

# ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN & FEMINISM

♀ a panel discussion with ♀

Shamita Das Dasgupta

(co-founder of Manavi and Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University)

Jennifer Lim

(VP of NOW's New York City Chapter)

Ai-jen Poo

(staff coordinator of the Women Workers Project at CAAAV)

Moderated by

Alexandra Suh

(teaches Asian American Women's Studies in NYC and is a member of the Women Workers Project at CAAAV and the Rainbow Center in Flushing, Queens)

Date: Thursday, MARCH 6, 1997

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Thomas Hunter 105

co-sponsored by the Asian American Studies Program and  
the Asian Pacific American Student Alliance

*History*

- 1. Is there an Asian American Women's movement, if so when and where was it formed?**
- 2. Would you say that the AA women's movement was an offshoot of the mainstream movement?**
- 3. Is the development of AA feminism parallel with the development of mainstream feminism?**
- 4. Where does the development of the Asian American Movement fit into the development of the AA Women' movement? (If applicable)**

*Transition*

- 5. Given the panel members' backgrounds, what are their individual perspectives in dealing with the mainstream women's movement and/or community issues as Asian American Women activists/femminists?**
- 6. What were specific reasons for their actions and the direction that they took?**

*Closure*

- 7. If indeed there are issues that cross cultural boundaries, is there possibility for more inter-community development of an AA Women's movement? Example: CAAAV's women worker's project, etc.**
- 8. The question of activist and feminist, with the issues that have been dealt with, is there is a separation of these labels?**

*Q & A session*

## Moderator

**Alexandra Suh** is a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University. She has taught Asian American Literature at Hunter College and Asian American Women's Studies at Barnard. She is a member of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence and a founding member of CAAAV's Women Workers Project. She has also served on the board of the Rainbow Center, a Korean women's center based in Flushing, Queens.

## Panelists

**Shamita Das Dasgupta** is a full-time faculty member with the Psychology department at Rutgers University-Newark. She co-founded Manavi in 1985, a pioneering organization that addresses issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, as well as other forms of victimization of South Asian women in the U.S. She is on the advisory boards of the National Clearinghouse for the Defense for Battered Women and the Battered Women's Justice Project. Ms. Das Dasgupta is well recognized for her work in the area of domestic violence and cultural diversity. Her work has attracted attention of various national and international media such as *The New York Times*, *India Today*, *Ms. Magazine*, *The Progressive*, *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *India Abroad*, *India Worldwide*, and *Manushi*. She has lectured extensively at various universities, women's organizations, and corporations on such diverse array of topics as violence against women, cultural diversity, Asian women's leadership, and South-Asian immigrant experiences. She is a recipient of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's 'Justice in Action' award, as well as Children's Hope award for 1995. Ms. Das Dasgupta has published several research papers on gender issues and a book entitled [The Demon Slayers and Other Stories, Bengali Folk Tales](#). Currently she is editing a book on South Asian American women in America with Rutgers University Press.

**Jennifer Lim**, a graduate of New York Law School, has been a member of the New York bar since 1987. She has maintained a strong commitment to a broad range of community and public interest activities. These include the fight to expand opportunities for women; the provision of services for senior citizens; advocacy of tenant and immigrant rights (*pro bono*.) From 1987 to 1993 Ms. Lim was a partner in the progressive downtown law firm of Donovan & Lim. She successfully fought for bilingual ballots so that American citizens who aren't proficient in English would no longer be excluded from the election process. She is the former Chairperson of the Committee on Women in the Workplace of the New York City National Organization of Women and currently serves as Vice President of its N.Y.C. chapter. During 1996, she served as a Policy Aide to Mark Green, the Public Advocate for the City of New York.

**Ai-jen Poo** has been a volunteer at the New York Asian Women's Center for about four years. She started volunteering at CAAAV on April 1995 during the citywide civil disobedience against policy brutality and the CUNY cuts. Since then, she has been a member of CAAAV's Women Workers Project committee. She is currently the part-time program coordinator for the project. She graduated from Columbia University in 1996 in Women and Gender Studies. In her final year, she became involved in the student struggle for Ethnic Studies, which marked a critical time of development, both personally and politically. Another current project that she is involved with is PYRAMID, an urban youth project for young Asian women based in Flushing, Queens.



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