spring 2006)

1. Name

Nina

2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

I spent my four years there, came Fall 01 and graduated Spring 05.

3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?

This is the year I intended to graduate.

a. What prevented you from graduating earlier?

I wanted to keep taking as many classes as possible--plus I studied abroad so I was still working on both my majors by my last semester.

4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

I was initially involved as a member of the Asian American Alliance, was a co-secretary for a year, and then served two semesters as a co-chair--Fall semester my sophomore year, and then Spring semester my senior year. As part of AAA, I worked on several conferences, co-chaired two A/PA Heritage Month programs, and was involved with other orgs on campus like OKSA, CSA, SASA, and FASA from within the "community." I also worked with other POC orgs such as ABUSUA, La Alianza, and others. I was also a part of the Committee for Asian American Studies (which operated my sophomore year, it was this committee that brought Dana Takagi the President of AAAS to Oberlin to resolve the situation with the sociology position that was left empty after Charfauros was forced to leave Oberlin). I was also a part of As I Am, the A/PA creative and literary journal,

...serving as a co-editor for several semesters (although I honestly can't remember anymore which ones...all were served with [Mona] though).

So here I can talk about Charfauros. Well I want to say that I didn't know anything about AAA or any other orgs on campus my first semester at Oberlin. If there was outreach my year (undoubtedly there was) I totally avoided it and didn't want to be pegged as Asian American (as that is all I am). For many reasons in my mind I wanted to be free from any types of labels and do my college as label-free as possible (*cracking up....oh how fortune favors the stupid... I'm actually laughing as I write this).

Then when I joined AAA I learned that society labels you whether you want it or not. So you either sit back and let yourself be labeled or you turn around and start screaming your lungs out at them. This is how I became introduced to AAA, As I Am and the movement to fight for Professor Antoinette Charfauros. This would be my second semester, first year.

See, I took this class with Prof Charfauros that changed my life (I can't remember the damn title of that class, but it was a SOCI class and before then I didn't know what sociology was even). (I love that sentence I say it so damn much when I talk about her, it was all throughout my grad apps). And throughout she tried to recruit me for AAA—specifically for AAA. I never spoke in her class (that I remember) but she kept saying that I said amazing things in class (I STILL think she was totally wrong there) but really she tried to bring me to AAA. She asked if I ever got emails, etc. You know I never checked my emails (my Obie account) cuz I thought, all the people that mattered in my life I already knew and knew my email (hotmail). Then one day I opened it, at the end of my freshman year, and it was FILLED with shit from MRC, AAA, and others. OMG.

Then my sophomore year I hear that Charfauros will be let go. Or terminated. You know I can't remember the word that was used. I remember over Winter Break or just after there was a big circle meeting at TWH. At that point I had already been in touch with [Nathan] and [Chuck] (something, forgot last name, was a senior, [Mona] would know). These were people who were big up on what was going on. I was a freshman I had no clue. This big meeting joined the efforts of many constituencies I think: diff orgs, diff people who were students of Charfauros and wanted to help her stay. All I remember from that meeting was that it was decided that everyone should write letters of support, give to [Nate] or [Lilah] (that may not be her name...please ask [Tanya] or another CC, she was a senior my Freshman year, she was one of Charfauros' protégé's and she HATED OBERLIN from what I understood. She was Asian Am) and they would raid Nancy Dye and Clayton Koppes and Peter Goldsmith's boxes with them.

So after this meeting (or right before) I was very skeptical. I loved Charfauros but I wasn't going for the whole DYE-KOPPES-GOLDSMITH ARE THE DEVIL bit just because I wasn't about to be spoon-fed anything. So I remember pulling [Nate]

aside and being like, please explain this whole thing to me. Why are they really being targeted, what is *really* going on? In this meeting I began to understand the whole history of the “movement” of CAS, of the AAA movement, of Faculty of color retention. About how DYE and others supported the AAA movement, the purpose being to have Asian Am Studies here at Oberlin. They were pivotal in even getting both tenure-track positions created (Asian Am Hist and Asian Am Soci).

[Nate] appointed me and [Paul] to lead a small research group to do research on faculty of color retention—in *The Observer* a faculty-oriented newspaper that stopped running in the late 80s or 90s, and in *The Oberlin Review*. This is how I met [Erin]. We were all freshman, or sophomores mostly except for [Paul] who was a Junior, and we supported each other and I think we really thought we were part of something. The idea was that we would do this work and it would be put into a press packet that would be sent to Ohio and used as leverage to get Charfauros back.

That same semester as this work was going on there was an announcement that interns across campus would be cut due to budget cuts. This effected *many* constituencies—theater department, the chaplains office (I think) and the MRC (I’m sure other departments as well...can’t think of any now tho...). I think because the POC community was already so organized due to the Charfauros movement, they (we) conflated this whole thing and it became more fuel to add to the flame.

What I remember then was that legendary meeting at what was the WRC (women’s resource center) where there were so many people who were outraged at the possibility of the MRC being reduced to two people (from 5) that people had to sit on top of each other basically. It was a feeling I will never forget, it was power coursing through a room filled with outrage. And the very next day, this outrage was posterred throughout campus with silkscreens demanding the security of the MRC. I mean all over campus. As in you couldn’t look anywhere and NOT see these silkscreens. This was my freshman year, man. It was amazing.

Later I’ve heard issues with this. I’ve heard that the move for MRC was so loud it alienated other departments (like theater) who were having similar human resources issues. However, I will say here that it’s not just a human resource issue, we’re talking about support for the small community-the minority community-of queer/people of color on campus. It was fueled by Charfauros’s forced departure, people felt insecure, and when push came to shove; we shoved back and demanded the right to not feel insecure. It’s true, it’s all about what support systems are in place—especially in an institution as powder-lipped on “diversity” as Oberlin claimed to be. ESPECIALLY at an institution that touts its history as much as this one does.

You have to understand that not everybody agreed about Charfauros. She tried to move mountains with this and it just didn’t work. I would say that the academy defeated her—that for PhDs all need to finish this dissertation. It was not the end of her career, she just needed to finish her dissertation. But I think for her she felt like

it was, and she tried with all her power to fight it—but I think it left a really bad mark on her career, and I don't even know if she's teaching now. I will say that the academy has lost a wonderful teacher and a huge voice for Asian American studies, Asian American students (this is how she positioned herself), and for Pacific Islands studies. This thing—the academy—at this point was a really hideous thing to me. But it was Charfauros who planted the idea in my head at first that I could be in her place, I could be her colleague and two is stronger than one. She was the first person who said this to me.

5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

Some of the issues I faced within the A/PA community were totally evident to me even as a freshman. I mean there was 1) retention issues in AAA (my class being a small class) and also with faculty retention and faculty appointments, there was 2) people who were so burned out and disillusioned they quit the whole thing (like that [Lilah] who I still never understood what happened, only after the whole Charfauros thing she completely quit the campus, moved far away and only came to campus for class), and finally 3) there were issues of the "AA (APA?, APIA?, AA and PI?) movement." While some of these issues were issues of the past (like 1 and 2) I think that the third issue took new forms during my four years.

6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

When I entered the Oberlin community as a Freshman it seemed that the A/PA community was very strong, very radical, and struggled for a very long time for what they have accomplished: the creation of two tenure track positions in A/PA History and Sociology, a long legacy of activism on campus which made them a strong presence known by most groups, successful conferences, a solid base for A/PA activism on campus. I felt like the community was strong, and when there were battles to be fought, they were done so fiercely and in a very planned way.

The challenges for A/PA activists (whose who remained active for an extended period of time) were both internal and external. Externally we lacked continual support from the academic institution of Oberlin College.

In my opinion, internal conflicts that occurred within the A/PA community resulted in the changing population of students admitted to Oberlin--which reflect the "changing face of Asian America" (I don't know who I'm quoting but I know that phrase has been used ALOT and is now almost a coined phrase). Throughout my four years, people struggled to define Asian America, struggled to include voices of Southeast Asian Americans, second-generation, low-income students, struggled to find a place for international students to participate--to make the struggle here relevant. We struggled with how to link the local with the global--our struggles at Oberlin College, with those in the nation, with those abroad. And I don't know if we did so successfully. I know that in the four years of my activism in AAA, more international students and hapa students were involved in AAA (As well as

members of Southeast Asian communities such as Vietnamese and Filipino American) and so the questions raised were different, the answers were different, and so were the needs. With the framework of "globalization" haunting our peripheral view, we tried to incorporate as many voices as we could.

The struggle for Asian American studies also become fragmented--what was Asian American studies? What was Asian/Pacific American Studies? What was the Asian American movement now? What were our needs? It seemed that our definitions were handed down to us, and while our needs were changing, our "demands" were not. Too often, it seemed, we worked to achieve an ends that was possibly out-dated, or and ends that needed to be framed differently. AAA's last conference "Changing Faces, Facing Changes" attempted to answer some of these concerns.

6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

This is a hard question for me to answer. I mean...what did I think we specifically accomplished during my four years here? (Challenges I talk about throughout) I don't know about this. I feel like we were more confused if anything. How sad would it be if I said, we accomplished getting ourselves confused. So nothing. Did we really accomplish nothing? Here let me explain:

When I entered the Oberlin community as a Freshman it seemed that the A/PA community was very strong, very radical, and had accomplished much: the creation of two tenure track positions in A/PA History and Sociology, a long legacy of activism on campus which made them a strong presence known by most groups, successful conferences, a solid base for A/PA activism on campus. See but this was all throughout like 30 years.

In my time at Oberlin we "accomplished" two Mid-West regional conferences successfully, four A/PA heritage months, 8 publications of *As I Ams*, numerous other panels and film series. We struggled through Charfauros leaving, bringing the president of AAAS (the acronym stands for something...Association for Asian American Studies most likely) Dana Takagi here to talk. It was a political maneuvering in some sense—we brought her here so it didn't look like AAAS was boycotting this position at Oberlin. This decision was made because while we supported Charfauros, everyone (that is, all of the faculty including Kamitsuka) told us she was not coming back. So we opted to make a move so that we don't lose the Soci position altogether. We wanted to be part of the selection process. Incredible isn't it? So much of the work at Oberlin becomes public innuendos... Anyway, we succeeded in hiring Professors Pawan Dhingra and Daryl Maeda. At my departure, the A/PA community had to regroup to struggle for the Asian Am History position *again* once he left. We were a part of the creation and development of *In Solidarity*. We successfully *continued* the movement, whatever that was. And I think—besides the challenges I've already mentioned—that was one of our biggest almost insurmountable challenges.

I don't want to once again conflate A/PA community with AAA. But I will say that AAA's insecure role does affect the A/PA community—as numerous conversations

have reassured me. If AAA doesn't know what it's purpose is, then that affects a lot of people.

7. How were these struggles expressed/ how did they become public, if they did?

I think one of the big words here should be *fragmentation*. Fragmentation identity, fragmentation of purpose... As I became more knowledgeable about the history of Asian Ams in particular, and had a bit more experience within the community (As in sat through hella hella meetings and listened to what was being said over and over again) I think one of the major issues that some people faced was where they "belonged"—ethnically, politically, based on your national affiliations (are you American or are you "International") or sexual orientations (is SASA a queer-friendly place?), or class-background (what if AAA was totally made up of bourgie kids fighting the good fight for the poor?). OMG I'm going insane here. You've got your East Asian constituency (CSA and OKSA), your South Asian constituency (SASA), and those in your Southeast Asian constituency. During my freshman (or sophomore year) one piece of that constituency became FASA. I know that there were also voices calling to start a VASA (Viet-Am Student Assoc) or VSA (nix the Am part). And then there was AAA, the "umbrella" org that was either supposed to bring them all together or act as the meeting ground for people who were pissed and not wanting to be a part of orgs that were purely culturally-oriented.

Here you gotta make the distinction that AAA is different from the "Asian(East, South, Southeast)/Am community." I think for a while I took it for granted that they were the same. I believed that the activist community was AAA and AAA was the activist community. In some respects this isn't exactly wrong—many activist elements came to AAA for support and became active members for AAA...but some did not. Some activist people stayed within their orgs (FASA, SASA, etc.) to try to "beef" up that org, or address concerns there. I mean you are not talking about a community of hundreds of people really. At most you are talking about 10-15 people, interspersed between two or maybe three (or seven) orgs within and without their racial community (ppl who join In Solidarity, Zami, As I Am, on top of OCDC, working for the MRC, working on panels such as Indigenous Women's Series...). Talk about burn-out. So here again the theme is: what is AAA?

When I came into AAA as a freshman I think it was beginning that transition of an org that fights for AA Studies on-campus to an org that *also* recruits and acts as an umbrella org. I think about it and maybe it was because of the people who began to take leadership positions in the community. This was due to a few things. First of all, AAA was created in the early 70s to be a strategic organization that mobilized for Asian American studies on campus. Fast forward, 30 years later we have a leg in the curriculum as part of CAS. On the one hand you can say: ARE YOU GOING TO BE SATISFIED WITH A BONE? On the other hand you have now what we didn't have three years before when I started as a freshman. I remember looking in the English department for *someone, anyone* who did Asian American literature and could find no one (in the Fall semester my freshman year Sylvia Watanabe was on leave) and now we have two profs in English who can do or do do Asian Am Literature, we've got someone in Creative Writing (Sylvia Watanabe), we've got Pawan Dhingra in Sociology and we've lost, gained, lost, gained someone in Asian Am history. Let me raise my voice again and say: SUPPORT THESE

PROFESSORS. MAKE SURE THEY KNOW YOU WANT THEM HERE. AND THEN START MOVING THEM TOGETHER SO THAT THEY CAN BECOME A PROGRAM IN AND OF THEMSELVES. We've also got David Kamitsuka in Religion who has always been a sturdy point in Asian Am studies. OHMYGOD if anything we're stronger than we've ever been and some of this has come WITHOUT our fight (the English hires for instance) so it's like we've got a lot of clout man!

Ok I regressed, but all in all I believe that AAA needs to remain the space for progressive, radical activism. I don't think that AAA needs to be an umbrella org—at least not uncritically, because otherwise we could inadvertently reify the whole Pan-ethnic Asians are all the same thing which we all know is untrue. I think that AAA needs to stand beside other orgs and be what AA studies on campus needs in particular.

8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

The struggle for Asian American studies also become fragmented--what was Asian American studies? What was Asian/Pacific American Studies? What was the Asian American movement now? What were our needs? It seemed that our definitions were handed down to us, and while our needs were changing, our "demands" were not. Too often, it seemed, we worked to achieve an ends that was possibly out-dated, or and ends that needed to be framed differently. AAA's last conference "Changing Faces, Facing Changes" attempted to answer some of these concerns.

My point is, as per my answer to (7) the work of AAA had to change—and I think that in some ways it did. It became the work of *supporting* the structures we do have, we tried to do assessments of what the A/PA community wanted and needed ([Nelly] and [Caroline] were in charge of that I think) we tried to do the work of educating our young'uns and trying to ask them where they think AAA should fit on campus. I mean we did some of that, and I believe a lot of that still is going on.

9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

In my opinion, internal conflicts that occurred within the A/PA community resulted in the changing population of students admitted to Oberlin--which reflect the "changing face of Asian America" (I don't know who I'm quoting but I know that phrase has been used ALOT and is now almost a coined phrase). Throughout my four years, people struggled to define Asian America, struggled to include voices of Southeast Asian Americans, second-generation, low-income students, struggled to find a place for international students to participate--to make the struggle here relevant. We struggled with how to link the local with the global--our struggles at Oberlin College, with those in the nation, with those abroad. And I don't know if we did so successfully. I know that in the four years of my activism in AAA, more international students and happa students were involved in AAA (As well as members of southeast Asian communities such as Vietnamese and Filipino American) and so the questions raised were different, the answers were different, and so were the needs. With the framework of "globalization" haunting our

peripheral view, we tried to incorporate as many voices as we could.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

Time. Sleep-time. Class-time. Graduating on time. Burn out. These were all things that were given too much to the community, taken from within oneself. Funny how we all get pissed at having to “teach others” about ourselves and yet we run conferences and panels all the time doing exactly that (my only consolation was that I was trying to teach myself). I mean, it’s not the only purpose. It’s also to put different voices out there besides dominant ones, but it’s the work that inevitably moves us, motivates us, and kills us...

11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

Well I burned out. By my Junior year I was definitely *sick*, and *tired* of everything. A lot of my responses in the earlier questions come from the culmination of my senior year—meaning if you had asked me those questions in my Junior year I would have probably been a lot more jaded and unable to answer some of them. So please take that into consideration.

My Fall semester Junior year (Fall 2003) I left campus to do a semester abroad. I was *so* glad to go. I was getting to sick of all the crap politics on campus, all the run-around, all the repetitive shit that we kept getting ourselves into. Up until that point I had seen AAA segregate itself from everyone—shouting it’s banner and alienating itself. I was angry because I was part of that alienation, but I wanted to learn how to talk across demarcations. I was burnt out and just crappy mooded all over.

Then I went to the border and many things changed (this would be the US/MX border or the MX/US border, whatever). I mean when I got there I didn’t “believe in” white allies. I was done with “white guilt” and I felt that a lot of allyship came from that. That’s just what I believed then. I know this to be true because that’s one of the major things that changed for me when I finished that semesters. I realized that there’s a lot more shit to be dealt with *other than* the shit that AAA deals with and forces itself to deal with. And all that *other shit* involves all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds and the only way to get through is communication. COMMUNICATION!

And maybe this is why when I came back to Oberlin that spring semester I distanced myself from the AAA community (note, AAA not A/PA) and became really involved in OCDC. I wanted to learn how to communicate with people. I realized that we’re all who we are and we all exist in these various structures and we can’t ignore that we have to live TOGETHER. Do I sound preachy yet?

Well actually it was a good thing. Because through OCDC I learned about this like development curve thingy (ask YB about this) that sort of maps student’s self-

identity realization thingy. Like, step ONE: you thing, oh! I'm not just a face, I'm actually like...*Asian*...wait I'm not just Asian I'm *Southeast Asian!* And wait...wait...I'm a WOMAN... Then step TWO: wait a minute...there's so much racism and sexism and all these -isms built into the system! Basically you get pissed. The step THREE: REACTION and EMPOWERMENT. Then I think FOUR is detachment and separation. I think this is where I was when I left Oberlin for the border. And then five is like reconciliation or something, basically that's when you are feeling like you can come back and work things out. So I realized that it was all a process, and that everyone goes through it, needs to go through it, and you really can't skip any steps. It's just progression. And that's when I realized I wanted to get back into the AAA scene and help people along with whatever stage they were at, to lead them to that final stage and to help people begin to talk with each other—like serious collaboration with other groups, like serious collaboration and allyships. Yes so this is when I came back to AAA, and then like ran for Co-Chair Spring semester and shiz.

12. How has retention been over the past 5 years within AAA?

Retention has fluctuated in the last five years. We would get a year with tons of participation, and then a year with very little participation.

12. How has retention been over the past 5 years within AAA?

Retention, I could go on forever about retention—about faculty retention, staff retention, about how retention has brought together the community (and split others, and here I'm talking about the Africana Community). How things promised are taken away. ARGH. Retention retention retention. Ok but here you're asking about retention in the AAA org right? I am going to say something to you which has been said to me as a freshman and it's not going to help. When I came into AAA I think there were two others: it was basically [Mona], [Jeffery], and I. Later [Rita] joined from our class as well. And I think it was like the four of us (then came [Caroline] who was our year?) But the low numbers worried me, but our seniors (at that point it was [Kevin] as AACC and other ppl like [Janet], [Fred], [Samina] and many others) told us that this was usual. Some years you get good numbers. Some you get few. On the years you get good numbers you think that you finally overcome the barrier of recruitment (you did a great job at the MRC picnic, and mentoring, etc.), you don't have to worry about that anymore. But the years that the numbers are low then there's stress, stress on top of all that goes on that year. The stress questions recruitment, we try to formulate "Big Bro/Big Sis" programs (without pursuing a hierarchy), we at AAA try to do more "friendly" programming (as per above) and then that pisses off our more radical members (as per above). Retention has fluctuated in the last five years. We would get a year with tons of participation, and then a year with very little participation.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

YES. I know it took me a long time to answer this and I hope you don't think it's because it's not important to me. I'm also thankful that you are doing this project AISHE because these things need to be recorded and I think it's awesome that you are doing it. I mean we are "doomed" to repeat history unless it understood. This is

in part why [Rita], [Mona], [Caroline], [Tanya], and I (were there other ppl? Uh oh...) did that "LEARN ABOUT AAA HISTORY" meeting where I think it did help people contextualize AAA and how it was formed, what purpose it had and then what it became.

I think that through history AAA became seen as an umbrella org for other orgs under the "Asian race scheme" but you know, I don't think that it's meant for it. I think that conversation is now over. What/Who is AAA intended for?

I hope that future Asian Ams that come to campus, who find themselves embroiled in this identity politics, who want a space to act on it, can find that space in AAA. And I know it may seem like repetitive shit, it may seem like it doesn't matter, but I'll be a voice that says: yea it does. All that above there (see above) I learned, all of that bullshit that I went through has made me wiser I think, and it's made me understand the varying degrees in which people "enter" and "exit" the movement, whatever it is. It's incoherent, but sometimes the chaos breeds the finest activists—and not all the same kinds either. I think I will say that [Rita], [Mona] and I have been (have become) friends, have ridden the whole AAA thing out for four years, have wanted to give up on it (and at points did and came back)...but point is we've emerged as three really different people, all aware and conscious of "the fight" and "the power fucking shit up" and all want to deal with it in different ways. We need people everywhere you know?

Charfauros was also the prof that recruited me. How awesome is that, that the prof was so key into the community that even she was recruiting? That's pretty damn awesome. So here's what I think. AAA's tasks now are to continue the fight—and continueing the fight means implementing ways to bring ppl to AA Classes, to bring faculty, staff, and students together (I mean friggin do mixers for goodness sakes!). Do the work of networking, connecting people. Tell faculty what you need. If you need more recruits, then ask faculty to recommend students. Or ask faculty to also talk to students you know? Has Dhingra ever said to a student: really? Someone said that stupid shit to you? Well maybe you should to go AAA and they can be your safe space—or be your first one... I mean if we want that, friggin tell them that. Have AA studies be IN places—introduce students to it through intro classes, through CAS, through GAWS, through even Asia House. Through Shansi. Work with Shansi. *gasp*sigh*what?* Shansi will never be able to let go of their past—but from what I understand (and hey, I pushed Shansi a lot remember?), they are trying to bring their past to the present, and guess what? One way they can do that is to advertise Asian Am classes. Force them to be part of the process man! I mean how do you wrench yourself from a past of cultural imperialism which they were undoubtedly a part of? You work for the present needs of those you possibly could have affected in the past. I mean isn't this one goal of affirmative action?

All in all, being a part of the A/PA community was complicated for me. Being a part of AAA was also complicated for me. I hope that other people get to experience all the love and hate that goes with being critical of all that is around you. I think that's it. Haha. If you need anything else, email!

Oh and PS, Also [Erin], [Michael] (forgot last name), and [Stephanie] did a project on CAS where they had a big meeting with many ppl and they have the whole

transcript written up. I think you should try to get your hands on that because there is A LOT more on the whole Charfauros deal there.

Norma's Interview (Spring 2006)

1. Name
Norma
2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.
2 Years
3. Is this the year you intended to graduate?
No
- f. What prevented you from graduating earlier?
4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?
I was co secretary for a year in AAA. I've also helped with various committees who are/were affiliated with AAA.
5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
A lack of solidarity depending on leadership. Member fluctuations of AAA, and AAA's position as a major resource for A/PA students.
6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?
The APA History position demonstration was a major accomplishment for A/PA activists here on campus. I also thought that the display in Mudd's A level last year was quite amazing. As far as challenges go, I'd have to say our conflict resolution skills with Shansi, and the arch are still hanging in a delicate place. Our fights for stable A/PA history and sociology positions are also very important.
7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?
Arch: through the Review every spring. History/sociology position: Our protest, various editorial letters to the Review. We like using the Review to get the word out. Using the freedom of the press to its potential.
8. How were they resolved? What was the result?
They're currently still in the works. The arch is a continuous dialog with Shansi. As for the faculty positions, that's still being worked on.
9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?
As far as internal issues, I can't say that I know the extent of those issues.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?
Time commitments, dedication, member attendance are all things most of the members of the AAA deal with.
11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?
N/A
12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?
I can't really say, seeing as how I haven't had time to be active lately. It seems to change quite drastically each semester. More members come at the beginning, but as the semester continues, people drop out.
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?
-

Rita's Interview (Spring 2006)

A: Please state your name.

R: Rita

A: Am I allowed to record this interview?

R: Yes.

A: How many years were you a student at Oberlin and please include the semester you graduated.

R: Four years.

A: And where...when did you graduate? Which semester?

R: Spring 2005.

A: Is this the year you originally intended to graduate?

R: Yes.

A: In what capacity were you involved in the A/PA community?

R: I was for a short period historian for the South Asian Student Association and I co-chaired the Arts and Activism conference that SASA co-sponsored. My sophomore year I became involved with AAA around the same time and I remained actively involved with AAA 'til I graduated. I co-chaired the 13th biennial Midwestern A/PA student conference in 2004

A: What do you see as some of the main major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

R: Clarifying question. When you say major issues do you mean within the A/PA community or the comm...

A: What were they fighting for?

R: Ok. Well I guess of course Asian American studies in general but particularly my sophomore year was the year that...well my first year was the year that students were trying to replace Moon Ho Jung's position, (with) Daryl Maeda's, and were also fighting the request for resignation for Antoinette Charfauros but that was around the time that I wasn't involved yet. My sophomore year the students worked really hard to repair relations with the with AAAS the Association for Asian American Studies and consequently to get Asian American students involved in the search to replace Professor Charfauros Mc Daniels, so they were involved in the search that finally or that ultimately hired Pawan Dhingra in the sociology department. Oh, and then my senior year when both Professor Dhingra and Professor Maeda were on were going to be on sabbatical the following year, students again had to work to get the College Faculty Council to approve of at least one visiting position to replace either of the two professors which we eventually did get with Jinzhao Li in sociology. What are the other issues we were doing? There have been instances I mean the safe space issues that have come up, that came up a couple of times when I was at Oberlin.

A: Could you explain?

R: Yes. The Asian American Alliance works as a or operates as a safe space for students who identify as being of Asian or Pacific Islander descent, which implies that the space is... Do you want me to explain safe space?

A: Sure.

R: Ok. Well a safe space is essentially a physical or let's say a tangential or non-tangential space, tangible, that's the word, tangible, non-tangible space where people who identify in a particular way or who have particular histories or experiences or particular issues in common come together outside of the larger mainstream society to talk about issues and experiences to discuss how certain power structures effect them specifically but also to kind of begin to understand how to then have a conversation about their position in society, the larger mainstream society. So the Asian American Alliance operates as a safe space, and my junior year, which is 2003, there was an instance where a majority student was asked to leave during the first introductory AAA meeting.

A: What do you mean when you say majority student?

R: White. The student was asked to leave. And that kind of got blown out of proportion in that the student wrote a letter both to AAA directly but also a letter to The Review talking about how he felt discriminated against and about how safe space was not a valuable concept, especially at a school like Oberlin, which prides itself as being liberal and accused AAA as being segregationist, etc., etc. And AAA then had to kind of make the college campus aware of what exactly safe space is and why it's really important for AAA to operate as a safe space. And that then led to a stream of other letters but I think what did happen within the A/PA community specifically was then other student organizations like FASA, SASA, OKSA, AND SASA, I already said that...

A: ...CSA

R: ...CSA then began to reevaluate whether they wanted to have regular safe spaces. I think it was...it seemed to be a given that all of these spaces were safe spaces until this incident when all organizations began to reassess the situation and I think only FASA and AAA decided...not even FASA? Only AAA then decided to be a safe space. None of the other student organizations voted to have safe spaces anymore. What about the other things? Issues wise, I'm not exactly sure how involved we've been with what student retention as a current issue, I think it's been looked at otherwise. Points I'm not ...Oh recruitment just of students for the rest of organizations, where the students feel comfortable within the spaces of student organizations and how to make them accessible to a larger number of students and less alienating to people. I think a lot of organizations have been talking about that and AAA has done a lot of talking about how to make the organization more accessible to international students and students of South Asian descent, also issues, making it more accessible to multiracial/multiethnic students.

A: And has this been successful? In your estimation.

R: Well I think the conversations have been productive. I don't think there is anything concrete that has actually come out of the conversation that has specifically made it more accessible. However, I do have to say that the number of students in, at least in AAA but also in other organizations, the number of first years participating in various student organizations is larger than I have seen in maybe ever. But I don't think anything really has...because strategies change.

A: Okay. What are some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA activists during your time here?

R: Well CAS for sure and then the two new Asian American studies positions in the, in conjunction with the CAS department. Getting the two faculty members, both Daryl and Pawan and then getting the replacement for Pawan. Also, getting two professors in the English department, although I don't think that was a direct consequence of student activism, it definitely indirectly is because I mean I think students have done a good job of educating on the issue of Asian American studies. Accomplishments...I think in all honesty it's just staying together as a community is an accomplishment. I can see it's really difficult for a lot of different communities and even lucky for good and bad reasons

and messed up reason to have relatively large Asian American population at this campus compared to other communities. So that that's definitely a good thing but we've also been able to hold on the community which means there's work to get done.

A: Could you elaborate on some these good, bad and messed up reasons?

R: Well, I mean it's definitely good that we have an Asian American Community. I think it's...I think the reasons for that are...could potentially be problematic. The fact that Asian American Students are represented more than other minority communities is kind of...references two things; one is I think the economic status that Asian Americans are supposed to have, I mean the College is coming from... I think a lot of people that we have at this school come from middle to upper middle class backgrounds and I think the college tends to think that Asian American student ultimately have that financial leverage. It's also true in the Con, where a lot of students come in for undergrad and other countries and financially stable families. So, I mean that's not the problem or it's a messed up way so to speak of getting a larger community. But there's...Also, I mean I'm presuming things like the whole model minority thing about... I mean I'm not saying that the college says that Asian American students are better minority students but I think that it kind of works that way. Just getting below the system. So...

A: And what do you think challenges to staying together with student organizations are? Because you said "We're Lucky"

R: There's so many... I mean I think... It's a very complic...As in any communities it's complicated because we have students not only coming from very varied geographical locations where their identity did not possess the levels or they identify in different ways or their priorities... so investment in the Asian American Communities at different levels they spot the similar issues and ...National background but also just the issue of how to politicize the people. I mean and that kind of relates back to the first two...of how politicized or political people want to be, specifically with the Asian American Alliance. It can potentially be difficult for those people who are alienated by the politics of the organization, which isn't necessarily...the politics aren't bad or good in terms of mind, that's the way it is. (Inaudible).

A: Would you like me to ask the question again?

R: Sure. Sure.

A: What do you think are the challenges to staying together as a group? You mentioned geographical location.

R: Geographics...geograph...aw..generation in the sense of what...again I mean they're all related I guess but you know what generation American are or aren't if you're not American also that kind of influences your investment in Asian American...Asian American-ness or Asian American identity or issues or whatever...

A: What...how were these...these struggles expressed and how did they become public if they did? All of the struggles you were talking about, for instance getting positions for CAS, etc.

R: How were they what? How were they...

A: How were they expressed publicly if they did at all?

R: I think it wasn't as...I think it was public in that allies were very aware of it. I don't think the general college community was aware of it and even if it is then it's just a fleeting thing where for me I've written letters to the review or articles and stuff like that. I think mainly it has been Asian American students interested in Asian American studies and allies working together with the administration and faculty. To my knowledge, at least in the four years that I've been here, I don't think like, the issue of Asian American studies has been particularly visible amongst the general campus.

A: So how were some of these internal issues resolved? What was the result if any?

R: The internal issues?

A: For instance, you talked about issues with people coming from different generations...

R: Mmhmm...

A: ...and backgrounds. How were they resolved in the community? How...how were they navigated? How is it that a cohesive group could come together? Is it something that...they're united only at certain points, or just an illusion?

R: I think the reason it can stay together is because the community, and again when I talk about the community, I'm talking primarily about the Asian American Alliance, I'm not talking about the Asian community, as the (inaudible). It has...its members are generally more politically conscious and willing to grow politically and therefore willing to have conversations. I think people are definitely more aware of what the problems are. I mean...I..I think that there's always a couple people who may have to bring up issues.

A: Like [Dominick] may bring up?

R: Oh and where's the space for international students. Where are South Asians? You know. So I think there...I think the onus does fall on certain people to bring up certain issues. You know you and [Kate] were talking and [Beatriz] were talking (inaudible) where we discussed multi-identity issues. And I think that in some ways it's a problem but I think also that people in the...I mean it's a problem that just a few people have to bring it up. But I think that the people...the Asian American Alliance...the students in the Asian American Alliance are open enough and I guess open was the word to take these criticisms and actually try and move forward, try and do something about it and try to be more conscious of the implications of the...the politics of the actions. And I think

that that work makes it easier. And I think that it's also really helpful that people just gather around as individuals. (Inaudible) seemed to (inaudible).

A: So what were some of the internal issues of the community? And how were they addressed? Or resolved, if they were resolved at all? Like, what were some issues? Conflicts within the community...disagreements on position that a community should take, for instance. Something that might...things that may not appear out on the surface, that allies may not know about, that the general community of Oberlin College might not know about?

R: You know I think that in general we just...I mean in some cases that could be conflicts that I was involved in, like with the South Asian Student Association. I think what happened... and this may not happen...this definitely was the rule for a time, was people just walk away and say, "This isn't my space." And that's kind of been just the end of it. But I think people won't tell me anything. Again, I think this doesn't just work things out and if not then, I think that there are...there definitely...(inaudible)... what I ask for then...(inaudible).

A: What do you mean in that case, is it things don't go the way they want to? Or is it stress? What is it?

R: I think it's just a difference in opinion, and how...and values, it depends on how strongly you want to take classes from them or not. Yeah. I...I...I am personally, and maybe I'm blanking but I'm personally not aware of like interpersonal conflict that has been, that has been expanded to an organization.

A: Okay.

R: But that is not true. I mean I'm thinking of it. But I don't know the details of it but...(inaudible) you should talk to her...but um...

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community? Of individuals.

R: Hm?

A: Personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community of individuals? Someone fighting for this or someone not being able to address an identity issue.

R: What are the struggles or how have they been? Because I think like what are the struggles...

A: What are the struggles?

R: I think the struggles are already kind of discussed.

A: Okay.

R: So, I mean, within AAA, again, it's been a thing...for me personally it's been significant because I'm South Asian and because I'm international. For certain people it has been... I've kinda mentioned, thinking about how do we make the organization more accessible to...multiracial/multiethnic or transpeople, or people who are not...who haven't had much (self-identification) with either...before or essentially didn't come from a lower income community.

A: What about alternate identities; minorities within minorities, for instance queer issues, trans issues?

R: And here, my experience is different within an organization like SASA, I think that's not in the discussion or it's not discussible and it should be at some point. Queer issues within SASA have always been kind of gray. It's handled differently, I'm not saying that it's necessarily visible or that it's always kept in mind or spoken about. At the same time I don't think it is...I don't think it's a particularly heterosexist space. I think that we recognize that issue...I don't...I think that people are more comfortable expressing their sexuality and their identity either comfortable who...are left feeling uncomfortable or just don't care(inaudible).

A: And how did the issue of the activist community as a whole affect you or others you know personally? Did people bring it home with them at night?

R: The issues?

A: The issues, for instance fighting for a position or...

R: Oh, yeah. Wait, so do you mean like inter-organizational conflicts that then became (relative?) About inter-organizational conflicts? Does that make sense? (Inaudible.)

A: Sure.

R: Oh..

A: You could talk about either.

R: Well, I don't think...well I don't know about them...I'm necessarily...a clueless person sometimes but I'm not I think aware of a lot of stuff like interpersonal...

A: Not interpersonal, but...

R: Oh, okay...

A: How a person experiences X, how each person...

R: Oh, yeah, definitely. I mean to have conversations that are (inaudible) not afraid of the organization. I have sat at the Oberlin (inaudible)frustions with AAA or frustrations that AAA have been having. ...yeah it's a part, its peoples lives more than the (inaudible)→ abandoned by hope.

A: And How does that affect Academics?

R: Oh... it varies from person to person, I mean I think that the things has had very minor..(inaudible) issues before. Because of the level of complexity of organizational issue..For me personally, I think that... it was such a huge commonality and exponent that if anything that (inaudible)... Not necessarily my academic performance but academic pursuit...

A: Do you know who made the jokes who... Had you had a problem with retention because of personal issues, because of a.. I don't know, because of the personal effect it has on individuals?

R: Have I personally been affected?

A: No, has the AAA had issues..

R: I mean people were, I think I know people who left..

A: The school or the organization?

R: Both, definitely the organization and the school. And I wouldn't come back if there weren't those issues. Any people who were like friends and (inaudible).. and I think a lot of people, and this isn't necessarily a retention issue but (inaudible) study away

A: Sure, is there anything else you want to add?

R: (inaudible)

A: To this interview, just information that I haven't asked about that might be on your mind that you want to tell about the community.

R: About the community, I think to me that one of the most Challenging community wise is (inaudible) Its stay a community, and now I mean, I don't mean Asian American Alliance Community or the organization itself. However they remain (inaudible) political entities, personal folks, definitely. And also(inaudible) The main thing that the quality (inaudible) especially the AA. They change but they aren't in rest that radical or theoretical. (inaudible) How the world has changed. But ultimately not an world change or certainly more theoretical than like (inaudible)

A: Based on what you said, you seem to be expressing a lack of support in the institution and I was wondering and how do... does faculty and how does staff interact since their (you said that there are) very few APA studies professors here. And how has that changed or not changed during the 10 year period.

R: I think, ok personally to me by now (inaudible) and is not an identity (inaudible) an internalized Asia America before AA were entities they can address AA issues whether they teach them or not. We don't have a community that's very larger. I mean they definitely have been involved to tack into if you want to like put together an event. (inaudible) and I think too extremely large and students need to have some kind of academic backing, yeah academic support, a support from academics, for the work that they do and I think that the professors are really interested in doing that and I (inaudible) but there are enough of that.. There used to be two but (inaudible) like Jill who.. but just given the kind of (inaudible) that Oberlin (inaudible) input if unclear ..Early decision So it is really frustration it is particularly frustrating that.. I mean if you have a large number of Asian communities that means you would have a large number active in the Asian American community also.. You know.. active in whatever like ..(inaudible) To not have the kind of support that Students need to have.. to expect students to make that.. the faculty retention help them to.. (inaudible) like organizing now and grad students graduate? (inaudible) And I think that, that the more frustrating efforts that. ..Just see the things that need to be [done].. I think that I've definitely experienced that frustration (inaudible) As students who just keep doing just what they can do what you can. No.. Its frustrating that.. This was my point.. You don't think that much.. (inaudible) You begin to see what is happening what happens elsewhere and that other people had access to (inaudible).

A: Ok, Thank you.

Tanya's Interview (December 2, 2005)

A: Could you please state your name for the record.

T: Tanya

A: And do I have permission to record this interview?

T: No. Yes. Yes.

A: You'll mess up my transcription.

T: Definitely! (Laughs.)

A: How many years were you a student at Oberlin, including the semester you graduated?

T: Now I'm confused with the MRC. Five years 'cause I took that year off.

A: And what semester did you graduate? Semester and year...

T: I graduated spring 2003.

A: Is this the year you intended to graduate?

T: No.

A: What prevented you from graduating earlier?

T: It was personal problems mostly having to do with the Asian American Alliance.

A: Would you care to elaborate?

T: (Laughing.)

A: Strategic deployment of questions.

T: (Laughing.) Well, I think that it was a time period where the older students very much wanted to have an influence on the younger students and I resisted that to a point where I just felt my identity was being questioned all the time and it caused me to have a personal crisis.

A: In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community? This is as you are an alumni...speaking from an alumni standpoint, not staff.

T: Oh, oh, just as a student. Well, my freshman year I became the co-historian at the pretty much, I think one of the first meeting I attended of course, the way that they always do it. And then that involvement continued for the first year and the second year I was less involved with the A/PA community and then I went away for the year. And when I returned, I became the co-secretary of the A/PA conference, and after that was over I became co-treasurer, I believe of AAA.

A: What do you see as some of the major issues in the A/PA community during your time?

T: Oh, goodness. Well, at that time we were still pushing to have a department for Asian American studies, the CAS didn't exist. So then it became a struggle to get CAS. So that was a major thing but we also had many issues with safe space. So there was an invasion of safe space and then just discussions of what it was and how necessary it was, which you know, that's what it always is! It seems like it hasn't really changed that much. It's just...it's cyclical. I think those were the major ones. Oh, and Miss Charfauros.

A: Could you explain in your own words about what happened with Miss Charfauros?

T: Yeah. So, this...very basic?

A: Uh...we'll see. Start with the basics.

T: Okay. Okay, Antoinette Charfauros McDaniel was a professor in the sociology department and she was let go ostensibly because she didn't finish her thesis and it was a major blow for the students because she was such a support of all of us. And being a sociology major and having worked with her it was particularly...it had a big impact on me and a lot of the people I worked with as a student. So, there was a lot of rallying around that and it was one of the first things, it was one of the major things we worked on where it didn't come to...to anything good. And she had to leave because of it. I think that's very basic of what the situation was.

A: Any other issues?

T: Any what?

A: Any issues? Any other issues?

T: The MRC, I mean that wasn't directly the...the A/PA community but it was...a huge...

A: What about the MRC?

T: The...that they were going to take away the intern positions and try to institute two people serving ALL of the disenfranchised groups on campus. And I mean the A/PA community coordinators that we had were so important, when we were organizing things. I mean, Michelle Shim, was so act...was so involved in AAA when I was a student, and then K.T. was also but to a lesser degree she was trying to give them more autonomy at that point. But there was just no way that all the programming could have come together without the MRC and that's it. Like the support and the space, and especially all the work that Rachel was really doing to give the students a presence on campus and a voice. Oh and then after Miss Charfauros was let go, just making sure...oh, there was the AAAS thing! Oh, my gosh! I forgot all...I mean I remember it but then it's just like putting it all together...but yeah the AAAS boycott of the sociology position search, and having to work through that and making sure that the position was secure so we didn't lose Miss Charfauros and the position and also dealing with the whole pain after that relationship between the students and Miss Charfauros after that. Yeah, I definitely got more involved after I came back. (Laughs.)

A: And you said something else after she left.

T: After Miss Charfauros left?

A: You said, "And then there was after Miss Charfauros..."

T: Oh, after we realized that it just wasn't going to do any good to keep bringing it up, we decided to figure out what our next step could actually be to still have progress.

A: Okay. This may be the same question or it may be different...

T: Mmhmm...

A: ...depending on how you interpret it. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA activists during your time at Oberlin?

T: Okay. So I think the major accomplishment was really working with so many different groups to get CAS as a department. And then it was...

A: What do you mean by "so many different groups?"

T: To have like all the queer groups, and the groups for students of color working together in a coalition is just an amazing thing. So, it wasn't just we...I think that was really the time when people started working together and seeing how connected we had to be or could be to get things done. And then one of the major challenges was the Miss Charfauros thing and losing her when she had been such a major support for all of us. And then with AAAS I'm still...I mean I think it's great that we're able to work through that but I'm still kind of trying to figure out how much of a success that was or not.

A: Could you explain how the CAS evolved out of the fight for AAA, I mean the fight for Asian American studies because no one has yet been able to.

T: I mean I think that...I'm not even exactly sure 'cause I wasn't exactly too involved with it. I think a lot of it happened while I was away and there's definitely a group of people that I can pinpoint as having been very involved and instrumental in its formation but it seems to me as though it did come out of conversations with faculty who knew the field and it...part of it is that it's the way ethnic studies is moving right now so there's more of a comparative analysis and it seems like in the minds of Asian American students it was a stepping stone towards having an Asian American studies department if that were ever to happen. And if you want to talk to those people I can tell you who they are.

A: Go head.

T: So [Hannah], definitely and [Charlie]...

A: Oh, [Charlie].

T: [Nathan], and [Winnie] and whose that other one? [Matilda].

A: H...

T: H-O-S-K-I-N-S. She was very much involved in the Native American...AIC.

A: Okay. How were these struggles expressed? How did they become public if they did?

T: Mmhhh. Well, with safe space that came...became very public I mean it was something we were trying to deal with within our community but it became public when there was a white woman that came into our meeting and...

A: What year was this?

T: Two thousand...no, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, 1998. It was my freshman year. So she came to the meeting and was asked to leave and it was in a very, very harsh manner so her boyfriend wrote a letter to the Review.

A: Was he Asian American?

T: They were both white. So that was where that came out. AAA of course responded or retaliated. And then there happened to be...

A: How did they respond/retaliate?

T: With letters to the editor. And then following that there was a cartoonist for the Review who they didn't know I knew him personally he was half Japanese and he proceeded to write cartoons about AAA. And I don't remember exactly but of course it was something about reverse racism and so then...

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T: [Melvin] must have a lot of information, too, right?

A: Yeah. But he's really busy too. Testing, testing, 1-2-3. Second half of Tanya. Cut.

T: Oh yeah. So yeah. So yeah. The AAA members wrote another cartoon that was reacting against it. They didn't realize that he was part Japanese.

A: What did that have to do with their response?

T: They thought it was a white man writing, so they said "you don't know anything; you have no understanding of this." And then...so then of course, it was a whole series of cartoons, which you can see in the Review. But yeah, that actually provides a much better context 'cause when you read it and you don't know that history it's not as easy to understand. So that was with safe space and why it all came out that way. Because of course once it's in the Review, the entire campus becomes involved and they have no idea about what's happening or what the story is behind it and so then AAA wound up being very much attacked on campus, though the...not directly of course but there was a lot of hostility and people coming up and being like, "well I don't think..."

A: Was this just AAA or other safe spaces as well?

T: It... it had always been dominantly AAA I think more people see it as a space that they can be part of...

A: Why do you think that is?

T: And I think it is because there is a lot of cultural appropriation and the whole thing... you know just like there's so much with anime and all of the fetishism. I think it just seems like it's a space that they feel like they can be part of so that they can learn about the culture. But yeah, definitely I mean it... the same with when it happened more recently people that were, groups that were considered safe spaces were definitely questioned about it but it just doesn't happen as frequently that there are people that try to enter that space that aren't part. So that was safe space. Then with Miss Charfauros that came out because she was a very popular teacher. So the Review once again had articles about it. That's how it generally comes out. Once it hits the Review then the entire campus knows about it. And then we had... we had so many meetings, strategizing and they were really well attended because it actually overlapped or coincided with them wanting to restructure the MRC, which was essentially doing away with the MRC as it was known or as we know it now. So, yeah, there were a whole bunch of students that came together and had meetings, in the Women's Resource Center at the time. And then we had all kinds of information going around and there was a separate email address even because we thought the administration was watching us. Which they probably were.

A: [Potri] says as much.

T: (Laughs.) It's all blurring together but I feel like we definitely went to Cox or to some place where all the faculty were. We still didn't make a difference. Except with the MRC. But I can't remember why. I think they had to give into one. Really. But then also it was... it was just really hard. We didn't have enough to stand on with Miss Charfauros. Like no matter how much we say that she did for students they still had the whole legal thing where she just hadn't finished her thesis. And so they just kept going back to that and hiding behind it. Oh and there was the no confidence vote.

A: You were talking about a vote of no confidence.

T: Oh, yeah so then after the whole thing with the MRC I know there were other incidents, too but I didn't know them as well. In any case, there was a vote of no confidence against Peter Goldsmith. That was [Renee's] freshman year, so that was 1999 or 2000, depending on which semester it was. Which actually happened before.

A: Why against Peter Goldsmith?

T: Actually that was separate because he was hired... well it seemed as though he was hired... oh, he was hired over someone that the students really really liked who was internal but I'm blanking on who that person was and...

A: Someone who stayed or didn't?

T: I'm not sure. I cannot remember who that person was but in any case, he was like Nancy's friend.

A: Nancy Dye.

T: Yeah. It was a bit of crony-ism it seemed. Anyways, but then there were some incidents on campus that he just didn't handle very well and I don't remember what they are and I don't want to try...

A: The rapes?

T: Yeah. There was that and then...

A: And the African American student?

T: I think so...

A: The...the students who beat up the African American student at that time.

T: Oh. Yeah. Oh, and Zeke...

A: Zeke.

T: Zeke. Yeah, yeah that was involved.

A: Sports-phobia.

T: It was crazy. And then also I mean he had really bad relations with students at Dartmouth, students of color at Dartmouth. So it raised questions as to why he left and his relationship with students of color. So yeah. And I think that also had an impact when they were talking about the MRC just because his reputation was so wounded...if he did that then they definitely would have turned against him.

A: Was it students of color or the particular Native American students at Dartmouth?

T: Oh. It was...it was a broader student of color movement 'cause they were circulating something from Dartmouth at that time. But yeah, so I think a lot of it had to do...like it just changed a lot of things because Peter Goldsmith's reputation was not doing very well. So I think that had a lot to do with why the MRC was able to stay around because it would have destroyed him when he saw how many students were rallying to save the MRC. If he had in fact gone through with the changes then they would have turned against him and eaten him alive pretty much. What was the other one? AAAS that one wasn't very public until I think it was a lot more strategic...

A: Wasn't public on campus or wasn't public in general? 'Cause isn't that a national organization?

T: Well, it is a national organization and it seemed though...it seemed as though that situation was... well, I guess there were a number of people that actually did read that petition but it sounded like it didn't go out to everyone.

A: Which petition?

T: The petition...

A: By whom, to whom?

T: Well, it was...it was regarding the search and the boycott of the search, which was thought to have been endorsed by the Association of Asian American Studies, but in fact it was endorsed only by individual members of it. Oh, gosh. It was all so confusing but that's why...okay, I think...can this be off the record?

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T: (Laughs.)

A: You said you can't figure it out for the life of you...

T: Yeah.

A: Okay. Back on record.

T: Mmmhmm.

A: How were these resolved? What was the result?

T: Gosh. Resolved. Safe space—it wasn't resolved, over time it seemed to go away. They had, ooh I know, we had discussions, where people went around. And then, I think what happened was the people that didn't agree ended up leaving AAA. Yeah. That's how it was resolved. They got pushed out. Then, of course, Miss Charfauros was let go and then we started moving towards protecting the sociology perpart...the position as an Asian American studies position. And that kind of combines the major things.

A: You mentioned something earlier I forget...but it's something about relations after you fought for the AAAS...the Asian...the AAAS, yes.

T: So, of course, with Miss Charfauros being so incredibly supportive of us we had formed personal bonds with her and so when we started to fight for the position to be filled rather than for her to return, it was...it was very hurtful for her. And I think the students really got caught in the middle because there was that choice to make between continuing that fight, and risking losing, or having someone that was qualified in that

position. Where did...I don't know...that was...yeah. So the students that had known her and that were close with her, it was a very difficult time for them.

A: Including you?

T: Mmhmm. I didn't see her. I think some of the students saw her. Like they encountered her randomly and they brought back stories. And every time someone brought back a story of meeting with her, it just brought you back and made you really question the work towards securing the position.

A: Okay. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved or addressed?

T: The internal issues...well, I guess it's that...that internal understanding of safe space. Whether there was a need for it...whether AAA should be a safe space and...and I don't think at the time there was really...I think after the few students who had worked with Miss Charfauros had talked about it, whether we should fight for the position...I think that was pretty much resolved after having conversations within just because it was so important since it really didn't seem like we could ever get her back. It was just really important just to make sure that there was a future for Asian American studies at Oberlin. Mm. Well, it seems like safe space is always a big issue within the community 'cause it really divides the community between students who...who feel that need for safe space and then the students... I think a lot of time it's students who have a lot of friends that aren't in the A/PA community, so it's a lot harder for them to understand the need and why it isn't something that people do on their own outside of AAA. And once again, I think it's the same thing if you don't agree with the fact that AAA should be a safe space then you end up leaving the organization. Yeah. It doesn't get resolved. That's why it's still an issue today.

A: What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

T: For like...?

A: And in this question you can answer also through your experiences as a coordinator, too.

T: Okay. Personal...

A: Rashne did...

T: Wait, read it to me again.

A: What were the personal struggles and investments you saw from within the community? So, what were the personal issues that came out? Like, what were the

personal problems, dealing with stuff in the community? You can talk about your own stuff, too.

T: I guess it's in terms of identity, authenticity. It came out all the time.

A: How so?

T: Yep. So, with the...with hapa students, a lot of times that there...there's so much tension, particularly when they weren't easily identifiable based on their appearance and I definitely...there was an incident where...I don't remember what it was...But anyways, a student was asked to leave the AARC, because she was white and she was actually half South Asian. And so it's just that and then...

A: What happened with that?

T: She just didn't...I mean she wasn't really involved with AAA to begin with but this wasn't...

A: That definitely didn't get her...

T: Yeah. I mean when those things happen, though, it's like they talk about it with their friends and it just...it breeds such a negative attitude towards AAA and I feel it seems to be present on campus. It's in...either you're part of AAA or you've been told very negative things about AAA so you won't become involved in it. And that conflict with safe space I think is a very personal thing. So, yeah, I mean I think there's definitely the people that don't see a need for safe space and then there's also the people who see the need for safe space but don't feel the need for safe space but don't feel AAA can provide it for whatever reasons. So that has always been an issue and it's rough when you see the people who are definitely looking for a community but it's just not... AAA isn't the space for them. And with people thinking AAA is too politicized and that it doesn't provide enough support socially. Let's see. Oh, jeez...(Laughs.) And then I think one of the major things is the burnout with our community because you see people who become so involved and overly invested that they just don't have the energy...are a huge number have been on probation or suspended because they've gotten so involved in the community, in planning stuff. And I feel like we have to do more to address it but I don't really know what it can be at this point. I mean I...I was on probation and yeah, so like finding that balance between wanting to do all of this activist work and be as student. I feel like when you're at Oberlin you feel all the issues. (Laughs). Then, when you've been away, it's like, what is it?

A: Good thing I got you now.

T: It's just like so...I just remember so much drama. And I think...oh, what was it? There was something...it had to do with my house and I don't remember what it was exactly.

A: Maybe if you remember your housemates...

T: No. No. Damn. I think the multi-issue organizing and I think...I haven't heard too much about it recently but I know within the A/PA community there have been a number of times where LGBT issues were very much...were they? I guess they are...they're always very marginalized. They're just talked about. I can't remember anymore.

A: Okay.

T: I'll go off. Blabber away.

A: How did the issues of the activist community effect you or others...oh, you mentioned identity, did you want to say anything else about that? You just mentioned how the identity...

T: Oh.

A: If that helped...before I go on.

T: No, I mean I think that also with wanting to get people to be on the same page so quickly, it really...if some people felt differently or weren't as ready to make that step it was definitely a challenge to their identity. And that's particularly for me, my own personal experience. And it's not as though I didn't have a consciousness. It's just I approach things very differently and it seemed at the time that they wanted people to approach it in the same way and brainwash people. And I just...I don't know.

A: Okay. Alright, then I am gonna go on. Yeah. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know, personally? Which, you already said part of but if you wanted to move up....

T: (Laughs.) Well, so yeah, I mean the first half was a struggle against it because it, well, with AAA and their issues, it was just a very negative experience for me with them really wanting to tell me to do things a certain way and seeing my peer willingly go along with it. And so there were three first years that were elected when I was a first year. One of them went along with it willingly and the other one quit pretty soon after he was elected. I stayed on even though I didn't want to...or I didn't just go along with what they were saying and it was a very isolating thing for me. They didn't invite me to anything so I think whether they meant to or not, they excluded me because I wasn't just going along with it. Then, and you have to...I mean as a first year, that is the worst experience ever 'cause you go there coming from a predominantly white high school and you're hoping to find a community of Asian Americans and they just will not even include you. And so I also knew a lot...I actually was the one that invited this woman 'cause I didn't know they had never told...I didn't know anything about the organization really other than it was the Asian American Alliance. So I had so many friends that just talked shit about it all the time 'cause they were friends with her. Yeah, it was coming from all sides. And I think...and I definitely see it was really great for other people as a person that continued on was just going along with everything that they were saying—it was such a great sense

of community. And they really like supported each other and they had meetings every week and...did like the whole dinner thing. No when I got back my senior year, it was...it became a very nurturing environment and it was...the thing with safe space was at that point dormant (laughs). It didn't go away but yeah I mean I think when you have the continual changing of the leadership and the membership it's a lot influenced by the people that are involved and that...it can definitely be a good thing. It is so important to...and I mean I guess AAA...it plays such a weird role because it's supposed to be an umbrella organization. But...

A: We no longer define ourselves as that.

T: Really?

A: No.

T: That's good. Because I mean, it just...it doesn't make sense 'cause you're trying to include all these people that don't want to be included in your organization, that don't feel connected to it, who don't even identify as Asian American. And so just thinking about that and how to include them, it was such a struggle 'cause you just...there comes a point where you can't. They don't want to be included and you're wasting your resources trying to pull people in who just have no interest in it at all. But then you also have to be careful that you don't become such an exclusive organization that you don't have any new leaders or new people getting involved and then that increases the likelihood of burnout. So, yes, then in that way the political things can lead to burnout and suck the life out of the people that have been involved. But it was a really great opportunity to actually have an impact at the school in a way that having graduated from Oberlin you realize that other schools don't give students that same opportunity particularly in the activist community. They don't foster students in the same way and they don't listen, as little as the Oberlin administration listens, other schools listen far less. So, it was...having that power as a student is really amazing even though you don't realize it at the time.

A: How's retention been over the past five years?

T: Retention?

A Within the AAA.

T: Oh. As an organization or of the students that are involved in it?

A: Go ahead.

T: Alright. So I was...I think I was asking clarification. Oh, yeah whether it was AAA's retention, or the retention of the school of the students involved in AAA?

A: Both.

T: Okay. AAA and retention. Ooh. Freshman year, we lost a lot of first years and I don't know sophomore year. Then, yeah, that's the thing is that you get a lot of first years that come to the initial meeting and then they quickly drop off and you've got a handful, if that, so about...I'd say average of about four students, freshman students that end up staying on for longer than the first meeting. And I think that a lot of it is the weeding out thing of just going there and realizing that AAA wasn't what they thought it was, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. But if there was a student that had, that seemed to have a lot of potential, like I remember with...what was her name? [Doreen]? Yeah, that was...that was a rough one. (Laughs.) But yeah, so...so yeah it happens every year.

A: She left the school.

T: She left the school? We can talk about that. Yeah. I didn't...I kind of sensed that. We had a training at Third World House, it was scary. Anyways, so yeah, with the first years there's that. Then, I think generally...generally after that initial period of trial and error with the first years you have people that stay on and about junior year they get burnt out and they move away from AAA. And that either continues until they graduate or less frequently...and usually, actually, usually with those kids, they'll start coming for the last two or three meetings out of nostalgia.

A: Ha ha ha.

T: And they'll be there for the elections for the next year, which is so bizarre. That's generally the trend with it. There are a few that stay on their entire time at Oberlin but they're...your class is different, but that was really rare before, but they stayed on without stepping away like a lot, and not just missing a few meetings, they were like out of AAA, they didn't want anything to do with it.

A: Wait, my class...

T: Your class was different because of...

A: Oh, okay, my class was not the class...

T: Ha ha ha...we've stopped it for a while, too. (Laughs.) No, your class is definitely different in that way. As for retention of the school by AAA members, so once again I mean there's the kid...there're the kids that get suspended. I know so many students who have said they don't want to graduate from Oberlin, that after their first year or so they just wanted to leave 'cause it's not a very supporting administration particularly with financial aid but...

A: That's what happened with [Phuong]...

T: Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah, I mean I think a pretty high number of students in the A/PA community end up leaving. But I'm trying to think back to my time of the people that left. I mean I know that my closest friend left Oberlin.

A: A/PA?

T: Uh-huh. But she wasn't that involved in AAA. And it wasn't because of the safe space incident. She just was not ever involved in it. Other than that, in my freshman class, of the people that were involved, I feel like the majority ended up graduating, if not in 2002...no, most of them graduated in 2002. I was the exception that graduated in '03, oh, and [Jim]. [Jim]. Did he graduate?

A: No.

T: [Jim]?!

A: Well, it's interesting.

T: (Sigh.)

A: But also [Manny].

T: He was my class? No, he was '03. He graduated in '04. He was not in my class.

A: No, but he graduated late, too.

T: Yeah. Yeah, I think what ends up happening is...

A: [Stewart]...[Stewart] graduated your year.

T: Oh was he in my, was he '02?

A: Yeah. No, he graduated late.

T: I think he was...oh, no, he graduated '04 'cause he's in the pictures of when I was a CC at the event. Yeah, it seems like in...students will graduate late...

A: [Albert]...

T: Oh, God!

A: [Samina] graduated away...

T: Early.

A: Yeah. But because she went away. [Malaika].

T: Yeah. Yeah I mean I think it's just...

A: [Malaika] graduated...almost didn't graduate.

T: Yeah.

A: That was by the skin...

T: Well, that's the thing, I mean a lot of students, they struggled so hard academically...

A: [Minnie] hasn't... [Minnie's] still a student...

T: Who?

A: [Minnie].

T: She...she graduated, she's just a...just coming back.

A: She said that she needed extra credits or something. She's a student not paying tuition, not because she's Shansi.

T: Huh. She must've...I mean I was her roommate. She must have gotten a degree in something but needed more credits to finish something else. 'Cause she was a nerd. She had like multiple majors. But yeah, so I think that in...that other than a few, it seems like most of the students that were in AAA with me gradually did. Maybe a little late, but most of them graduated on time. It was just a struggle to get them there, though.

A: Did [Duke] and [Melvin] graduate on time?

T: [Melvin] almost didn't but ended up graduating on time.

A: He almost didn't get his major.

T: Yeah. No, I remember...I did... I remember thinking he wasn't going to graduate on time, but somehow he managed to push it and he was able to, and that was incredible 'cause it didn't...it totally didn't seem like it was going to happen. So yeah. Yeah, and I think that's the thing though, even though the retention looks fine, it's just like a major struggle to get them to that point of graduation.

A: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to add? You would like to say?

T: I talked a lot. Well from that thing, I mean I know you can't push but, but I do think it would be good if students got academic credit for their activism. 'Cause it's really, when you realize and you come out into the real world, it's a whole...

A: Well, you can it's called winter term.

T: Yeah.

A: And it's called the AIM EXCO.

T: Oh! Is that new?

A: The American Indian Movement EXCO? It's been there since you were a CC.

T: Can you get credit for doing activism?

A: You get EXCO credit.

T: If you're...oh.

A: If you're part of the AIM.

T: But only AIM, right?

A: Yeah.

T: Which, like, I didn't see any of those kids. (Laughs.)

A: Sorry.

T: That's CC bitterness coming out.

A: Yeah, they didn't come to anything.

T: No.

A: Conferences. [Caroline's] taking a private reading in the conference.

T: Yeah. But that's the thing. Like students have to work really hard to get that to happen. And it's such an important...like seriously, my activism is what got me a job. The liberal arts degree is not enough to get you a job. (Laughs.) You need to have far more than that. Liberal Arts will get you into grad. school, which is why there're so many students at Oberlin that end up going to grad. school but if you've been an activist at Oberlin, you have so many practical skills that you can use to get a job in the real world. Not making a lot of money, but (laughs) having work. I think that's it.

Thomas' Interview (Spring 2006)

1. Name

Thomas

2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated.

Fall 2001 to Spring 2004

3. Is this the year you intended to graduate? Yes (kind of)

g. What prevented you from graduating earlier?

h. I graduated a year early because I had a year's worth of high school credit.

4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

About one year. Kind of a lot.

5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

Low member number, even lower active member number. Wider A/PA community not very interested in "political" things AAA charter (?) historically(?) focused on, but more in "cultural" things like free "Asian" food. Leading to lack of direction to AAA (?). Many people said they wanted AAA to remain "political" but...it seemed to be not working. I think I thought that more political power was needed for AAA, as who wants to belong to a political organization with no political power?

Split (?) between South and East Asian descent peoples. Question mark because were the groups ever together except in the hegemonic category of "Asia"? Dominance of East Asian - related issues and people in AAA even though in the 9/11 - related events seemed to point to the need for "political" work related to South Asian descent groups?

Lack of representation (?) discussion (?) of queer issues within AAA.

Lack of clarity for role of AAA as "umbrella organization" in some eyes, as the "main" "political" organization in other eyes. This is in reference to many other Asian descent related or People of Color related organizations like FASA, KSA, and Zami.

6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

Safe space. The choice to keep AAA a safe space or not could have been taken out of AAA's hands. Especially given La Alianza Latina's decision to "include" white folk around the same time.

People organized important major events like History Month, and the APA Conference.

7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

There were several writings in the Oberlin Review. Possible action from OC administrators? AAA members researched past occurrences relating to safe space.

8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

AAA members decided to keep AAA a safe space.

9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

See 5. In my opinion, people had discussions but no major changes were really achieved.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community

11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

I'm a foreigner, and I have pretty much only seen the White face of America, as US's int'l face is very white eg Hollywood distributed globally. Also, I think white folk tend to interact w/ foreigners more (being more privileged? Americans traveling outside US seem very white except on military duty), reinforcing this image. AAA showed me a totally different face of the US.

Made me think about, research, and learn about my privileges being Japanese/male/straight, beyond what is often taught in schools, and through not merely a nation-based lens.

12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?

Many people seem to come to the first couple meetings of the year. But then it comes down to a small group of people to do most of the organizing.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Trinh's Interview (Spring 2006)

Name: Trinh

Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated:

4 yrs [Spring 2006]

Is this the year you intended to graduate?

yes

What prevented you from graduating earlier?

n/a

In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?

I was very active with AAA for the first two years, and was AAA officer (Co-Sec) for one year. I was also involved with the two A/PA conferences in 2004 and 2006 as Committee member. I see myself as a part of the A/PA community in Oberlin.

What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?

Since I'm an international student here at Oberlin, the major issue that I perceive is with international students and the question of whether they should engage more into A/PA activities in Oberlin. When I first arrived, I never think that I'd be categorized as Asian/Pacific American because I never thought I possessed the "American" part in the term A/PA. But being active with the community has helped me learn a lot, and I honestly feel safer and more like home with my A/PA friends.

But it doesn't seem to be the case for other intl students, esp. those in the Con. I can see certain hesitation when we invited them to our events, and many see AAA and A/PA events as exclusive. Even CSA, SASA and OKSA encounter these problems of whether the organizations should stay political-oriented for A/PA students or more cultural-oriented for intl students.

Safe space is another related issue. I personally feel very well guarded within my A/PA community, but obviously, not everyone on this campus is fully aware of the safe space concept, even our own community members.

What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during your time here?

The struggle for A/PA studies continues, although there hasn't been significant improvement. The administration is never supportive, and we have kept trying hard over and over again. News of Prof. Maeda's departure came to my surprise. Even though we succeeded in asking for a temporary replacement, this doesn't by any means guarantee a tenure position in the future, and the prospect of A/PA Studies would become even worse.

The article on Oberlin Review about a month ago actually made me think a lot about the prospect of our A/PA Studies. No one can deny that everyone has come together and done an amazing job in gathering supports, esp. students' support, in the request for the return of Prof. Maeda's position. However, we can't deny the low enrollment number in A/PA Studies-related classes, which is actually the critical factor for the administration to decide whether or not to support the position. Of course, enrollment is not the whole story, and the importance of ethnic studies can't be judged only by a number, but it's definitely something we need to work more on.

Another challenge that we face, of course, is to increase our visibility on campus and to attract other allies. This issue is closely related with "safe-space" since I know many students consider A/PA organizations very political and exclusive.

How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

- Sit-in in Cox to support the return of Prof Maeda's position
- A/PA Conferences. Pretty poor attendance though. Most of the audience was committee members and other speakers, we have thus failed to educate a wider community of the importance of A/PA Studies and the challenges that our community faces, as stated in the Mission Statement.
- A/PA Heritage Month, which I consider the most "friendly" event for the wider public.

How were they resolved? What was the result?

What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

- maybe some issues with CSA?! I don't really know the story in great details, but they don't seem to get along well at some point, which is not cool!
- Lack of cooperation among A/PA organizations. Orgs under AAA umbrella don't seem to come along well, but rather exist as separate identities. I don't think this issue has received appropriate attention, and I'd love to see more joint events among these orgs.

What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

People "dropping out" of the community (example: myself, [Beatriz]...)! Many freshmen were interested, then sort of ignored their community events in the consecutive years. This is really sad!

How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

How has retention in AAA been during your time?

I don't personally know anyone who leaves Oberlin because they can't find appropriate A/PA classes, but I know people who took semesters away to study their areas of interest.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I'm not an immigrant, and I haven't been in this country for a long time, my answers thus may not contain significant insights or comments that you are looking for. I myself haven't been able to understand all the challenges that the community faces outside of Oberlin. I, however, pay a deep respect for all of my friends in the A/PA community, who prove themselves to be very enthusiastic activists. I owe much of my education at Oberlin about race and A/PA community in the U.S. to these talented people.

Involvement with the community has indeed taught me many crucial things that Oberlin doesn't teach me in class.

Viola's Interview (Spring 2006)

ok aishe,

i'm attaching my answers to this email..i hope it makes sense! it's so hard to type out my answers because it brings back so many feelings (and also because i haven't had to recall these things in awhile) i hope it shows up on word because i don't have ms word on my laptop. let me know if you can't open it. gluck! let me know if there is anything else i can help with. i'm planning being in oberlin the last week in april. i hope i'll get to see you then! finish your work so we can play! =)

love,

viola

1. Name: **Viola**
2. Years as a student at Oberlin including semester graduated. **2000-2004**
3. Is this the year you intended to graduate? **yes**
 - a. What prevented you from graduating earlier? **I did not want to be out in the "real" world sooner.**
4. In what capacity were you involved on campus in the A/PA community?
Mainly, I organized with AAA, helped with In Solidarity, and acted as an ally for sub-groups under AAA--specifically OKSA conferences. I held officer positions in AAA as a historian during my second year, secretary during my junior year, and co-chair during my senior year. Also, I was one of the co-chairs for the 2004 A/PA conference.
5. What do you see as some of the major issues of the A/PA community during your time here?
During my first year, members of the A/PA community were active in establishing the CAS major, meeting with professors and with people from other communities Professor Jung left Oberlin College, leaving the position in the history department open for hiring. I remember during my sophomore year, students rallied for the retention of Professor Antoinette Charfauros-McDaniel. The MRC in threat of losing funding was a major that affected all marginalized people on campus, but since it impacted the A/PA community, I consider it a major issue. As co-chair of AAA and the A/PA conference, perhaps I was more on the "inside", having to deal with issues that affected the A/PA community. At the beginning of the school year, safe space issues arose, requiring me and multiple students to write letters to the Review, meeting with leaders in other POC/Queer communities.
6. What were some of the challenges or accomplishments of A/PA (activists) during

your time here?

The termination of Prof. Charfauros galvanized the A/PA activists. It forced students in a very unfair position. Without providing justifications about the propriety (or lack) of the administrations' actions, we made the effort among ourselves to write a letter to AAAS and organized Dana Takagi (then president of AAAS) to meet with Nancy Dye. We made known our needs to AAAS as students on campus and took action quickly.

One big challenge that came up every few years regarded safe space and the larger dynamics of racism on campus. It affects all communities, but it seemed that people seemed more justified in challenging AAA safe space.

7. How were these struggles expressed and how did they become public, if they did?

First, all these struggles were discussed and addressed within the community. We met with faculty members and the A/PA Community Coordinator. Then, the conversations would involve friends and allies. But the struggles became public when we wrote letters to the Review, Nancy Dye, and other people involved in the struggles. Basically we made our positions public through letters and also action (i.e. by inviting Dana Takagi to campus)

8. How were they resolved? What was the result?

Ms. Charfauros left Oberlin College. We had to be very involved in every step of the faculty search process. Prof. Dhingra is the current A/PA professor in sociology. With the issues around safe space, I'm not sure if it will ever be resolved, since new students who have not analyzed privilege and power dynamics arrive on campus each year. All we can do is to make sure we defend it and let known that we need it. Ask for respect from those people who may not see a need for it.

9. What were some of the internal issues of the community? How were they resolved/addressed?

Often, A/PA students who didn't support safe space left AAA. They stopped organizing around A/PA issues. Certain sub-groups also proposed a focus on cultural issues, rather than political empowerment.

10. What were the personal struggles and investments that you saw from within the community?

The tradeoff that comes with long hours organizing is the struggle to maintain passing grades. I remember people saw AAA as another clique, since "everyone" hung out with each other.

Regarding personal investment--the conferences were amazing!! Even though I was exhausted, I felt so grateful for the conversations that happened. Especially as an organizer, it solidified my relationships with other organizers and even gave me support when I wasn't motivated. I remember making the promise to someone that I would pass my classes and receive that diploma!

11. How did the issues of the activist community affect you or others you know personally?

I think everyone dealt with issues very differently. For example, in such an rigorous environment, I know it was difficult for those I know personally to ask for academic help. We don't stress enough about the importance of graduation and throw all our efforts into Oberlin politics. While organizing is important, we need to take care of each other, and that includes making sure we don't get burnt out.

12. How has retention in AAA been during your time?

I'll admit, it hasn't been the best in terms of retention. AAA has a reputation of being too militant or political, which deters people from getting involved in the first place. For those students who are involved initially, we haven't encouraged and fostered that enthusiasm. We just expect new members to do tasks such as posting flyers, contact a faculty, etc. While these tasks are important to help them become familiar with Oberlin politics, it is necessary for upper-classmen to show that they're learning as well. New people feel intimidated because they don't know as much, or are inexperienced. In reality, all students are on the same road to social justice, and that path has been arduous and uncertain.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Appendix E:
Student
Letters and
Email
Correspon-
dence**

Appendix E: Student Letters and Email Correspondence

Albert (letter to author, December 16, 2004)

Hey everybody,

I know we've all been up to our ears in activism and being angry at the Man and what have you (not to mention work), but I this...this is ridiculous. I don't know how many of you are aware of this story - it happened over the Thanksgiving holiday, I think. Professor Maeda brought this up in his Asian American History class.

A Hmong-American hunter named Chai Soua Vang was charged with shooting and killing I think five hunters and wounding three others following a confrontation about trespassing. The Hmong are an ethnic group from Laos (I believe they are the dominant ethnicity in Laos). Hmong have been emigrating to the United States since 1975 as refugees from political persecution in Laos, along with many other populations from all over South and Southeast Asia. There are population concentrations in central California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The survivors of the shooting claim that the confrontation was simply a dispute over a deer blind. Chai Soua Vang, who has confessed to the shootings, claims that he was threatened by other men and fired out of self defense. This has all the makings of being another messy race-related incident - it's his word against the hunters as to whether this was a misunderstanding or a racially motivated incident with unfortunate results. Well, to get down to what's really pissing me off, it has already acquired a racial element, via a tremendously tasteless bumper sticker that had been sold in a mall in Minnesota reading:

Save a hunter, shoot a mung

The word "Hmong" is misspelled, but its intent is fairly evident.

here is a link to the whole story from the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/H/HMONG_STICKER?SITE=WIMIL&SECTION=US&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

I'm not proposing any sort of action, I honestly don't know if there's anything we can do apart from circulate this story and recognize the racial element of both the shooting and this blatantly offensive piece of horse-doo. Frankly, I'm a little perturbed. I mean, this ain't the type of visibility Asian Americans have been working towards.

Hope work is going well for everybody and if I don't talk to y'all before going home have a great break.

Albert

Asian American Alliance (letter to Professor Barbara Craig, December 15, 2004)

----- Original Message -----

From Asian American Alliance
<Asian.American.Alliance@oberlin.edu>

Date Wed, 15 Dec 2004 13:03:27 -0500

To Barbara.Craig@oberlin.edu

Subject letter to CFC

A/PA students
c/o: Asian American Alliance
aaa@oberlin.edu
Wilder Box #3

December 15, 2004

Professor Barbara Craig
College Faculty Council
Rice 229

Dear Professor Craig and members of the College Faculty Council:

As members of the Asian/Pacific American (A/PA) communities, we write to express our concern regarding the lack of replacements for the two Asian American (AA) studies faculty positions in the History and Sociology departments for the Fall 2005/Spring 2006 school year. We request the council to allocate two-semester at least one position replacements for both positions specializing in AA Studies in either of these two social science departments, specializing in AA Studies, for the reasons that follow.

These two positions have a significant impact on our overall

academic and personal growth at Oberlin. The classes offered by these two professors create a space for marginalized voices within academia, thereby validating our experiences as A/PA students. Something about soc and hist depts.... Most importantly, these positions offer the core and entry classes for an AA studies focus in Comparative American Studies (CAS), in lieu of an independent AA studies program.

After the profound turmoil surrounding the termination of Professor Charfauros McDaniel, we have only now rebuilt widespread momentum in support of AA studies at Oberlin despite attempts for more than 30 years to implement an AA Studies department. Student interest in these classes—such as those offered by is constantly rising Professors Maeda and Dhingra, and Professors Liu and Takada in the English department—is constantly rising. S, and students have been utilizing these classes to fulfill major requirements for the Identity and Diversity concentration with a focus on AA Studies (as offered within CAS, which is only in its second year of implementation). We are concerned that the lack of social science classes with an AA sStudies focus will decrease opportunities within and inhibit continued progress towards this major. We recognize and appreciate the AA Studies-focused classes that are currently offered in the English and Creative Writing departments; however, we find that social science frameworks are integral to AA Studies. We are concerned that the lack of social science classes with an AA Studies focus may decrease opportunities within and inhibit continued progress towards this major. In addition, both students who identify as A/PA and those who do not will suffer due to the lack of replacements. Currently, these two positions are the only two that offer AA Studies-focused classes in both History and Sociology.

The two positions are valuable to us as a community outside of teaching and official advisory roles. Next year we will be holding our 14th Biennial Midwest A/PA Student Conference. The involvement of these professors is integral essential to the sustenance of the tradition of this conference this tradition. This is only one example of their deep value to us outside of the classroom. These two positions also provide much needed academic support and mentorship to us individually and to the larger community as a whole as official academic advisors. They also fulfill the role of not only academic organizational advisors, but also rs and assist in defining and achieving our goals as an active and vibrant community on campus. There are very few faculty with the expertise necessary to fulfill these roles.

For the reasons above, we urge the council to consider our request for an two additional replacement positions in the social sciences. Activism on the part of A/PA students, faculty and staff has resulted in the institutionalization of AA studies classes at Oberlin within CAS. We acknowledge the support displayed by the college's support for/to our endeavors, and acknowledge the tight budgetary constraints the college is currently facing. hope Nevertheless, we hope that OC Oberlin continues to this support AA Studies by ensuring two-semester replacements for both replacing one of these positions in the social sciences. We appreciate your time consideration of this letter and hope to engage in further dialogue with you. We look forward to your response.

> Finally, you could, in the last paragraph, be a bit clearer of what you want. Do you want two a full time replacement or half time? What is acceptable to you and what isn't? You acknowledge the efforts by the

> administration to create APA studies; you might also acknowledge the tight budgetary constraints that they are dealing with as well, which is why you are asking for one, not two replacements.

I would press for a 2 semester replacement for either of the two positions (Prof K).

Sincerely,

Undersigned,

Daniel Domaguin, '06	AAA (Co-Chair), FASA
Ashley Suarez, '06	AAA (Co-Chair), FASA
Satoko Kanahara, '06	AAA
Nancy M. Nguyen, '08	AAA, CSA
Pari Mody, '06	SASA
Chun Ouyang, '07	AAA
Jonathan Chen, '06	CSA, AAA
Adam Carlson, '06	OKSA , AAA
Kimberley Meinert, '07	CSA
Nancy D. Nguyen, '05	AAA, VSA
Melissa Francisco, '05	FASA, AAA
Rashne Limki, '05	SASA, AAA
Amanda Yee, '06	CSA, AAA
Brian Chen, '07	CSA, AAA
Maya Walton, '07	AAA
Matthew Chen, '08	AAA, CSA

Valerie White, '08	FASA
Jackie Tong, '05	student
Siv Tang, '06	CSA
Yukiko Shishikura, '05	Shansi Student Committee
Noel Zapata, '06	FASA
Rasha Al Sarraj, '05	FASA

Also Co-signed by:

Asian American Alliance
Filipino American Students Association
Asian American Alliance

Asian American Alliance (draft letter to Dean Jeffery Witmer and members of the College Faculty Council, December 15, 2004)

A/PA students
c/o: Asian American Alliance
aaa@oberlin.edu
Wilder Box #3
December 15, 2004

College Faculty Council
c/o Dean Jeffrey Witmer
Cox 101

Dear Dean Witmer and members of the College Faculty Council:

As members of the Asian/Pacific American (A/PA) communities, we write to express our concern regarding the lack of replacements for the two Asian American (AA) studies faculty positions in the History and Sociology departments for the Fall 2005/Spring 2006 school year. We request the council to allocate two-semester replacements for both positions specializing in AA Studies for the reasons that follow.

These two positions have a significant impact on our overall academic and personal growth at Oberlin. The classes offered by these two professors create a space for marginalized voices within academia, thereby validating our experiences as A/PA students. Most importantly, these positions offer the core and entry classes for an AA studies focus in Comparative American Studies (CAS), in lieu of an independent AA studies program.

After the profound turmoil surrounding the termination of Professor Charfauros McDaniel, we have only now rebuilt widespread momentum in support of AA studies at Oberlin despite attempts for more than 30 years to implement an AA Studies department. Student interest in classes—such as those offered by Professors Maeda and Dhingra, and Professors Liu and Takada in the English department—is constantly rising. Students have been utilizing these classes to fulfill major requirements for the Identity and Diversity concentration with a focus on AA studies

(as offered within CAS, which is only in its second year of implementation). We are concerned that the lack of social science classes with an AA studies focus will decrease opportunities within and inhibit continued progress towards this major. We recognize and appreciate the AA Studies-focused classes that are currently offered in the English and Creative Writing departments; however, we find that social science frameworks are integral to AA Studies. In addition, both students who identify as A/PA and those who do not will suffer due to the lack of replacements. Currently, these two positions are the only two that offer AA Studies-focused classes in both History and Sociology.

The two positions are valuable to us as a community outside of teaching and official advisory roles. Next year we will be holding our 14th Biennial Midwest A/PA Student Conference. The involvement of these professors is essential to the sustenance of this tradition. This is only one example of their deep value to us outside of the classroom. These two positions provide much needed academic support and mentorship to us individually and to the larger community as a whole. They fulfill the role of not only academic advisors, but also assist in defining and achieving our goals as an active and vibrant community on campus. There are very few faculty with the expertise necessary to fulfill these roles.

For the reasons above, we urge the council to consider our request for two replacement positions in the social sciences. Activism on the part of A/PA students, faculty and staff has resulted in the institutionalization of AA studies classes at Oberlin within CAS. We acknowledge the college's support for our endeavors, and acknowledge the tight budgetary constraints the college is currently facing. Nevertheless, we hope that Oberlin continues to support AA Studies by ensuring two-semester replacements for both positions. We appreciate your time and hope to engage in further dialogue with you. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Undersigned

Daniel Domaguin, '06	AAA (Co-Chair), FASA
Ashley Suarez, '06	AAA (Co-Chair), FASA
Satoko Kanahara, '06	AAA
Nancy M. Nguyen, '08	AAA, CSA
Pari Mody, '06	SASA
Chun Ouyang, '07	AAA
Jonathan Chen, '06	CSA, AAA
Adam Carlson, '06	OKSA, AAA
Kimberley Meinert, '07	CSA
Nancy D. Nguyen, '05	AAA
Melissa Francisco, '05	FASA, AAA
Rashne Limki, '05	SASA, AAA
Amanda Yee, '06	CSA, AAA
Brian Chen, '07	CSA, AAA
Maya Walton, '07	AAA
Matthew Chen, '08	AAA, CSA
Valerie White, '08	FASA
Jackie Tong, '05	student
Siv Tang, '06	CSA
Yukiko Shishikura, '05	Shansi Student Committee
Noel Zapata, '06	FASA
Rasha Al Sarraj, '05	FASA

Also Co-signed by:

Comparative American Studies Majors/Students (letter to Dean Jeffery Witmer and members of the College Faculty Council, December 15, 2004)

December 15, 2004

Dear Dean Witmer and members of the College Faculty Council:

As Comparative American Studies majors/students, we urge you to reconsider your decision to deny replacements for the Asian American Studies positions in History and Sociology. Not replacing these positions leaves students at a disadvantage, as Asian American Studies is a central focus within all three Comparative American Studies concentrations. As a key focus of CAS, not having access to Asian American Studies will severely limit the breadth of our major.

Given that there are so few options for Asian American Studies on this campus, losing these key positions for a year will disrupt the continuity of a major in Comparative American Studies. In addition to severely limiting the options of our major, not replacing these positions also does a disservice to History and Sociology majors as there are no other opportunities within these disciplines for Asian American Studies.

Comparative American Studies is a new and rapidly growing program with a great deal of student interest, excitement and support. We fear that losing such a key component of the major would disrupt our momentum, as Professor Maeda and Professor Dhingra's classes serve as an entryway for students into the Comparative American Studies major. In their absence we fear not only that students interested in Asian American Studies will be unable to explore this field, but that it will also create a teaching and mentoring burden for the remaining members of the CAS Program Committee.

As students we recognize the importance of Asian American Studies as a concentration and as a part of the broader intellectual project of Comparative American Studies. Again, we urge you to reconsider your decision and grant replacements for the Asian American Studies positions in History and Sociology. Please address any questions or concerns regarding this letter to the CAS student representatives, undersigned.

Sincerely,

Melissa Sanchez, Junior, CAS student representative
Emma Blose, Senior, CAS student representative
Myrl Beam, Senior, CAS student representative
Lee Davis, Junior, CAS major

Sarah Schreiber, Senior, CAS major
Melissa Francisco, Senior, CAS major
Lydia Pelot-Hobbes, Sophomore, CAS major
Jane Feustel, Junior, CAS major
Rick Hoffman, Senior, CAS major
Satoko Kanahara Junior CAS major
Ramaesh Bhagirat, Junior, CAS, Latin American Studies, African American Studies major
Vernicia Elie, Junior, CAS and African American Studies major
Ariel Samach, Junior, CAS major
Lorena Lucero, Sophomore, CAS major
Kimberley Meinert, Sophomore, CAS major
Andy Monk, Junior, CAS major
Daniel Domaguin, Junior, CAS and History major
Michael Sosa, Sophomore, CAS major
Kenichi Funabashi, Junior, CAS major
Danielle Levine, Junior, CAS and Environmental Studies major
Gina George, Junior, Philosophy major and CAS minor
David Kreiss-Tomkins, Senior, Geology major and CAS minor
Eli Conley, First-year, prospective CAS major
Sophia Simon-Ortiz, First-year, prospective CAS major
Nathan Leamy, Junior, prospective CAS major
Susanna Duncan, Sophomore, undeclared
Zach Webber, Senior, Creative Writing and Psychology major
Laura Bellows, Senior, Environmental Studies major

Comparative American Studies students (letter to Dean Jeffery Witmer and members of the College Faculty Council, December 2004)

December 2004

Dear Dean Whitmer and members of the College Faculty Council:

As Comparative American Studies majors/students, we urge you to reconsider your decision to deny replacements for the Asian American Studies positions in History and Sociology. Not replacing these positions leaves students at a disadvantage, as Asian American Studies is a central focus within all three Comparative American Studies concentrations. As a key focus of CAS, not having access to Asian American Studies will severely limit the breadth of our major.

Given that there are so few options for Asian American Studies on this campus, losing these key positions for a year will disrupt the continuity of a major in Comparative

American Studies. In addition to severely limiting the options of our major, not replacing these positions also does a disservice to History and Sociology majors as there are no other opportunities within these disciplines for Asian American Studies.

Comparative American Studies is a new and rapidly growing program with a great deal of student interest, excitement and support. We fear that losing such a key component of the major would disrupt our momentum, as Professor Maeda and Professor Dhingra's classes serve as an entryway for students into the Comparative American Studies major. In their absence we fear not only that students interested in Asian American Studies will be unable to explore this field, but that it will also create a teaching and mentoring burden for the remaining members of the CAS Program Committee.

As students we recognize the importance of Asian American Studies as a concentration and as a part of the broader intellectual project of Comparative American Studies. Again, we urge you to reconsider your decision and grant replacements for the Asian American Studies positions in History and Sociology.

Sincerely,

Melissa Sanchez, Junior, CAS student representative
Emma Blose, Senior, CAS student representative
Myrl Beam, Senior, CAS student representative
Lee Davis, Junior, CAS major
Sarah Schreiber, Senior, CAS major
Melissa Francisco, Senior, CAS major
Lydia Pelot-Hobbes, Sophomore, CAS major
Jane Feustel, Junior, CAS major

Asian American Studies NOW! Committee (letter to Dean Harry N. Hirsch, August 22, 2005)

Harry
N. Hirsch
Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences
Oberlin College.

Aug. 22, 2005.

Dear Dean Hirsch,

We, the undersigned, as members of the Asian American Studies NOW! Committee want to express our interest in securing the immediate return of the Asian American history position, formerly held by Professor Daryl Maeda. We believe that Prof. Maeda's classes greatly enhanced the quality and breadth of Oberlin's curriculum, and therefore, we hope that you will not hesitate in expediting the return of this position. Below, we have highlighted the importance of the Asian

American History position, and we hope that you will be convinced of the urgency in re-filling the position.

- Professor Maeda's classes are integral to United States History and Comparative American Studies curriculum. In fact, the CAS Program was approved by the Faculty with the understanding that Asian American History courses would be an integral part of the program.
- They are also crucial for the development and sustenance of Asian American Studies at Oberlin. Prof. Maeda's classes provide a necessary complement to other Asian American Studies classes taught at Oberlin, including those taught in the Sociology Department. His courses are central to the Asian American Studies component of CAS.
- Moreover, his classes also address Pacific American as well as broader Social Movement History, two subject areas in which the Oberlin curriculum is seriously deficient.
- It has been a long and involved struggle to bring Asian American History to Oberlin, and during Prof. Maeda's tenure, interest in Asian American Studies gained momentum. Interest in Asian American History is extremely high, and constantly growing.
- Any delay in the return of this position will lead to renewed frustration among the student community, and will have negative implications for the efforts invested by students, faculty and staff to institutionalize Asian American Studies at Oberlin. *This position has been reviewed twice in the last six years*, both by EPPC and the College Faculty Council, and each time it has been found to be an important and necessary one. Thus, the importance of this position has been thoroughly evaluated in the recent past.

We hope that you continue to recognize the continued, and heightened, importance of this position to Oberlin's academic quality, and we hope that the administration will reaffirm its commitment to it. We are greatly concerned that if the request for return of position is sent for review to the EPPC, that the process will once again be drawn out. Any vacancy in this position will result in stunting the development of Asian American Studies and CAS at Oberlin, leaving students without a necessary component of United States history.

Asian American Studies is one of the recent curricular developments that makes Oberlin College distinctive and forward-looking among Liberal Arts Colleges in the mid-west. We hope that the search for a replacement will be in the works by October. We sincerely hope that we can count on your support for the return of this position by recommending the approval of this position by the College Faculty Council without delay.

We look forward to receiving a response from you before the beginning of classes.

Sincerely,
The Asian American Studies NOW! Committee

Manasi Bhate '07
Brian Chen '07
Daniel Domaguin '06
Gina George '06
Kimberley Meinert '07
Pari Mody '06
Minh-Tam Nguyen '08
Ashley Suarez '06
Marianne Tassone '06

CC Prof. Jan Cooper
Prof. Heather Hogan

Asian American Studies NOW! Committee, and Major Representatives from the Comparative American Studies Program and the History Department (letter to of the Educational Plans and Policies Committee, September 28, 2005)

Dear Members of the Educational Plans and Policies Committee,

We, the undersigned members of the Asian American Studies NOW! Committee, and Major Representatives of the Comparative American Studies Program and the History Department, want to express our interest in securing the immediate return of the Asian American history position, formerly held by Professor Daryl Maeda. We believe that Prof. Maeda's classes greatly enhanced the quality and breadth of Oberlin's curriculum. We hope that EPPC will not hesitate in expediting the return of this position. Below, we have highlighted the importance of the Asian American History position, and we hope that you will be convinced of the urgency in returning it.

- The constant presence of a strong Asian American History curriculum is essential for students who wish to pursue an academic concentration in Asian American Studies. It has been a long and involved struggle to bring Asian American History classes to Oberlin, and during Prof. Maeda's tenure, interest in Asian American Studies gained momentum. Interest in Asian American History is high, and constantly growing.
- Following the dismissal of Prof. Antoinette Charfaurous McDaniel, the Association of Asian American Studies (AAAS), declared a national boycott of her position at Oberlin College. A/PA students at Oberlin worked very hard to repair relations with AAAS and successfully convinced them to end the boycott.
- Any delay in the return of this position will lead to renewed frustration among the student community, and will have negative implications for the efforts invested by students, faculty and staff to institutionalize Asian American Studies at Oberlin. Furthermore, delays in returning the Asian American History position may endanger future faculty and student recruitment efforts.

- This position has been reviewed twice in the last six years, both by EPPC and the College Faculty Council, and each time it has been found to be essential. Thus, the importance of this position has been thoroughly evaluated in the recent past.
- Professor Maeda's classes are integral to United States History and Comparative American Studies curriculum. In fact, the CAS Program was approved by the Faculty with the understanding that Asian American History courses would be an integral part of the program. Prof. Maeda's classes provide a necessary complement to other Asian American Studies classes taught at Oberlin, including those taught in the Sociology Department.
- Moreover, his classes also address Pacific American as well as South and Southeast Asian Diasporas, subject areas in which the Oberlin curriculum is seriously deficient.
- We wish to reiterate that the Asian American History position is distinct from any Asian History/Asian Studies position. While both areas are of equal academic importance, they each cover very different bases of knowledge, methodologies, etc. Moreover, the Asian American History position provides an essential academic context for the co-curricular educational events organized by A/PA communities at Oberlin. (see attached time-line)

Asian American Studies is one of the recent curricular developments that make Oberlin College distinctive and forward-looking among Liberal Arts colleges in the mid-west. Any vacancy in this position would result in stunting the development of Asian American Studies and CAS at Oberlin, leaving students without a necessary component of United States history. We hope that the process will not be drawn out during EPPC review, and that the search for a replacement can begin as soon as possible, so that students can continue taking AP/A classes next year.

Sincerely,

Asian American Studies NOW! Committee
Reps

CAS Major Reps

History Major

Manasi Bhate '07
Langer '06
SASA

Daniel Domaguin '06 Adina
also AASNOW/Committee

Adam Carlson '06
Weber '07
AAA, OKSA

Lydia Pelot-Hobbs '07 Ben

Hang Do '06
AAA

Melissa Sanchez '06

Gina George '05
AAA, SASA

Mia Gregory '08
AAA, OKSA

Satoko Kanahara '06
AAA

Kimberley Meinert '07
AAA

Pari Mody '06
SASA

Minh-Tam Nguyen '08
AAA

Shalini Saha '08
AAA

Ashley Suarez '06
AAA, FASA

Marianne Tassone '06
AAA, OKSA

Maya Walton '07
AAA

Caroline (letter to Asian American Alliance, December 8, 2005)

Dear everyone,

At last night's meeting about the CFC's decision to cut the Asian American History position we made some decisions about action. We are planning to have a **non-obstructive sit-in in Cox tomorrow (Friday, Nov. 19) at noon during the CFC meeting.**

In preparation for this, we are doing the following:

- **Logistics Meeting: 4:30 PM Thursday (TODAY!) in Wilder 112** to discuss plans for tomorrow's pre-demonstration gathering and the demonstration itself.

- **Sign/poster-making Party: 10 PM Thursday (TODAY!) in Wilder 202** for the gathering/sit-in. If we go past midnight we will move to the ELC house.

- **TOMORROW'S DEMONSTRATION: Meet at 11:30 AM (Friday)** in a place to be decided at the meeting at 4:30 today. From 11:30-11:50 AM Friday, we will have a gathering of some sort and then move into Cox to show our support of the Asian American History Position and other related issues that have negative implications for the Oberlin College community.

Other important things to do:

1. Spread the Word!!!!!!

This action WILL NOT WORK AND WILL BE CALLED OFF if we do not have a sufficient amount of students showing support (80-90 people). There were about 35 people at the meeting last night. We need to talk with our friends and RECRUIT to be there on Friday. **All those who will be at the demonstration tomorrow (either at 11.30 or at noon), email a confirmation to [redacted]@oberlin.edu so we have an idea of our numbers. This includes people you recruit. Numbers are everything.**

2. Circulate the Fact Sheet: Use the fact-sheet among friends to help spread awareness. (attached and pasted below)

3. Be on the Prowl for Materials for Posters:

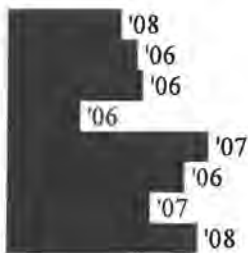
- Butcher paper
- Large pieces of cardboard (search corrugated cardboard dumpsters, behind art building, Stevenson, wilder, etc.)
- Markers, spray paint, tools for writing/decorating.

4. If you have relationships with any of the professors on CFC, you can talk with them at your discretion about your feelings on the decision. (for CFC's members see <http://www.oberlin.edu/secretary/faculty/electionRes.html>)

5. Please keep this only amongst students (no postings on face book or other public spaces) so that we are not stopped or hindered before we begin.

We hope that we can count on your participation because together can win this.

In Solidarity,



Concerned students (letter to *The Oberlin Review*, November 2005)

Re: Asian American History Faculty Position

Attached you will find a letter by concerned students regarding the Asian American History faculty position. (also pasted below.) We would greatly appreciate it if it could be included in this week's Review. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
A. Suarez
asuarez@oberlin.edu
440-776-3815

To the Oberlin Review:

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our deep frustrations regarding the decision made public last Friday, November 11 by the College Faculty Council (CFC) to cut the Asian American History position. The loss of this position is severely detrimental to our academic, social and personal growth. We are extremely disappointed because CFC's verdict has effectively pushed Asian Americans and Asian American issues further to the margins of this institution—academically, socially, and politically. This decision is representative of the Council's failure to recognize the academic legitimacy and integrity of fields such as Asian American Studies in particular, and ethnic studies, in general. More importantly, this decision is emblematic of a serious lack of understanding of and commitment to the needs and concerns of students of color.

The decision by the current CFC is shocking also because this Council appears to have chosen to ignore decisions made by past Councils as well as the Educational Plans and Policies Committee (EPPC). This position has been reviewed twice in the past seven years and each time its importance has been reaffirmed. Furthermore, the current Council has shown disregard for the efforts invested by students for over thirty-five years to institutionalize Asian American Studies on this campus. Asian American students and allies have committed themselves individually and academically in order to acquire the knowledge that these history classes have provided. This position was created out of a groundswell of student activism for classes related to Asian American issues and ethnic studies. In fact, the Comparative American Studies (CAS) program was established with the understanding that the classes provided by this history position would play an integral role in the curriculum. Decisions such as these hinder students from pursuing a comprehensive CAS or history major.

CFC's decision is a great disservice to past, present, and future Oberlin students. We are deeply concerned that Oberlin is not as progressive as it espouses to be, and that this decision has contributed to the "mainstreaming" of the College. Moreover, refusal to return the Asian American history position will undoubtedly endanger the recruitment and retention of students of color.

We urge the campus community to mobilize and demand that Council return the Asian American history position.

In Solidarity,

Maya M. Bajak '07	Shalini Saha '08
Niels Bantilan '09	Thomas Shannon '09
Manasi Bhate '07	Sara Skvirsky '09
Adam Carlsen '06	Ashley Suarez '06
Melsen Carlson '06	Megan Tabag '07
Eli Conley '08	Allison Takahashi '09
Lee Davis '06	Daniel Tam-Claiborne '09
Hang Do '06	Marianne Tassone '06
Daniel Domaguin '06	Cheska Tolentino '09
Annie Dutka '07	d. vergados '06
Jane Feustal '06	Maya Walton '07
Stephanie Forbes '08	Vicky Nang Wang '09
Marten Frazier '07	Shibo Xu '09
Kenichi Funabashi '06	Andrew Yoon '09
Gina George '05	
Mia Gregory '08	
Griffin '06	
Mary Heglar '06	
Lee Hislop '07	
Angela Horn '06	
Molly Joplin '07	
Nayeem Mahbub '07	
Rachel Marcus '06	
Kimberley Meinert '07	
Pari Mody '06	
Arundhati Mohankumar '08	
Minh-Tam Nguyen '08	
Nancy M. Nguyen '08	
Emily Palmer '07	
Lydia Pelot-Hobbs '07	

Kate (letter to Nina, June 23, 2005)

Hi Nina!

(Um, I know this is over a month old and you have probably stopped thinking about it by now and moved on to your plans for going to Vietnam and such, but, I just read this email about five minutes ago. So even though I don't know who Jeff Chan is or why I'm suddenly being brought into the inner workings of the Shansi/AAA drama, I'm gonna hit 'reply all' to keep everyone in the loop of this conversation. Hope that's cool with you. Oh, and just to warn you, this is going to be very stream-of-thought and very unproofread. Here we go...)

I'm glad you had a chance to sit down and think about the difference between Asian America, Asia, Asian Americans, Asians, their intersections, etc. It made me very glad to read that you understood all that stuff, even if you didn't at the time you were shooting questions at professor Maeda. Part of why I think it is still important to have A/PA studies as a separate entity from CAS is so that people who are interested can develop deeper understandings of how they fit into the construction of Asian America, and so they can understand how Asian America came to be. You did this, just now, in your email, except it came to you seven days before you graduated from Oberlin. If we have an Asian/Pacific American Studies MAJOR (not a concentration) then all the amazing A/PA students and activists on campus can have the opportunity to understand much more, much earlier, much faster and much easier. (much more easily?) I was going to declare an independent major in A/PA Studies, but since I am going abroad and am working towards two majors, I am *just* doing CAS with a focus on mixed race Asian America. While it is an amazing major and I am learning a lot, I still know that there is so much more to Asian America than what I am getting out of my major. It seems to me a little bit insulting that we have entire departments for African American Studies and Hispanic Studies, yet Asian/Pacific American Studies gets...a concentration. And, now, one core faculty member. But on the flip side, when I was telling my mom (OC'75 and part of the original AAA folks) about the classes I've taken with Professors Maeda, Watanabe and Dhingra, she was so happy and excited because those were the sorts of classes that she said AAA had been fighting for back in the day. Talking with my mom about her experience at Oberlin during the seventies as a Chinese American is really interesting because she helps me to see things for how great they are now, in comparison to thirty years ago (okay, duh). I mean, when she was in college, there were a handful of Asian Americans (about 40) who were sort of lost in their sense of identity because they had nowhere to turn to help them understand their context. And so all they felt they could do was form AAA. I mean, people like Takaki and Root hadn't even been published yet, and really the only one out there was Bulosan. So, okay, my point is that it's not like we don't have classes to help us understand us. But we definitely don't have a major. And it's the lack of a major that I think is part of the reason why AAA is falling apart--people aren't fully understanding the necessity for solidarity. Those of us who are in AAA need

to help the push for more A/PA studies classes--and quality professors to teach them--so that there is a necessity for a department. While writing letters to Nancy Dye et al is a good step, I know we all know we can do more than that. We need to start from the ground up, and that includes increasing interest in A/PA Studies, as well as developing positive relationships with our current professors. We don't want to continue our track record of having A/PA faculty here for three years or so and then having them fly out on us. I mean, Daryl Maeda left partly for career advancement, partly to be closer to family, but also partly because A/PA community politics at Oberlin drove him out. We couldn't do anything about his first two reasons for leaving, but don't you think we as a community could've done a bit more outreach to him, a bit less passive aggressiveness? As for increasing interest in A/PA Studies classes, I still (in my incredibly biased opinion) think that my idea for requiring residents of Asia House to take one class per semester would help that. Not only would it take the burden off of students to educate, but it would bring the Asia House community together around (more) common interest and it would boost enrollment in A/PA Studies classes. That's how they do it in Afrikan Heritage House, and I think it may be able to work in Asia House, as well. These are just some of my thoughts on how our community sits right now, as far as I see it. Obviously when you take Shansi into consideration, it changes, but I haven't been involved in any of those conversations, nor do I really understand what the whole conversation is about, so I can't really comment much on it. But perhaps if Shansi wants to have some sort of understood relationship, they could help us in our push for A/PA Studies? I mean, the work Shansi does has a direct effect on all of Asian America and Asian Americans. It seems to me that if Shansi truly wants to "include support for Oberlin-based projects about the Asian diaspora and the historic and cultural connections between Asian and Asian America," then they should be helping to push for A/PA Studies so that we, as Asian/Pacific Americans, can understand, contextualize and appreciate Asian/Pacific America and where we stand in the whole thang.

Anyway, those are my (really long) thoughts. Like I said, they're unproofread, so sorry for any gross grammatical mistakes or misspellings. Hope summer is treating you (all) well! Enjoy it! Let me know if there's anything I can help to do while I'm in Argentina.

Kate

Thursday, June 23, 2005 7:02 pm

Include support for Oberlin-based projects about the Asian diaspora and the historic and cultural connections between Asian and Asian America

Kate (letter to undisclosed recipients, August 18, 2005)

Thursday August 18 2005 (Thx 2 Billy)

Re: Racist acts at UMich

[to whom it may concern—address this to whomever you think should receive it],

As a member of the Asian/Pacific American community and as a Comparative American Studies major focusing on Asian/Pacific America, I am writing concerning the replacement of Daryl Maeda's former position in the History department at Oberlin College.

When Nancy Dye was hired as president of this institution in [insert year here please], she promised Oberlin's Asian/Pacific American community that she was committed to Asian American Studies. While Oberlin has made incredible strides towards Asian/Pacific American Studies by hiring faculty to teach related topics in English, History and Sociology, and thereby making possible an Asian/Pacific American "focus" within Comparative American Studies, the bottom line is that we still do not have an Asian/Pacific American Studies department.

People of Color need to have a vessel through which to understand themselves as marginalized bodies through the construction of race in the United States. For those of Asian/Pacific descent at Oberlin College, this includes not only support/activist/cultural spaces (such as SASA, AAA, KSA, CSA, MRC, AARC [are they gonna know what the acronyms are? should i write all that out??]) but also academic resources. We need to know where we come from, how we got here, why, when... in short, we need to know our history. Only then can we begin to process and understand ourselves as we are contextualized within American discourse.

After being given a taste of Asian/Pacific America's history through the three Asian/Pacific American Studies classes I have taken at Oberlin, I realized how much I needed this material in my curriculum, and how much more I wanted—and needed—to learn: Maeda's Asian American History class inspired me to take other courses such as Dhingra's Contemporary Asian American Experience and Watanabe's Asian/Pacific American Writing courses. Consequently, I have earned the opportunity to apply my interests while doing guided research at the University of Buenos Aires. I am currently (Jul 05-Dec 05) living in Buenos Aires, Argentina researching the city's relatively new Korean barrio. Although doing such research while studying abroad is a rare and wonderful opportunity, be reminded that it would not have been possible without Oberlin's Asian American History course to spark my interest.

My first two years at Oberlin have helped to teach me to persist in questioning history, to constantly search for different points of view, to challenge myself and to challenge those who provide me with information. So now I am challenging you, Oberlin College, to continue to adequately provide all students the opportunity to learn some of the history of Asian/Pacific America, as well as of African America, Hispanic America, Latin America and white America.

Daryl Maeda didn't just teach Asian American History, however. He also taught upper-level seminars on race relations and ethnic radical movements, and was an advisor and mentor to many individuals and organizations in Oberlin's Asian/Pacific American community.

To eliminate the Asian American History position is to eliminate the opportunity for Oberlin College students to learn about an entire demographic of people. Moreover, this demographic of students at Oberlin will not only be losing a large portion of its academic resources, but a mentor and guiding hand, as well. It is essential that the Asian American History position be replaced. Please do so.

Sincerely,

Kate (OC class of 2007)

Nina (letter to Kate, May 20, 2005)

On May 20, 2005, at 4:57 PM, Nina wrote:

Ok i know you guys don't want to read this, that's okay. I just have to write it down and have it somewhere. Sometime though, it would be cool if you read it...

So just so everyone is on the same page: When Dominick, Kate and I went to see Daryl Monday (before reading period) he said something that stuck to me, which Kate pointed out to me that I misinterpreted. Daryl had said something to the affect of "When Shansi starts supporting Asian America, then we'll see." I misheard this and thought he said, "...Asian Americans..." to which I promptly retorted.. Then I mentioned something about how Shansi wanted to change its mission statement and then I felt really stupid. Cuz why? Cuz of the following:

At our initial dinner at Sylvia's, one of the first topics we talked about how Shansi wanted to change its mission statement. I mean just look at the one of the possible choices for the statement change:

*Oberlin Shansi is a non-profit organization that promotes understanding and communication between Asians and Americans through individual and group educational programs and community projects. The aim of these endeavors, **which include support for Oberlin-based projects about the Asian diaspora and the historic and cultural connections between Asian and Asian America**, is to make constructive and useful contributions to Asian and American institutions, programs, and communities. Shansi is one of the oldest educational exchange institutions in the United States and is one of the distinguishing features of the Oberlin campus.*

What this statement says is that Shansi may want to focus on Asian America. That's exactly what Daryl was talking about right? 'When Shansi focuses on Asian America...' right?

And I think my mistake was reformulating it in a way that immediately asks: If Shansi changes their statement in this way, does this mean that AAA and Shansi would have a

formal relationship? And then we were wrapped up in what that means, to have a formal relationship. I became too focused on just the two orgs (AAA and Shansi) instead of looking at the BIGGER picture. Changing a mission statement could be seen as structural change. I limited myself instead of seeing it as an open door, as Shansi stating that Asian America is not hidden in Shansi's understanding of a relationship between Asia and the US.

However, what the above statement still misses is a recognition that (historically power-imbalanced) connections between the US and Asia SUCH AS Shansi result in the communities such as "Asian America">>i.e. there are power differentials that continue between countries in Asia and the US, and the consequence of that is ME, my history, my slighted position within this country, my appropriated everything, and so forth. It has been a colonizing presence, it continues to be and the bodies that travel (me) are displaced. I think that this statement still doesn't recognize THAT part of it. but its a start eh?

Also we've said before that, if Shansi puts this in their mission statement, than it's like they are legitimating themselves before actually doing the work for the Asian American community. But it's the chicken/egg question: Do we watch Shansi and see if they support Asian American imperatives and then see to it that the mission statement is changed? Or do they change their mission statement and then we can hold them accountable for that change? I believe that the second is more powerful.

I'm not trying to push an agenda here. I still don't think that AAA and Shansi can have a formal relationship now. I'm just trying to shed light on one thing, one mistake on my part, which extends into AAA cuz I was the co-chair. I believe this was narrow vision, that I couldn't see what it meant OVERALL—I could only understand it in terms of the relationship between AAA and Shansi. So I'm just letting yall know so that you guys can avoid this in the future.

There's another thing, I can't remember what it is....daminit. Oh yea and this is for AISHE.

Yo I know ure doing an anthropological thing. But dude, you know how this whole year it's been like APA studies is part of CAS because we need to focus on INTERSECTIONS (globally too). And like AAA is opening its meaning to include more stories because there are diff ppl in AAA and different Asian Am histories than East Asians? This whole move towards GLOABLIZATION and TRANSNATIONALISM within A/PA studies, in AAA, and even the focus of our heritage month and Conference next year (judging from the topics ppl were interested in at that meeting)—Shansi's changing relationship with AAA and that whole thing makes sense (because for AAA to look at Shansi would be like AAA looking beyond it's America-centrist-ness...I think). We are moving towards a more global perspective, where nationality, homeland, diaspora is the mental map. And it all makes sense, my gosh. Like historically, from the 70s till now. It all makes sense! IT ALL MAKES SENSE...

*That's just another thought. Okay I've written enuf...
I love yall, I'll miss yall and yea. Haha, boy do I ramble.*

love

nina

Rita (letter to undisclosed Members of Asian American Alliance, February 26, 2005)

Hi all,

I have been meaning to bring up something for a while now, just haven't figured out what the right time/space is to do so. I have been thinking of a lot of different stuff and dealing with various frustrations over the past few days, and I figured I might as well say this sooner rather than later. I am writing this e-mail instead of having a conversation, because sometimes it helps me articulate things better. Please understand that this is not a personal attack, just the expression of my opinion.

So, for the 3 or so years that I have been involved with AAA and the A/PA Community, there have been numerous times when I have wondered how most of the stuff relates to me, simply by virtue of the fact that I am not Asian American. During the first few months that I started attending AAA meetings (during my sophomore year), I wasn't even sure that AAA was a space for me, as an international student. Over the years, through the A/PA community and simply by being at Oberlin, I have tried to learn/understand what I can about various issues pertaining to Asian America/Americans. I still don't know the histories or understand a lot of the experiences that the A/PA community speaks about. And in some ways, that has made me feel like an outsider, always questioning the legitimacy of my knowledge and experience, and trying to justify to myself my space within the community. And I know that this is not my experience alone, but that of a couple of other international students as well. I am saying this because I think the one question that the community needs to rethink is: who are we? or who are we for? And if the community is meant to be for Asians and Asian Americans alike, then a concerted effort needs to be made to address/emphasize that. As of now, in my opinion, a lot of the conversations that happen seem to take for granted an American context/presence and that, in a way, contributes to the marginalization of non-American voices/experiences.

I believe this is true of the South Asian and South Asian American presence as well. In the 3 years that I have been involved with AAA, there have been 3 South Asians active in AAA - i.e. Samina, me and now Caroline (and maybe Samona, if she decides to stay involved), and for the most part, we have

been/will be the sole South Asian presence in AAA at any given time. I apologize if I offend anyone, but, in my opinion, not enough importance/effort seems to be given to or put into addressing South Asia/South Asians, probably because of the lack of presence and/or because of the dissimilarity of the history that South Asia shares with the US. (Please correct me if I am wrong.) Once again, I am not sure how I fit in with the community.

I am not sure if/when/how these issues need to be addressed. Please understand, that the A/PA Community is the most important/meaningful community that I identify with and feel comfortable within, on this campus. But at times, it has been difficult and uncomfortable. I am concerned that AAA may inadvertently be shutting out people in a situation similar to my own. And I am particularly concerned because the community has been such a valuable support system for me and it hurts me to think that others may not be able to experience similar support.

I hope this e-mail doesn't offend anyone - I have written it only because I really do care about AAA and the A/PA community. I may have made incorrect statements/remarks in this e-mail, so please do let me know if that is so.

Guess that's it for now. Thanks for reading. Take care.

Rita

Saturday, February 26, 2005 1:22 pm

Undisclosed authors (series of e-mails to undisclosed recipients, November 17-19, 2005)

From [REDACTED]
Sent Thursday, November 17, 2005 1:35 pm
To [REDACTED]
Subject Peaceful Demonstration! Tomorrow (Friday, Nov. 19th)
Attachments [Asian American Studies Position Factsheet.doc](#) 42K

Dear everyone,

At last night's meeting about the CFC's decision to cut the Asian American History position we made some decisions about action. We are planning to have a **non-obstructive sit-in in Cox tomorrow (Friday, Nov. 19) at noon during the CFC meeting.**

In preparation for this, we are doing the following:

- **Logistics Meeting: 4:30 PM Thursday (TODAY!) in Wilder 112** to discuss plans for tomorrow's pre-demonstration gathering and the demonstration itself.

- **Sign/poster-making Party: 10 PM Thursday (TODAY!) in Wilder 202** for the gathering/sit-in. If we go past midnight we will move to the ELC house.

- **TOMORROW'S DEMONSTRATION: Meet at 11:30 AM (Friday)** in a place to be decided at the meeting at 4:30 today. From 11:30-11:50 AM Friday, we will have a gathering of some sort and then move into Cox to show our support of the Asian American History Position and other related issues that have negative implications for the Oberlin College community.

Other important things to do:

1. Spread the Word!!!!!!

This action WILL NOT WORK AND WILL BE CALLED OFF if we do not have a sufficient amount of students showing support (80-90 people). There were about 35 people at the meeting last night. We need to talk with our friends and RECRUIT to be there on Friday. **All those who will be at the demonstration tomorrow (either at 11.30 or at noon), email a confirmation to [REDACTED]@oberlin.edu so we have an idea of our numbers. This includes people you recruit. Numbers are everything.**

2. Circulate the Fact Sheet: Use the fact-sheet among friends to help spread awareness. (attached and pasted below)

3. Be on the Prowl for Materials for Posters:

- Butcher paper
- Large pieces of cardboard (search corrugated cardboard dumpsters, behind art building, Stevenson, wilder, etc.)
- Markers, spray paint, tools for writing/decorating.

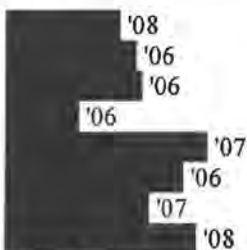
4. If you have relationships with any of the professors on CFC, you can talk with them at your discretion about your feelings on the decision. (for CFC's members see

<http://www.oberlin.edu/secretary/faculty/electionRes.html>)

5. Please keep this only amongst students (no postings on face book or other public spaces) so that we are not stopped or hindered before we begin.

We hope that we can count on your participation because together can win this.

In Solidarity,



Asian American Studies Position Facts Sheet

1. What's going on?

The College Faculty Council (CFC) decided to **not reinstate** the Asian American Studies Position in the **History and Comparative American Studies (CAS)** Departments on Friday, November 11th. Nancy Dye requested that the CFC reconsider its decision.

This is the history

- i. The CFC has in the past **seven years** returned the position **twice** and the Educational Plans and Policies Committee (EPPC) has given the position a **high recommendation** for renewal.
- ii Asian American Studies has been at the center of a student, faculty, and staff struggle for **35 years** now.

- iii Out of these struggles came the Comparative American Studies Department and a space was created for the study of marginalized communities in a U.S. context
- iv **CFC and EPPC have enforced an unprecedented veil of secrecy over the entire process of ranking and cutting positions.**

2. Why is this important to You?

Not having the position **compromises the History and CAS majors**

****CAS concentrations in "identity and diversity" and "histories and practices of social change" will be affected**

****History concentration in "ethnic of the united states", "intellectual/cultural history" and "socio-cultural history"**

The Asian American Studies faculty is at a loss by 1/3

Failure to return the position **endangers the recruitment and retention of students and faculty of color.**

This decision and its repercussions clearly **undermine the principles of the unanimously approved Strategic Plan** that states:

****"Develop a plan to recruit and retain faculty and administrators of African American and other American racial minorities, especially in areas where there is significant under representation."**

****"...a commitment to social inclusion [and] diversity"**

From [REDACTED]

Sent Thursday, November 17, 2005 2:34 pm

To [REDACTED]

Subject incase you don't know.

dear friends:

As some of you may already know, the Asian American History position, formerly held by Daryl Maeda (who moved to a better job at U of Colorado), was under review by the College Faculty Council (CFC). We found out last Friday that CFC HAS CUT the Asian American history position. This is a huge blow to the history department and the young Comparative American Studies department as this faculty position was part of both. Also, considering the history of this position (prestigious holder, unanimous approval in past reviewing), it is a strange decision - so much so that Nancy Dye and Dean Hirsch have both asked the CFC to reconsider and reevaluate it.

I know that many of you may not have taken a class with Maeda, any Asian American studies class, or even a History or Comparative American Studies class. This issue, however, is still something I think it is really important for us to get behind, as it has very wide implications explained well in the below letter that will appear in the review. We need to make our feelings known now, so as to guide a shifting institution (strategic plan, etc) in the way we as students and future Alumni want it to go.

The trick is, that the reevaluation CFC meeting happens on Friday (tomorrow) from 12noon to 2, long before the Review comes out. Although CFC and other relevant committees have received copies of this letter, the MOST IMPORTANT STEP right now is to show broad STUDENT SUPPORT behind reversing the decision. The History department and Comparative American Studies department are working very hard from inside the meeting to show why this position is vital, but what the CFC has not seen to this point is what the students think.

We think this position is vital, and that we think Ethnic Studies

academic disciplines MUST BE A PRIORITY for Oberlin College.

To make our support known, there is going to be a SILENT SIT-IN at COX on Friday at noon before and during the CFC reevaluation meeting. It will be silent so as to be more powerful, and we do NOT want to disturb the meeting in any way. It is GREAT that the meeting is even taking place. We just want our presence to be known by having a whole lot of bodies (with signs) at Cox when the CFC members come in - so they can SEE the student support behind this position. We will stay for the entire meeting, so that while they are in there, they know that we are all out there counting on them to make the right decision.

If you are interested in participating in this action, first EMAIL ME BACK RIGHT NOW so that we can get your name on the 'will be participating' list. This is real important, cuz if we cant get more than 50 or 60 bodies, it will NOT look impressive, and we may cancel the action. Then, there is a meeting TODAY at 4:30 about strategy, and a meeting late tonight to make signs. Tomorrow, we will try to gather at 11:30 to check numbers, but if you cannot or are not willing to not go to a 11-11:50 class, or leave early, then just head for Cox as soon as class is let out.

thanks, and please help. all you have to do is show up to make a really big difference.

From [REDACTED]
Sent Thursday, November 17, 2005 8:18 pm
Subject update of Asian American history position action tomorrow
Today at 4:30 We decided the following things about the actions tomorrow:

- Some people will be flyering before class tomorrow about the position cut and the sit-in.
- We are meeting outside of Wilder tomorrow at 11:30. We will then proceed to Cox at 11:45.
- For those that are in class until 11:50 proceed DIRECTLY to Cox so that CFC can see our numbers.
- This will be a SILENT PEACEFUL NON-OBTRUSIVE protest.
- Gina George and Melissa Sanchez are our spokespeople to CFC and other college administrators.
- Posters are being made tonight at 10pm in Wilder 202.

Thank you every for your support and continue to get the word out of people you know with confirmation emails sent to me at [REDACTED]@oberlin.edu

In Solidarity,
[REDACTED]

From [REDACTED]
Sent Friday, November 18, 2005 0:57 am
Subject Re: Tomorrow

Just to add:

There is a large poster that says "Asian American Studies NOW! - 35 years and going strong" or something like that. It would be great to get all of us around this poster... perhaps at the bottom of

the stairwell because then it will be hard to miss by faculty. Then we can all be together if CFC wants to discuss anything with us in particular.

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, November 17, 2005 7:27 pm
Subject: Tomorrow

>
> Hi everyone,
>
> So as you can tell by the slew of e-mails you have been receiving,
> there
> is a lot of stuff going on around the AsAm History Position. I
> just
> wanted to write and say I hope you'll will be present at the
> events
> tomorrow. It has been fabulous to see the interest and support
> from
> numerous other communities and it is necessary to have such a
> broad-based movement. But after all, this is very crucial to the
> AsAm
> Community. More importantly, since you'll have been involved in
> the
> process thus far it would be great for you'll to be at the
> "forefront,"
> sort of like spokespeople for the group, when necessary. Please
> let me
> know what you think about this.
>
> Thanks for all your work so far.
>
> Rita

Unknown author. "Asian American Studies Position Facts Sheet." (Unpublished, 2005)

Asian American Studies Position Facts Sheet

1. What's going on?

- ◆ The College Faculty Council (CFC) decided to **not reinstate** the Asian American Studies Position in the **History** and **Comparative American Studies (CAS)** Departments on Friday, November 11th.
- ◆ Nancy Dye requested that the CFC reconsider its decision.

This is the history

- I. The CFC has in the past **seven years** returned the position **twice** and this time Educational Plans and Policies Committee (EPPC) has given the position a **high recommendation** for renewal
- II. Asian American Studies has been at the center of a student, faculty, and staff struggle for **35 years** now
- III. Out of these struggles came the Comparative American Studies Department and a space was created for the study of marginalized communities in a **U.S. context**
- IV. **CFC and EPPC have enforced an unprecedented veil of secrecy over the entire process of ranking and cutting positions.**

2. Why is this important to You?

- ◆ Not having the position **compromises the History and CAS majors**
****CAS concentrations in “identity and diversity” and “histories and practices of social change” will be affected**
****History concentration in “ethnic of the united states”, “intellectual/cultural history” and “socio-cultural history”**

- ◆ The Asian American Studies faculty is at a loss by 1/3

- ◆ Failure to return the position **endangers the recruitment and retention of students and faculty of color.**

- ◆ This decision and its repercussions clearly **undermine the principles of the unanimously approved Strategic Plan** that states:

****“Develop a plan to recruit and retain faculty and administrators of African American and other American racial minorities, especially in areas where there is significant under representation.”**

****”...a commitment to social inclusion [and] diversity”**

**Undersigned members of the Asian American Studies NOW! Committee. 2005
 (letter to Nancy Dye, 2005)**

Dear President Dye,

The undersigned members of the Asian American Studies NOW! Committee and its allies find it shocking and unsettling that the College Faculty Council would decide to cut the Asian American history

(AAAS) boycotted the position of Professor Antoinette Charfaurous McDaniel, following her dismissal from the college. Oberlin students worked hard to repair relations with AAAS, and have convinced them to end the boycott. CFC's decision is likely to jeopardize this relationship once again.

- The presence of a strong Asian American history curriculum is essential for students who wish to pursue an academic concentration in Asian American Studies.

We would like to meet with you to discuss this situation in greater detail. We hope we can count on you for your continued support. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Appendix F:
Faculty
Letters and
Email
Correspon-
dence**

Appendix F: Faculty Letters and Email Correspondence

Cooper, J. (letter to concerned students, September 17, 2005)

Hi folks,

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you this week with the final proposal we made for the return of the Asian American History position, but you'll find it attached. We turned it in Friday, a week ago. We've heard that it has been sent to EPPC. I gathered from a statement that Dean Hirsch made to the first College Faculty Committee meeting that all proposals are pretty much automatically being given this treatment.

I'm anxious to continue working with you on this. One thing I strongly suggest, which you've probably already realized for yourselves, is that if it possible at this point, it would be very helpful to make sure that students with a lot of knowledge of the need for Asian American History get named to the positions on EPPC. If others have already been named, it would very helpful to talk to them about this issue. Also, any slots on the Strategic Plan committee for the curriculum will be vital for interests in Asian American studies, and any other ethnic studies, in the near future.

Those are just a few thoughts I have, now that we're past add/drop and the crunch of getting the semester off to a start. I'm happy to talk with anyone anytime about any of your concerns. I've finally decided on open office hours for this term: MW 10-11:30 and T 2-3:30, but feel free to contact me for an appointment at another time or just drop by if you see my office light on.

Hope everyone's had a good first 2 weeks of classes. best wishes, Jan
Saturday, September 17, 2005 6:55 am

Hogan, H. Chair and J. Cooper (request for permanent replacement made to College Faculty Council, September, 2005)

REQUEST FOR PERMANENT REPLACEMENT

Department/Program: Department of History
Comparative American Studies
Chair/Director: Heather Hogan, Chair
Jan Cooper, Director

Curricular Area of Request: Asian American History
Position is: Full time X, Part time _____ (specify FTE: _____)
.5 FTE History, .5 FTE Comparative American Studies

(Please attach separate sheets with numbered responses.) Summary (Brief description of position)

We request a permanent replacement for the position vacated by the resignation of Mr. Daryl Maeda. We request this position be placed jointly in the History Department and the Comparative American Studies Program(CAS), and be defined as Asian American history with the ability to teach comparative courses in American Studies. Twice in the past seven years, CFC and EPPC have thoroughly examined, deliberated over, and approved essentially the same Asian American history position. It is one of the most carefully scrutinized—and approved via faculty governance—faculty positions in recent memory.

The Asian American History position originated within the History Department at a time when the CAS did not yet exist. The creation of CAS, however, was predicated on the existence of the Asian American position in History. Over the past three years the courses offered by Mr. Maeda have become central to the CAS major while covering key aspects of American social, cultural and ethnic history for the History Department. In light of the fundamentally interdisciplinary nature of this position and its importance to both programs, we believe it appropriate that the position now become a joint appointment.

While the position will be reconfigured somewhat to reflect exciting new institutional realities, the basic contours of the position remain the same: the incumbent will teach the survey of Asian American history, specialized courses on the social, political, intellectual and/or cultural history of Asian Americans, the history of social movements in America, and comparative approaches to the study of race and ethnicity. Our conversations with the MRC and the Asian American Alliance indicate that there is strong student interest in these courses. Not returning the position will also adversely affect mentoring for Asian American and Pacific Islander students and the workload of other already burdened junior faculty who support them.

The Dean's Office will obtain data from the Registrar on course enrollments over the past five years. A copy will be sent to you so that you can indicate which courses are intended primarily for a general audience and so that you can add any comments you deem appropriate.

Here we note the types of audiences for the most recent courses, as offered by Mr. Maeda, while also listing Mr. Jung's courses and enrollments.

[Maeda: Fall 2002-Spring 2005]

* courses that were for a general audience in the sense that they did not have prerequisites and could be taken by anyone for Cultural Diversity and Social Sciences credits, but were also intended to provide foundational knowledge for CAS and History majors who would go on to take more topical courses at a

higher level

** courses that required consent of the instructor

***First Year Seminars for a general audience of first year students

Spring 2005

History 261: Race and Radicalism in the 1960s (enrollment 30)*

History 332: The Radical Challenge: (enrollment 13)**

Fall 2004

History 260: Asian American History (enrollment: 26)*

History 330: Unbearable Whiteness: The Social Construction of a Racial Category (enrollment: 13)**

FYSP 166: America's Concentration Camps (enrollment: 8)***

Spring 2004

History 261: Race and Radicalism in the 1960s (enrollment: 32)*

History 331: Asian American Cultural History (enrollment: 4)**

History 995: Private Reading (enrollment: 1)

Fall 2003

History 260: Asian American History (enrollment: 11)*

History 330: Unbearable Whiteness: The Social Construction of a Racial Category (enrollment: 12)**

FYSP 166: America's Concentration Camps (enrollment: 15)***

History 995: Private Reading (enrollment: 1)

Spring 2003

History 111: Asian American Cultural History (enrollment: 7)*

History 330: Unbearable Whiteness: The Social Construction of a Racial Category (enrollment: 12)**

Fall 2002

History 260: Asian American History (enrollment: 19)*

History 261: Race and Radicalism in the 1960s (enrollment: 30)*

[Singh Fall 2001-Spring 2002. One year non-continuing appointment in replacement of Jung]

Fall 2001

History 111: Malcolm X: Contemporary Icon (enrollment: 13)

History 260: Asian American History (enrollment: 23)

Spring 2002

History 256: Asian American Women's History (5)

History 259: Protest Movements of Color in the 1960s (15)

History 331: Colloquium in Asian American History (2)

[Jung Fall 1999-Spring 2001]

Spring 2001

History 119: The 1960s (Fr colloq) (enrollment 9)

History 264: Aliens and Citizens (enrollment 31)

History 331: Colloquium in Asian American History (enrollment 6)

Fall 2000

History 260: Asian American History (enrollment 30)

History 254: The Radical Tradition (enrollment 35)

Spring 2000

History 264: Aliens and Citizens (enrollment 35)

History 331: Colloquium in Asian American History (enrollment 9)

Fall 1999

History 119: The 1960s (Fr colloq) (enrollment 16)

History 260: Asian American History (enrollment (28)

1. Please briefly describe the current staffing pattern in your department or program. Who provides curricular contributions in what areas? Who provides research contributions in what areas?

History Department Staffing for Academic year 2005-06

United States

Clayton Koppes (1 FTE) Following a sabbatical in 2005-06 will return to the department in Fall 2006. U.S. history, with a chronological focus on the post-1940 period and specialization in the fields of cultural history (particularly film), political history, and diplomatic history.

Gary Kornblith (.67 FTE) U.S. history from the European invasion of North America through the late 19th century. Courses include the first half of American history survey, Revolutionary America and Early Republic, Jacksonian society, Industrial Revolution in America, Civil War and Reconstruction, and a seminar on Native American history. Recent publications include an essay on Revolutionary elites (with John Murrin of Princeton University) and an article on the coming of the Civil War. Currently collaborating with Carol Lasser on a book manuscript titled "Elusive Utopia: Race and Race Relations in Oberlin, 1833-2000."

Carol Lasser (.67 FTE) On leave, Fall 2005 - U.S. history, with a chronological focus on the 19th and 20th centuries and a specific focus on American women's history, as well as

abolition, slavery, and race in the 19th century. Also offers courses in Oberlin Community History as American History. Her research continues on various aspects of antebellum American women's history, but her major scholarly project is currently (with Gary Kornblith) a book tentatively entitled "Elusive Utopia: Race and Race Relations in Oberlin, 1833-2000)." She is also interested in methodology and pedagogy, central concerns in her course Oberlin Community History as American History.

Pablo Mitchell (1 FTE) Latino/a history, with a focus on the 19th and 20th centuries, and issues of gender and race interactions. Teaches history of sexuality, U.S. West. His research concentrates on U.S. Southwest history, along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Ellen Stroud (1 FTE) On leave Spring 2006 American Environmental history and urban history, with a chronological focus on the 19th and 20th centuries. She offers a range of courses in U.S. Urban and Environmental history. Her research interests include the environmental history of the northeastern United States, the intersections of cultural and environmental history, and issues of pedagogy and theory within the field of environmental history.

Carl Zimring (Visiting Assistant Professor, Spring 2006, in replacement of Ellen Stroud) Teaches U.S. Environmental history, and Recent America.

Europe

Lisa Abend (.5 FTE) On leave 2005-06. Teaches courses in early modern and modern European history. Teaching interests include early modern Spanish Empire; women and gender; the Spanish Civil War; and History and Memory. Current research interests include spiritualism in modern Spain.

Isaac Miller (1 FTE) On leave 2005-06. Medieval and Renaissance European history, with a focus on cultural and intellectual history. His research has been on the development of the concept of "individual" and he is expanding his research on the development of key concepts about culture and religion in European history. Has offered course work on the history of science.

Annemarie Sammartino (1 FTE) Modern Central European History. Teaches courses in intellectual history, women and gender, migration, a first year seminar on Freud's Vienna, and the Revolutions of 1989 in East Central Europe. Her research interests include the history of Central Europe, migration, and the history of citizenship and national belonging.

Leonard Smith (1 FTE) European history, with a chronological focus on the modern period (French Revolution to the present). Geographic coverage of Western Europe, with a methodological focus on social and cultural history, also diplomatic history. Recent curricular additions include World War II, the history of the body, and the French Empire. He continues to situate his research in France during and after World War I.

David Sepkoski (Visiting Assistant Professor of History, Fall 2005, in partial replacement of Isaac Miller) His teaching centers on the intellectual and cultural history of science in Early Modern and Modern Europe, particularly in France, Germany, and Britain. He is currently working on several projects focusing on various aspects of 17th and 18th century natural philosophy, including mathematics, physical theory, and geology/paleontology.

Other

[Japanese History .67 FTE, joint appointment in East Asian Studies. Authorized as a one year-non continuing position; currently pending return of the permanent position.]

Michael Fisher (1 FTE) South Asian history, covering its entire chronology through the modern histories of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Social and cultural and history which includes an examination of British imperialism in Asia and Africa. Environmental history of South Asia. Advanced courses on the British Empire in Asia, Africa, and Britain. Recent scholarship has been focused on the presence and influence of South Asians in Britain.

Gregory Hammond One-year non continuing position in Latin American history
In replacement of Steve Volk.

Heather Hogan (1 FTE) Russian and Soviet history, covering its entire chronology through the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reemergence of an independent Russia and successor states. Intermediate and advanced level courses offered in the pre-Petrine period (pre-1689), the Imperial period, and 20th century Russia and the Soviet Union, including social, labor, and women's history approaches. Teaches courses concerning Central Asia and is working on the compilation of a documents collection.

David Kelley (.67 FTE, joint appointment with East Asian Studies) Chinese history, covering its entire chronology through China's recent "emergence into modernity." Political, social and world history approaches. Also offers courses on Vietnam, European and American images of Asia ("Orientalism"), and World history. His research is on the Luo sect and transport workers in China from 1700-1900 as well as on themes of Buddhist-inspired social welfare in Ming and Qing China.

Shulamit Magnus (.33 FTE, joint appointment with Jewish Studies) Jewish history, and modern European history more generally. Her research covers areas of Jewish history, women's history, urban history, and issues of autobiography.

Steven Volk (1 FTE) On leave 2005-06. Latin American history, covering the chronology from pre-Columbian times to the present from a number of different approaches: gender studies, nationalism, peasants and the state, diplomatic history, and political history. He also offers courses in museum studies. His research includes: The Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and the location of her artwork in non-Mexican museums; Alexander Walker, a Scottish anatomist in the early nineteenth century who combined

scientific work, political support for Latin American independence, and popularized science/pseudoscience; the representation of Chile in the U.S. political memory.

Comparative American Studies Program Staffing for Academic year 2005-06

Gina Perez (1 FTE) Comparative American Studies core courses, including introduction, situated research and practicum (the CAS methods course), intermediate and capstone seminars in U.S. Latinas/os issues; first year seminar on Chicago as urban laboratory; the contribution of social science approaches to interdisciplinary study. Her research addresses U.S. Latinas/os and gender, political economy, migration, transnationalism, urban anthropology, poverty, Latina feminisms, and militarization and Latina/o youth.

Meredith Raimondo (1 FTE) On leave 2005-06. Comparative American Studies core courses, including introduction, situated research and practicum (the CAS methods course), intermediate and capstone seminars in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Studies; first year seminar in HIV-AIDS in America; the contribution of humanities and social science approaches to interdisciplinary study. Her research is on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Studies and Media and Representation; Space, Place, and Globalization; HIV/AIDS.

Lisa Hall (1 FTE) Leave replacement for Meredith Raimondo in 2005-06 and for Gina Perez in 2006-07. Comparative American Studies core courses, including introduction, intermediate classes and capstone seminars in contemporary Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender communities of color; art and contemporary activism; the contribution of humanities and social science approaches to interdisciplinary study. Her research delves into comparative racialization in the U.S., colonialization and Pacific Islander experience; forms of contemporary political art; and literary production by U.S. women of color, particularly lesbians of color and the Women in Print movement of the 1970s and 1980s;

Annette Portillo (teaching 1 course per semester) Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Native American Studies. Courses will include Native American Identities in comparative context, and comparisons of the testimonial literary form in Native American and Latina writing. Her research tests autobiographical and feminist theory against the strategies of Native American and Chicana writers.

2. Describe the area of curricular need briefly. Will existing areas be strengthened or will new areas be developed? Does this request aim to fill a knowledge gap, a skills gap, or some combination of the two? Does it facilitate the acquisition of skills characteristic of your discipline? What is the significance of this area relative to the rest of your curriculum?

This position addresses the college's need for courses covering Asian American history, the history of social movements in the United States, and historically-based methodologies in Comparative American Studies. The existing areas of Asian American history and U.S. social movements will be neither strengthened nor will new areas be

developed. Instead the existence of a much-needed area will be retained. Its return will prevent the re-creation of a knowledge gap, while enabling a stronger connection between historical approaches and the CAS Program to be instituted.

For the last several years, Asian American history has been a critical part of first the History Department, then the Comparative American Studies Program. The centrality of Asian American history at Oberlin reflects the significance of the field in the broader academy. Over the past decade, Asian American history has produced leading works in both the disciplines of History and American Studies. In the last two years, for instance, Asian American historians have received the following awards from the American Studies Association (ASA) and the Organization of American Historians (OAH). In 2004, the ASA awarded Catherine Ceniza Choy's Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History (Duke University Press) honorable mention for the Lora Romero First Book Publication Prize to while Kandice Chuh's Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique (Duke University Press) received the first prize. The ASA also gave the Yasao Sakabirara Prize for best paper presented by an international scholar at the annual meeting to Lily Cho (University of Western Ontario) for "Seeing through Smoke: Situating the Coolie within the Discourse of Freedom." In 2005, Mae Ngai's Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (Princeton University Press) won the OAH's Frederick Jackson Turner award for the best first book on American history while Nikhil Pal Singh's Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy (Harvard University Press) won the Liberty Legacy Foundation award for the best book on the civil rights during any era in U.S. history and Seema Sohi (University of Washington, Seattle) was awarded the Huggins-Quarles Award for graduate students for her dissertation project "Migration, Race, and Empire: South Asian Revolutionaries on the Pacific Coast."

Students, faculty and alumni fought for the inclusion of Asian American Studies in the curriculum for thirty years and welcomed Oberlin's Asian American History position as long overdue. The success of several courses by both Mr. Maeda and Mr. Jung (see above enrollment figures for Race and Radicalism in the 1960s, Radical Challenge, Radical Tradition) suggests that the history of social movements in the United States is an additional curricular gap that this position is well-situated to address. The popularity of Mr. Maeda's course on the history of Whiteness as a racial category is further evidence that the college would be well-served by a position that emphasizes the history of social movements across the political spectrum in the US. In addition to coursework in Asian American history, the History Department and CAS program expect the incumbent to offer HIST 2XX Grassroots: Social Movements on the Left and Right in American History. Such a course is especially needed for CAS's concentration in History and Practices of Social Change.

3. Have alumni surveys or other feedback such as assessment surveys indicated specific educational needs in this area? How will this position enable you to meet such needs?

The Asian American Alliance (AAA) and the Filipino American Students Association (FASA), as well as the more recently formed Asian American Studies NOW

Committee, have worked with faculty and staff and on their own constantly for over thirty years to demonstrate the educational need in Asian American History at Oberlin. In a letter dated December 13, 2004, AAA wrote to the College Faculty Council to express concern over the lack of replacements after initial requests for Mr. Maeda and Mr. Dhingra's leaves. At that time they stated "We have succeeded in building widespread momentum in support of Asian American Studies, and student interest in these classes is constantly rising." They also observed that the Asian American History position and Sociology positions "fulfill the role of organizational advisors and assist in defining and achieving our goals as an active and vibrant community on campus. There are very few faculty with the expertise necessary to fulfill these roles."

The CAS faculty have had numerous conversations with AAA students over the past two years about AAA's desire for expanded coverage of Asian American Studies in the program. Returning this position would not constitute an expansion of the coverage, but it would at least prevent a shrinkage. Because of the reconfiguration of the position as a joint appointment, it would, however, make the importance of Asian American Studies knowledge and methodologies more obviously a central part of the CAS program's comparative project.

a. Does this request reflect advice from the latest Program Review, or does it reflect recent developments in your discipline? If yes, please give details.

The last History Department Program Review (1996) devoted significant attention to the teaching of ethnic studies in the History Department. At that time the outside reviewers were helping the department think through upcoming hiring possibilities on the U.S side (the position left vacant by the resignation of Guerin Gonzales in 1995 and the projected retirement of Geoff Blodgett). As well, the reviewers heard from a significant number of students who expressed concern about retaining Latina/o and Borderlands history and/or adding Asian American history. With the appointment of Pablo Mitchell to the reconfigured Guerin Gonzales position and the reallocation of the "Blodgett" slot to Asian American history, the History Department significantly expanded its curricular offerings in the area of race, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Comparative American Studies is in only its third year of existence, and therefore has not yet undergone program review. It was created, however, with the recognition that the three subject areas most needed were Asian American, Latina/o American, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies. Since the History Department already had Moon-Ho Jung at that time and Sociology was in the process of hiring Pawan Dhingra into tenure track positions, the core faculty for CAS were hired in the other two fields. Thus the program was created with the expectation that whoever filled the Asian American History position would be thoroughly involved in CAS. The CAS Program further institutionalized the relationship in 2003-04 by seeking courtesy appointments for Mr. Maeda, as well as Mr. Dhingra and Mr. Mitchell.

It must be noted that the Oberlin CAS program is already gaining recognition nationally as a new model for American Studies programs, especially at small liberal arts

colleges. It has drawn its unique comparative approach from combining its core faculty's courses comparative approaches to American Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer Studies with course offerings in Asian American Studies, Women's Studies, and African American Studies, as well as scholarship in the more "traditional" areas of American Studies in literature, sociology, and history, all viewed through a sense of America in a transnational context. Many in the field of American Studies consider this approach optimal. Losing the components of Asian American history and the history of social movements that are fundamental to the CAS Program's comparative approach would be devastating. It would also undo the difficult rehabilitation of reputation the college was forced to undertake with the Asian American Studies Association due to the national controversy over the institution's refusal to reappoint Antoinette Charfauros McDaniel in fall 2001 and the subsequent boycott of that position by the national Asian American Studies Association.

4. How many courses are required to meet the curricular need? Please list the courses likely to be taught as a result of the replacement, including course title, level, and anticipated enrollments. Would any be Freshman-Sophomore Colloquia, for example? Also provide brief course descriptions.

We envision a rotation of the following courses:

CAST 100. Introduction to Comparative American Studies

The course introduces students to the complexity of American social and cultural formations, with particular emphases on sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and gender, and to various methodologies of comparative analysis. Previously this course has been taught only by core CAS faculty, but the program would like to expand the areas of expertise drawn into its design and pedagogy. An Asian American Studies historian will provide a depth of welcome new perspectives. Enrollment limit 25.

First Year Seminar.

Profs. Jung, Singh and Maeda each developed a course designed for first year students and we would expect the new incumbent to offer a first year seminar in one of her or his areas of interest. Enrollment limit: 14.

CAST/HIST 260. Asian American History

This course is an introduction to the history of peoples of Asian ancestry in the United States and the construction of an Asian American collectivity. Major themes will include the place of Asian Americans in the American imagination, migrations, labor, communities, and responses to social and legal discrimination. The categories of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality will figure prominently as students explore similarities and differences among Asian American experiences. Enrollment limit: 40.

CAST/HIST 2XX Grassroots: Social Movements on the Left and Right in American History

Grassroots organizing has been a vital force in American culture throughout the nation's history. This course surveys the history of community-based social movements

from the nineteenth century to the present and will address organizing ideologies and tactics, major events, and significant individuals. Topics will include labor unionization, prohibition, anticommunism, civil rights movements, student activism, antiabortion campaigns, environmental justice, and the rise of the Christian right. Enrollment limit: 30.

CAST/HIST 331. Asian American Cultural History

Throughout Asian American history, culture has provided Asian Americans with an arena in which to protest injustice, express their needs and desires, and tackle issues of race, ethnicity, nation, class, gender, and sexuality. This course explores not only how Asian American cultural productions (including poems, novels, drama, films, and everyday social practices) have responded to their social contexts, but also how culture has produced Asian American communities. Enrollment limit 12.

CAST 4xx: Capstone Seminar

This course will provide students with an opportunity to pursue in-depth research on specific topics using a range of complex disciplinary sources. Its focus will depend on the faculty member's areas of expertise. It enables CAS majors to consolidate and hone the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches that they have studied throughout their major. Enrollment limit: 12

5. Will this position promote interdisciplinary teaching and interaction? Please attach letters from chairs of departments and programs that are likely to be influenced substantially.

As a shared appointment, the position obviously enacts an interdisciplinary collaboration between History and Comparative American Studies. A colleague thoroughly involved in History and core CAS faculty activities will be able to reinforce coordination between the two departments in curricular planning and special events. It will also enhance the coverage of American topics in other departments, such as English and Sociology, which depend heavily on historical perspective and are developing deeper interests in ethnic studies.

CAS stands to further benefit from this collaboration in other ways. In the past two years, Gina Pérez and Meredith Raimondo, both tenure-track junior faculty members appointed to CAS in 2003, have devoted remarkable energy to the development of CAS. Due to faculty illness and leave patterns, much of the burden of constructing a coherent and meaningful curriculum was left to them, and they have admirably filled the void by creating a model interdisciplinary program that is already gaining national recognition and praise. The successful launching of the CAS program has led to considerable enrollment and advising pressure, however. In the past two years, the CAS introductory courses have been filled nearly to capacity (see below).

CAS 100

Fall 2003

Spring 2004

enrollment: 19 (limit 25)

enrollment: 24 (limit 25)

Fall 2004	enrollment: 29 (limit 30)
Spring 2005	enrollment: 23 (limit 25)
Fall 2005 (as of 8/26/05)	enrollment: 23 (limit 25) -note this is with "staff" listed for pre-registration

CAS already had 25 majors at the end of Spring 2005, an average of 12.5 majors per FTE in the program. This average is well above the college norm. As female junior faculty with strong commitments to the Latina/o and LGBTQ communities, Ms. Pérez and Ms. Raimondo also shoulder considerable informal advising responsibilities. The addition of a .5 FTE would significantly alleviate the advising and teaching pressure on the core CAS faculty.

Furthermore, CAS has flourished based in no small measure on the presence of Asian American history in the college curriculum. CAS majors are required to complete coursework in three categories: (a) Identity and Diversity; b) Globalization, Transnationalism, and Nation; c) Histories and Practices of Social Change. Asian American history is a cornerstone of the first requirement. Without Asian American history, students would have far less opportunity to obtain vital training in historical methodologies. Courses by Mr. Maeda on social movements in the US, moreover, have become central to the third concentration. The reconfigured position will allow CAS to continue to offer students a full curriculum in historical methodologies and the histories of American social movements.

Finally, while CAS stands to benefit substantially from returning this position, the costs of not returning the position are even more significant. The elimination of Asian American history from the curriculum would be devastating to the program and to the core and affiliated faculty, many of whom have devoted much of their time and energy at the beginnings of their scholarly careers to the success of CAS. Such a decision would also leave only one faculty position solely devoted to Asian American studies at the college (Pawan Dhingra in the Sociology department), placing significant added service and curricular responsibilities on yet another junior tenure-track faculty member.

6. How does this request relate to the overall college curriculum? Will these courses help students fulfill institutional graduation requirements? Will they enable your department to better serve the needs of non-majors? Will they affect the majors of other departments and programs?

In the past decade, Oberlin College has built upon its well-deserved reputation as a leader in the study of race relations in the United States. Institutional commitments in African American, Asian American, Latina/o, and Native American Studies have created a curriculum that is second to none in liberal arts colleges in educating students in the complexities of race and ethnicity in the nation. While the college has recently hired specialists in Asian American sociology and Asian American literature, Asian American history remains a cornerstone of this critical new curricular focus of the college. We

stress that not only Asian American history is served by this position. To properly historicize social movements and the experience of other ethnicities, a trained historian is necessary, not those who specialize in other disciplines. The overall college curriculum would thus be significantly weakened by the absence of an Asian American historian.

This replacement position also reflects several of the institutional priorities set forth in the recently-approved Strategic Plan. In addition to exemplifying “the intellectual interconnections across Oberlin’s curriculum” and “foster[ing] faculty communication and collaboration across disciplinary, departmental, and divisional lines,” the Asian American history position would offer faculty support to students for community service and service learning. Both departments have committed significant resources to such endeavors and Mr. Maeda had begun to establish and incorporate components of service learning into his courses before his resignation.

All of Mr. Maeda’s courses fulfilled the “cultural diversity” requirement; many of the courses taught in the History Department routinely offer “WR” or “Wri” certification, as do CAS courses. History courses bear the social science designation and thus help students fulfill that portion of the distribution requirements for graduation.

7. How will the replacement affect the majors of other departments and programs? Please attach letters from chairs of departments and programs that are likely to be influenced substantially. Chairs should address the nature and value of the proposed replacement from their departments’/programs’ point of view.

Majors in the English and Sociology Departments stand to lose if this position is not returned, given that both departments seek to cover American culture and society. Asian American literary production and social issues are rapidly expanding scholarly fields. It would behoove any English or Sociology major attempting an honors project or graduate studies in these fields to learn about the complexities of the histories of their subjects. Indeed, at this moment in history it is a disservice to students interested in the culture and social issues of the US in general not to make Asian American history available.

We have asked Scott McMillin and Daphne John to further address these observations from the point of view of their departments in separate letters.

8. Please compare your current staffing pattern and curriculum with that of five and ten years ago. What changes, if any, have there been, and why?

In 1994-95, the History Department was authorized at the following staffing levels:

Europe: 3 FTE positions:

- Colish - medieval and Renaissance-Reformation
- Smith - modern European history
- Soucy - modern Continental Europe

United States: 4.34 FTE positions:

- Blodgett - post-Civil War to 1930s
- Koppes - post-World War II
- Kornblith - (.67 FTE) - colonial and early republic
- Lasser - (.67 FTE) - 19th and 20th century women
- Guerin-Gonzales - Borderlands

Other: 4.34 FTE positions:

- DiCenzo - (.67 FTE in History) - Japan
- Fisher - South Asia
- Hogan - Russia/Soviet Union
- Kelley - (.67 FTE in History) - China
- Volk - Latin America

A variety of factors combined to significantly alter the configuration of the U.S. and European curriculum over the past 5-6 years, which might best be described in narrative terms, particularly given the degree of difficulty in filling some positions, the pattern of leave replacements, and part-time appointments.

United States

The resignation of Guerin Gonzales in 1995 led to the non-continuing appointments of Linda Delgado, then Benson Tong. CFC authorized a permanent replacement in this field which was filled by a one-year appointment of Javier Pescador, and then Pablo Mitchell beginning on a continuing appointment in 2000. With the impending retirement of Geoff Blodgett and his shift to half-time, the department reconfigured this position and hired Moon-Ho Jung in the fall of 1999 to teach Asian American history. Jung resigned in 2001 and, following a one-year replacement (Jaideep Singh), Daryl Maeda began a continuing appointment in academic year 2002-03. Maeda resigned effective June 30, 2005.

Koppes, Kornblith and Lasser were on administrative appointments in the mid-to latter 1990s, with Koppes fully replaced by Stradling, Sackman and ultimately by Stroud; and with Kornblith and Lasser only partially replaced. Between Fall 2001 and Spring 2004, Lasser's appointment has varied between .5 and .6, reflecting her work as director of OCEAN.

Kozol was jointly-appointed on a continuing basis in Women's Studies (.67 FTE) and History (.33 FTE) in 1997-98, but resigned from her appointment in the History Department in 2000.

Europe

With the retirement of Bob Soucy in June 1998, the "Soucy" position was reconfigured as Central Europe since 1815 and in 1999 Rita Chin began a continuing appointment.

Chin resigned in 2003. Following a one-year replacement, Annemarie Sammartino was hired in the continuing position beginning Fall 2004 in Modern Central European history.

Shulamit Magnus joined the department in 1998 on a joint appointment (.33 in History, .67 in Jewish Studies)

Isaac Miller held a two-year appointment as Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow in 1999-2001; he was hired to fill the continuing tenure-track appointment in replacement of Colish who retired in June 2001.

Lisa Abend was hired as temporary replacement for the leaves of Rita Chin and Len Smith during the academic years 2001-03. In Fall 2003, she began a three year, non-continuing half time appointment, at the end of which the position will become a .5 FTE continuing tenure-track position and a permanent addition to staff in the History Department. [There has been some temporary adjustment to her fractional appointment due a gift from a donor in support of the teaching of Spanish history.]

In 2002-04 we enjoyed 4 extra courses taught by Mellon Post-doctoral Visiting Fellow David Šepkoski in the History of Science. In 2004-05 Šepkoski taught five courses, in partial replacement of Isaac Miller (on leave) and as Mead-Swing Assistant Professor in the History of Science.

The Department is currently authorized at the following staffing levels:
United States 5.34 FTE

Kornblith - (.67 FTE) - colonial and early republic
Lasser - (.67 FTE) - 19th and 20th century women, Oberlin history
[Maeda - Asian American history]
Mitchell - Latina/o, Sexuality
Stroud - U.S. Environmental History
Koppes - U.S. 20th c diplomatic, political

Europe 3.5 FTE

Abend (.5 FTE) - Early Modern Europe
Miller - Medieval and Early Modern History
Sammartino - Modern Central Europe
Smith - Modern Western Europe

Other 4.67FTE

[DiCenzo – Japan (.67 FTE in History; .33 in East Asian Studies) DiCenzo retired at the end of academic year 2004-05. A one year non continuing replacement was authorized; a decision is pending on the permanent return of this position.]

Fisher - South Asia
Hogan - Russia/Soviet Union
Kelley - (.67 FTE in History) - China

Magnus - (.33 FTE in History) – Jewish history
Volk - Latin America

The History Department was asked to support institutional initiatives through a spousal appointment (2003), and in the release of a colleague for administrative service (2000). We were expanded by virtue of these two separate cases by 1.5FTE. Our staffing five years ago, in 2000-01, thus stood at 12 FTE; ten years ago, in 1994-95, we were authorized at 11.67 FTE. The additional .33 came with the joint appointment of Shulamit Magnus (.67 FTE in Jewish Studies).

Among the most significant curricular initiatives of the recent past are the contribution that historians are making to the First Year Seminar program, with the following offerings:

Abend: Understanding World War I
Fisher: Religion, Politics, and Ethnicity in South Asian History
Hogan: Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Central Asia: Great Games and Silk Roads
Kelley: Worldview and History: Approaches to the History of the World
Kornblith: Collision of Cultures in North America, 1492-1700
[Maeda: America's Concentration Camps]
Magnus: Who Was a Jew? Boundaries of Identity
Miller: Diversity and Cultural Interactions in Medieval Spain
Sammartino: Freud's Vienna: Artists, Intellectuals and Anti-Semites at the Fin-de-Siecle
Mitchell: American Mixed Blood
Smith: Europe in Revolution: 1848
Stroud: The Body in Environmental History
Volk: How Images Matter: Latin America through U.S. Eyes

Ten years ago, Ethnic Studies or Queer Studies of any sort except in the fields of African American Studies and Women's Studies were only a dream for students and faculty interested in a more multicultural approach to teaching American subject matter. Five years ago, faculty and students were organizing to propose the creation of the CAS Program. From the beginning, they assumed that Asian American Studies would be a principal part of the program.

9. Please project, if possible, the staffing pattern and curriculum of five years hence, and comment as appropriate,
a. with internal adjustments (for example, by replacing under-subscribed courses or by offering them in alternate years), retraining (with or without funding for released time), use of temporary replacements, replacements of projected vacancies, built-in leave replacements, etc., assuming no permanent replacement;

Over the past 10-15 years, the study of race and ethnicity in the United States has

become increasingly specialized as well as theoretically sophisticated and hence has generated complex historiographies which American historians in other sub disciplines cannot be expected to command. Over the course of the 1990s, it became increasingly clear that we could not stretch our FTEs in U.S. history to hire someone competent to teach both Asian American and Latino/a history. Should we be unable to hire in the area of Asian American history, it would be dropped from the History department curriculum.

We must also stress that the History faculty is fully engaged, with strong enrollments in existing courses, The chart below provides History's overall enrollments during the past ten years.

	Total enrollments	# of sections	Students/section
1995-96	1578	50	31.6
1996-97	1509	55	27.4
1997-98	1665	55	30.3
1998-99	1757	59	29.8
1999-2000	1522	54	28.2
2000-01	1525	67	22.8
2001-02	1520	57	24.5
2002-03	1534	61	24.9
2003-04	1580	67	23.6
2004-05	1613	63	25.6
10yr ave	1580	59	26.7

These figures should also be understood in light of the substantial contribution the department has made in recent years to the First Year Seminar Program and its initiative to provide a 'small-group' experience for our students. In short, redeployment of faculty resources is not a realistic approach toward addressing the curricular need in Asian American history and the history of social movements in America.

Enrollments in the courses of the Comparative American Studies Program show that their core faculty are similarly fully engaged with their current teaching assignments. Furthermore as both core faculty are untenured, and covering subjects in high demand but not covered elsewhere in the curriculum, they should not be expected to develop a new expertise in such a different area.

b. with appropriate internal adjustments, etc., assuming the permanent replacement.

The History Department and the East Asian Studies program hopes to be authorized to begin a search for a tenure-track appointment in the area of Japanese history early in academic year 2005-06. It must be remembered, however, that the components of East Asian Studies constitute fields of training and scholarship entirely different from those of Asian American Studies. It was recognition of that fact that moved the college to

create the Asian American History position in the first place.

The U.S. wing of the History Department will change in the immediate future with the resignation of Daryl Maeda and the return of Clayton Koppes to full time teaching in 2006-07.

Isaac Miller requested and was granted a year's leave without pay for 2005-06 so that he could accompany his wife who recently received an academic appointment at the University of Melbourne. Lisa Abend requested and received a leave without pay for academic year 2005-06 to pursue her interest in journalistic writing. We very much hope that both Isaac and Lisa will return to the history department but must recognize that their leaves may ultimately result in resignations. If so, the department would request a return of the "Miller" position. We believe it unlikely that the "Abend" position would be returned as this was an expansion in our authorized FTE to respond to an important institutional initiative.

The History Department has gone through a significant round of retirements, a substantial reconceptualization of our curriculum, and a period of hiring a new cohort of tenure-track faculty in the past five years. Currently, the most senior cohort - Fisher, Hogan, Kelley, Kornblith, Lasser, Magnus, Volk - is approximately the same age and began their teaching and scholarly careers at approximately the same time and is not likely to retire within the next five years.

Five years hence, the CAS Program expects to have tenured both Ms. Perez and Ms. Raimondo, and firmly established the curriculum that they have created. It already has attracted 25 majors in just its first two years of existence, and grown from 2 graduating majors in its first year to 6 graduating majors in its second. The program expects to be serving even larger numbers of both majors and non-majors in the coming years.

10. State, in as much detail as possible, what new resources (or additional demand on existing resources) would be required to support this position (e.g. space, library, staff, equipment).

Since this is a request for the return of a current faculty position, there should be few additional resources needed in terms of office or secretarial support. Over the past several years, the library has been adding to its resources in the field of Asian American history. While it is possible that the new hire would seek to build in a particular area of research, we would not envision the need for a major allocation of funds.

11. Please feel free to provide additional pertinent information that will aid in the evaluation of this request. For example, does this request address any issues raised in the long-range strategic planning report?

As discussed in the "3Rs" report, hiring should be perceived as a process that

builds our community as well as shapes our curriculum. In recent years the college has had great success in recruiting a more diverse faculty; we have had less success in retaining faculty of color. We've been particularly unsuccessful in keeping faculty hired for the Asian American History position. Mr. Jung resigned from Oberlin to take a position at the University of Washington, Seattle; Mr. Maeda resigned to assume a post at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Well-trained scholars in Asian American History are in high demand, suggestive of the growing importance and vitality of this field. One advantage of returning the Asian American History position as a joint-appointment with CAS, however, is that it is likely to make it even more attractive to talented scholars in the field, as their research and teaching benefit from increased ties to interdisciplinary programs like CAS.

Mindful of the critical role the development of a Comparative American Studies program has contributed to the building of a diverse community, we urge the return of the permanent position in Asian American history. Eliminating Asian American history from our curriculum after a four-year effort to rebuild Oberlin's national reputation with the Asian American Studies Association (i.e. the fallout from Ms. McDaniels' dismissal) will adversely affect our ability to recruit and retain young faculty working in the general area of race and ethnicity in the Americas.

Furthermore, students and faculty have worked tirelessly for over thirty years to create a place in the Oberlin curriculum for Asian American Studies. To lose our permanent faculty position in its unique history, and the role that history has played in social movement history of the United States, would be construed by many as much more than expedience in a time of financial cutbacks. It would break a crucial promise made in the past for the future of the institution.

John, D. & J. Cooper (letter to Dean Jeffery Witmer and members of the College Faculty Council, December 16, 2004)

DATE: 16 December 2004

TO: Dean Jeffrey Witmer, Chair, College Faculty Council

FROM: Daphne John, Chair, Department of Sociology

Jan Cooper, Director, Comparative American Studies Program

SUBJECT: Curricular replacement in Asian American Studies

In consultation with the History Department, we are writing to urge the College Faculty Council to reconsider its decision not to grant replacement for Pawan Dhingra's full year leave in 2005-06. Specifically, we feel that if two full semester courses in Asian American studies can be filled, the needs of Sociology and Comparative American Studies majors can be met, while also serving the growing number of non-majors who desire instruction in Asian American and immigrant social sciences knowledge.

You will note that this is a significant reduction in the request that the Sociology Department originally made for a full year's replacement for Mr. Dhingra. We recognize

that the budget is extremely tight this year and appreciate that you have had to make many difficult decisions. We also appreciate the mini-course to bring in someone to offer a special topic in Asian American subject matter that the Dean has approved for Sociology. However, we do not think that will be nearly sufficient to keep the Asian American curricular areas in Sociology and Comparative American Studies at a minimum level of strength.

Several years ago the College supported the Sociology department in making a commitment to cover Asian American subject matter, and, while at times that has been a rocky path, student thirst for the study of Asian American and immigration social phenomena has finally started to be met since Mr. Dhingra's arrival. We feel that failing to meet the needs for that work at this time would set back the important progress made in the past two years in establishing this crucial area in the Sociology curriculum. The department feels that other arrangements can be made to cover the rest of the courses that Mr. Dhingra would have taught next year, but no one can cover the two Asian American courses that he would have been scheduled to teach.

Furthermore, the Comparative American Studies Program is at a similarly precarious stage in establishing its coverage of Asian American Studies. It depends entirely on the Sociology and History departments to provide courses in that field, which is one of its four main emphases (including African American, Latino/a American, and Sexuality studies). Since Daryl Maeda is scheduled to be on leave for one semester, and will not teach any courses focused on Asian-American subjects when he is on duty, majors who plan to finish concentrations in Asian American topics will be thwarted. Other majors as well will lose the opportunity to pursue study in this area to contribute to other sorts of comparative analysis.

We urge Council to remember that Asian American studies, especially in Sociology, is a well-developed field, quite unlike East Asian studies (although having connections in that geographic area), and having very distinct differences from other sorts of ethnic studies. Oberlin students have fought long and hard to convince the faculty to recognize its importance and now that we have, we are loath to neglect it, even for a year.

Witmer, K. (letter to Dominick and author, December 15, 2005)

Subject: A/PA Letter of December 15

Dear Dominick and Ashley:

I write in response to the letter that you and other students sent to the College Faculty Council in December. At that time the Council had not authorized leave replacement in History and Sociology that would allow for the offering of Asian American Studies courses in 2005-06. I had planned to write to you quite a while ago, but delayed my response due to some uncertainties. There have been developments since December that have resulted in the Council authorizing a full-year replacement position in Sociology that will include courses that deal with the Asian American experience. The Sociology Department will begin a search to fill this

recently authorized position. I am writing to the two of you (and sending a similar note to the student representatives of CAS, who also wrote to the Council in December), but you should feel free to forward this note to the others who signed your letter.

Sincerely,
Jeff Witmer
Acting Dean and Chair of College Faculty Council

Friday, February 25, 2005 10:54 am
