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Mind if We CRAASH Here?

Under-funded Asian American Studies Program incites student action—the CRAASH

Tracy Neiman

Contributing Writer

The Coalition for the Revitalization of Asian American Studies at Hunter (CRAASH) is a new group headed by, and currently made up of, four students who would like to see progress made to fund Hunter's Asian American Studies Program. CRAASH is led by Olivia Lin and classmates Jessica Lee, Chris Eng and Emil Marquita.

The group was formed after Olivia Lin was rebuffed in her attempt to declare an Asian American Studies minor. Lin said she was informed that the department "couldn't offer any minors [that] term because they didn't have a permanent head, and [there was] no one to run the program because there [was] no salary for anyone who [chose] to take this position." Upon further probing, Lin found out that the pay for that position was nonexistent because both CUNY and Hunter provide little or no funding for the program, a fate apparently



Many students are not aware of the myriad opportunities offered by the Hunter College Education Abroad Program. Students may choose from a vast range of programs and destinations, from studying Performing Arts in India to Race, Gender and Culture in Brazil. Read more about these options in Tyler Ciccurrelli's article on page 5.

photo by Charlotte Cusumano



image courtesy of CRAASH

common to many ethnic studies departments.

The situation is made more complex by an increasingly tight departmental budget, which consists of only \$500 for supplies. According to an adjunct professor in the Asian American

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Hunter Helps the Homeless

Students take part in the Midnight Run

Dave Mitchell

Associate Features Editor

Twenty or so volunteers met at Hunter on Thursday, September 20, to join the Midnight Run, an organization devoted to helping Manhattan's poor. Students showed homeless people in midtown Manhattan they cared by distributing donated clothing and food.

Hillel, Hunter's Jewish group, got involved with Midnight Run last year and hosted the event this year as well. Some other groups joined Hillel, including the Women's Rights Coalition, Amnesty International and Agents of Change.

Hillel tries to collect donations and make a run every month, citing *Tikkunolam*, which is a Hebrew concept, meaning, "to repair the world."

Midnight Run is made up of "a consortium of churches, synagogues, schools

and other civic groups in metropolitan New York," according to their website, and has been headed by Dale Williams since 1991. He is their only full-time employee and was once homeless himself.

Bill Gemake, who has volunteered with the organization for seventeen years, met the volunteers at Hunter and explained how a run works. They left just before 10 p.m., piling into a silver Ford van or walking to the first of several midtown destinations. More important than handing out gently worn clothing, toiletries and food, was the chance for those living on the streets to spend time with people who genuinely want to help. On the run, volunteers asked, "How are you doing?" and "Is there something I can get for you?" Midnight Run helps people who don't usually see this sort of kindness.

"I get people who call me a bum ... that hurts," one man said. "Every time I hear it,

it hurts." He said that a real estate developer from Tokyo and a lawyer from Queens recently pushed him and his companion of 37 years out of their apartment. The story is common: living expenses get too high, and the person, or people, have no support system to fall back on.

When the van made a stop, the first thing recipients usually asked for was clothing. Most asked for razors, shampoo and soap next. Gemake recalled Dale Williams once saying, "There is nothing worse than knowing you smell and not being able to do anything about it." The majority of homeless people that the volunteers met on the street were polite and well-spoken, some even held bachelor's degrees. Gemake said it was those in need of help who kept him involved.

"I was overwhelmed," he said, "not just

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NEWS

HWRC Gets Down to Business

The Hunter Women's Rights Coalition continues their fight this year

Anthony Bongiorno

News Editor

The Hunter Women's Rights Coalition, headed by Jerin Alam, is still going strong, with a large number of events and plans for the new school year on their agenda.

We decided to do a beginning of the year check-in with the HWRC to ask them about some of their newer plans, and how they feel about New York's recent refusal of abstinence only funding, a one-up for pro-choicers. Jerin Alam, the group's president, refers to this move as a "victory."

"Studies have shown that abstinence only education does not work and that these programs sometimes gave incorrect health information to students," said Alam. "In a world where AIDS has become a pandemic, the last thing we need is mis-education about sexual health. I am grateful that New York is one of the states that refused the federal funding for this waste of money. The decision sends out a clear message to the federal government and I hope they are listening."

Alam then detailed some future plans of the HWRC to support reproductive rights, and their team-up with Planned Parenthood. "I met with a representative from Planned Parenthood yesterday," said Alam. "We will be working closely

with them, and there are plans to bring in representatives about doing a workshop and letter-writing campaign."

The HWRC and Planned Parenthood are also working together on making birth control pills available for students. "Congress recently passed an act that cut funding to colleges to provide low cost birth control pills to its students. In some cases, costs went up from \$10 to \$50 per prescription," said Alam. "This is not something that has affected Hunter yet, because we were not able to provide birth control on campus. However, I am meeting with the Health & Wellness office soon and will discuss ways of providing this service to our students."

As well as their work on reproductive rights, the HWRC is involved in an upcoming on-campus event that Hunter College, and the Women and Gender Studies Program in particular, is helping to organize. The event is called The National Conference for Women and Girls: Freedom on Our Terms—From Houston 1977 - NY 2007, and it will be a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the first National Women's Conference, which was held in Houston, Texas. "We need lots of volunteers," urges Alam.

For more about the HWRC (the group certain to take over the world), check out their club space in Thomas Hunter room 309, or their Facebook page.

(Not) News to Me

The Envoy News Editor handpicks the recent headlines that the Hunter community should care about—and the few that no one should care about.

Anthony Bongiorno

News Editor

News to Me...

- Looks like America's kids are finally beginning to catch up. According to the results of recent reading and math tests, America's public school students are doing notably better in math since the No Child Left Behind Law took effect in 2002. However, reading scores as a whole have not increased significantly, and have even dropped slightly among eighth graders.

- Bill O'Reilly's statements are serving him up a dish of trouble, this time with African Americans. O'Reilly was full of praise for Harlem restaurant, Sylvia's, on the Sept. 19 episode of his nationally syndicated radio show. Some say his flattering comments, however, reflected his ignorance of black culture. "There wasn't one person in Sylvia's who [was] screaming, 'M-Fer, I want more iced tea ... [It] was like going into an Italian restaurant in an all-white suburb in the sense of people were sitting there, and they were ordering and having fun. And there wasn't any kind of craziness at all.'" Oh, O'Reilly!

- The U.N. is strongly urging a quadrupling of global AIDS spending to meet their goal of providing universal access to effective treatment by the year 2010. Current spending on AIDS totals about \$10 billion a year. Michel Sidibe, deputy executive director for UNAIDS, told reporters, "We simply are not spending enough or doing enough."

- When Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) was asked by Tim Russert about possibly torturing terrorists who know where a bomb

will explode, she replied, "[Torture] cannot be American policy, period ... there is very little evidence that it works." He then told her that her husband, former president Bill Clinton, was the person who laid out that scenario. Clinton replied, "He's not standing here right now."

Not News to Me...

- Television journalist, Nancy Grace, announced on her CNN show the sexes of her expected twins, one a boy, one a girl. My announcement: Congratulations, Nancy ... and you're still way annoying.

Donald Trump told CNN that long-time television journalist Dan Rather is "a loser ... [who] has been getting low ratings for years," when asked for comments about Rather's lawsuit against CBS. Mind you, Dan Rather was the host of the *CBS Evening News* for 24 years. Donald Trump's *The Apprentice* was nearly cancelled after its fifth season, and has now been moved to NBC's Sunday night lineup, to run after *America's Got Talent*. Umm...

- Congressman Heath Shuler (D-NC) is proposing a bill that will create special "kid-friendly" sections on all commercial aircrafts. "It's very unfortunate that airlines continue to show very violent films on the main cabin screen," said Shuler. "It's very difficult for parents to say [to their children], 'Don't watch the screen.'" Great idea. Kids deserve to get their own "kid friendly" section. After all, adults have their "let's get friendly and make kids" section, also known as the plane restroom. Why should they get all the fun?

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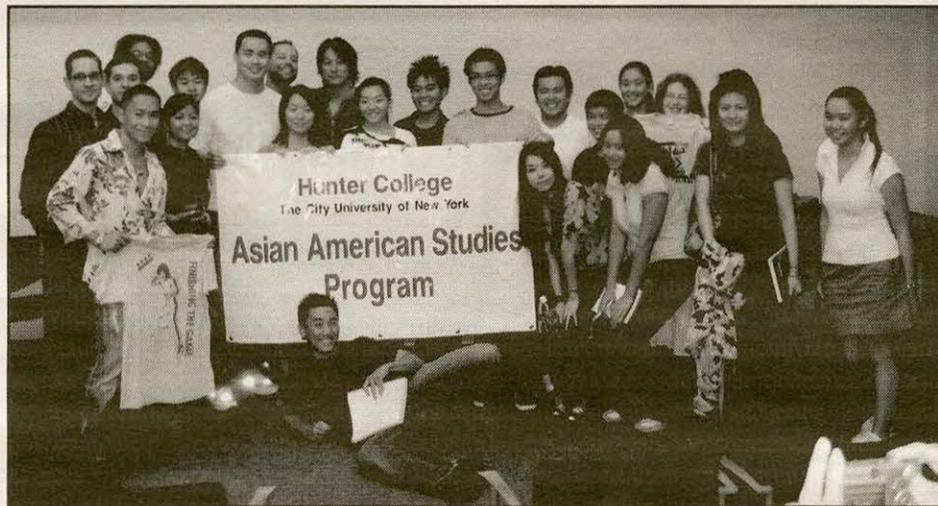
Studies Program (AASP), who spoke on the condition of anonymity, AASP's budget does not support a full-time staff, and therefore must rely on adjuncts.

Nonetheless, the situation is not as bleak as it sounds. "All of the adjuncts who teach in the program are highly qualified to do what they do," the instructor said. "We've all done interesting things. They're not just outsourcing jobs to whoever walks in."

Additionally, according to Meredith Halpern, Hunter's spokesperson, "It is not the case at all that there aren't any full-time professors. The coordinator of the program, Jennifer Hayashida, has recently been hired thanks to new funding for her position." Halpern also cited nine other "new and continuing faculty members in Asian Studies," and added, "this year, a new Asian American faculty member [will be] teaching courses on Asian American topics in Film and Media Studies."

Still, classes are filled to capacity, and there are only 17 courses being offered in the department this semester, six of which are introductory courses. Even for the most qualified professors, stretching the department's limited budget and resources in order to meet the demands of its students is challenging.

Lin said she was told "the main reason that the Asian American Studies Program is not getting any support from CUNY is because



Hunter College students join director Justin Lin and actors Sung Kang and Roger Fan at the first Asian American Studies Program sponsored event on September 25th to discuss the impact of Asian Americans in the media.

photo courtesy of CRAASH

there is not interest from students." To Lin, however, this seems like backwards logic.

"If there's no interest," Lin asked, "then why are there so many students in my classes when we don't even have one full-time faculty member?" Furthermore, it was largely student interest in 1993 which gave rise to the department in the first place. Additionally, according to www.collegeboard.com, the Hunter student body is 24% Asian/Pacific Islander, making Asian American Studies very pertinent for the Hunter community.

"It's strange not to try harder to have the curriculum reflect the student body," acknowledged the aforementioned instructor.

CRAASH says in its mission statement

that they are "dedicated to rejuvenating the Asian American Studies Program of Hunter College, as well as expanding the program to include a greater variety of courses. CRAASH aims to organize the Hunter community and spread awareness about the inadequate conditions of the AASP."

So far, CRAASH members have distributed fliers around the school and are working on a petition. They also hope to begin negotiations with the CUNY Board of Trustees, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and Hunter President, Jennifer J. Raab by generating enough student interest in the cause to get the administration to address the issue.

As a new organization, CRAASH

is looking for as much help as possible. According to Lin, "We are four people who want to do so much, but it's out of our own pockets. We're looking for sponsors and are trying to get more funding." Students or faculty interested in helping out should email HunterCollegeCRASH@yahoo.com.

Students are not the only ones making strides in generating interest for the Asian American Studies Program. The department itself is working on applying for CUNY and outside grants, as well as furthering student interest in the program. According to the instructor quoted earlier, there is already an increase in interest this year. Even faculty who teach relevant courses in other departments are getting more involved with the Asian American Studies Program, and students in general are more involved in it.

It helps that the department is utilizing its limited funds to host events such as last week's free movie screening and Q&A with Justin Lin, Director of *Better Luck Tomorrow* and the upcoming *Finishing the Game*, as well as with actors Roger Fan (*Annapolis* and *BLT*) and Sung Kang (*The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*).

The professor quoted previously is hopeful that by "[soliciting] interest from Asian American artists and academics, [and reaching] out to the Asian American community in New York [which has] a lot to offer the Hunter community," the department will create enough interest to sustain itself.