



The Newsletter of Asian/Pacific Islander Unitarian Universalists and their Allies

Volume 3 Number 2

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June 2007

### *A/PIC President's Letter*



**D**ear Friends,

Where were you on June 19, 1982? That's the date that 27-year-old Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American, was beaten to death by two white unemployed auto workers in Detroit. His assailants were given three years probation and a \$3,000 fine. The case became a rallying point for the Asian American community and is considered the beginning of the pan-ethnic Asian American movement.

In 1982 I was 19 years old, a college sophomore. Being a product of the Assimilation Generation, I believed that if I kept my head down and worked hard, I could blend in and be white. I also went to great lengths to avoid the campus Asian-American student group. "Those people are too radical," I remember thinking. I recall hearing about the Vincent Chin murder, but I was living in a dense fog of denial. It seemed like a whole universe away from my reality.

While I'd like to say that my attitudes have changed completely, they haven't. I struggle with my "Inner Assimilator" every day. For example, if I'm at the airport and I see a loud group of Asians speaking Korean, my Assimilator cringes. The Assimilator wants to walk over and tell them to shut up, or at least get up (see Letter, 2)

### *UUCP Kiddie Center*

by Susan Quisel (UU Church of the Philippines)



*The Kiddie Center in Brgy Aquino, Canlaon City, Oriental Negros*

**I**t is said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." [Proverbs 22:6] In terms of spirituality, one's religious upbringing shapes an individual's personality and has direct bearing upon his/her relationship to the wider community.

In the Philippines, the influences and consequences of Roman Catholicism and other Trinitarian religious teachings, in the end, make the Filipino people judgmental, critical and exclusionary. It is very likely that the religious upbringing of a teacher will be taught to the children. That's why children of Protestant parents will most likely learn, even at pre-school centers, the Catholic prayers and other prayers from other Christian sects. (See Kiddie,5)

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## Reflections on Virginia Tech

by Paul Leung (Denton UU Fellowship, Denton, TX)

I feel a bit like preaching to the choir as my initial response to the Virginia Tech shooting was written up as an editorial piece for a general audience with the hope that they will have a better understanding of Americans of Asian descent. I am an academic and it was a bit ironic that I gave a presentation the week of the shooting as part of Asian American Heritage Month (celebrated in April rather than in May when school lets out) to a group made up primarily of Asian American students. I wanted to convey a sense of pride for Americans of Asian descent who preceded us and whose achievements have often remained in the background. My presentation was titled *Building on Our Legacy* with emphasis on the legacy of contributions that Americans of Asian descent have made to America. Unfortunately, as well known to many of us, these contributions have often been invisible. Asians have been in America some say as long ago as 1421 (Menzies, 2002) Many of us may not be aware that Asian Americans fought on both sides of the American Civil War. Sometimes the invisibility was a conscious effort to exclude, e.g. the Chinese who worked on the transcontinental railroad were not allowed to pose for the photo at Promontory Point, Utah, celebrating the railroad's completion. Americans of Asian descent are too often not seen or heard in our classrooms or our history books.

At other times, Asian Americans are reluctantly placed front and center. The Virginia Tech murders are an obvious case in point. International incidents such as a downed plane in China calls into question where Asian American loyalties lie. A Chinese American is seen as a Japanese American as was the case in the murder of Vincent Chin. There is no telling us apart (whether we are 1<sup>st</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> generation or whether we are Southeast Asian or Korean) by our physical features. Numerous comments have been made about Cho and his motivation. Most likely, we will never know. While being Korean American or an immigrant may not be the primary reason, it likely did play a role. But just as likely, there is a wider social responsibility that must be accepted by all in American society.

I think it is important to recognize that immi-



grant families, especially those who come with little in way of resources, are often consumed with ensuring survival. Parents may not spend a lot of time with their children who may be left to fend for themselves or who are required to contribute financially to the family. Familial expectations that children do well in school and in their choice of occupation place immigrant children or children of immigrant parents under a great deal of pressure. The positive thing is that the majority of Asian Americans survive and do OK if not well. Add to that the American stereotype of the Asian "model" minority where Asians excel in math and science, who don't need or care for assistance or support, who hasn't been fully accepted by the mainstream, and it is not difficult to imagine the additional pressures placed on an Asian American young adults and especially one who may be more interested in art or auto mechanics than the Ivy League. The bottom line is that stereotypes even seemingly positive ones are fraught with unintended consequences and even tragic circumstances.

I believe as UUs, we do have a responsibility. We have a responsibility to educate and to tear down walls that divide, a responsibility to think and feel what it is to be different, and a responsibility to be supportive of all who we meet.

(Letter, from page 1)  
and sit as far away as possible.

I also have an "Inner Asian UU" – a voice of reason that keeps the Assimilator in line. Last month I bought a t-shirt that has "Kim" written in Korean on the front. At least once a week, as I am getting dressed in the morning, I have an internal conversation that goes something like this:

**Inner Asian:** *You should wear the Korean Kim shirt today.*

**Assimilator:** *You wear it and all these blonde-haired Wisconsin people are going to look at you funny. And they will ask questions.*

**Inner Asian:** *... and?*

**Assimilator:** *Why do you have to stick out?*

**Inner Asian:** *You already stick out. They ask, you tell them what the t-shirt says, and their world will be broadened a bit.*

And while this conversation may seem trivial in comparison to Vincent Chin's murder, it is because of his death that this conversation is even (see Letter, 5)

**One More Bell** by *Catie Chi Olson* (White Bear UU Church, Minneapolis, MN)

On April 16, I was sitting with other seminarians in our first applied ministry class when someone mentioned the tragedy at Virginia Tech. At that time, it sounded like another Columbine tragedy. Maybe this would be like the Oklahoma City bombing, when the first suspects



were those of Arab descent, only to be proven to be the act of a white, home grown terrorist named Timothy McVeigh. By the next day, the gunman was “an Asian”, then “Korean National Cho Seung Hui”. Then the package arrived at NBC news and it was clear that a young Korean man had done this terrible thing. Losing a child this way – to a violent act in a place of learning and growth – feels insurmountably painful.

For me, as a Korean American, I prepared for a backlash. So did Korean communities around the US. South Korean embassies officially prepared for a reaction in America. The next week, in that same ministry class, I voiced my belief that this specific violence was a mixture of mental illness, racism and despair. What I could not bring myself to reveal was a comment about Cho’s name, implying what I know is true: that changing his name to the Westernized Seung-Hui Cho never had a chance of making him an American.

While we can never know what exactly was in the mind of Cho, we know from reports that he was a man let down by many systems. He was to have seen a counseling service on campus. Most people know now that this enigmatic man had trouble with the most rudimentary speech. As the only son, he should have been cherished by his family, instead of abandoned, even in his sad death and horrifying destruction. Poet Nikki Giovanni was so disturbed by Cho’s behavior that she would have preferred to leave her tenured position at Virginia Tech than have him in another of her classes. A female high school classmate said that Cho was voted the most likely to become a murderer.

In times of great sadness or danger, churches once tolled their bell as a signal to community. Virginia Tech tolled their bells for each of the 32 people killed at the hand of this abandoned man. When we

remember this tragedy, I hope it will not be too much to consider also ringing one more time. Maybe that thirty-third toll could remind us that each person deserves community, to be considered as fully human as each of us wants to be considered.

**News From Metro Manila UUs**

by *Guerrero Roberto Ma* (UU Community of Manila, Philippines)



*Collage making at a youth conference*

Last April the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines accepted the congregation in Bicutan, Metro Manila, as an official member congregation during its National Convention.

This further strengthens the community and will hopefully open up partnerships with UU communities in the U.S.

The Bicutan Group has also improved the structure, adding a ceiling and rain gutter to the existing roof and posts.

The microfinance program is still going strong, with a total of 21 ladies availing of the small loans for businesses.

The Metro Manila UUs are also starting a scholarship program. Thus far 5 indigent UU youth will avail of the scholarships this coming school year, mostly for computer courses.

The Young Professionals group in Quezon City, a suburb of Metro Manila, is also doing well. Attendance has been solid during the April and May monthly meetings.

Keep track of the Metro Manila UUs at [www.uuphilippines.org](http://www.uuphilippines.org) and at [www.friendster.com/uumanila](http://www.friendster.com/uumanila).

## Linguistic Potholes: When is a Brown Bag Not Just a Brown Bag?

by Vivien Hao (Pacific Unitarian Church, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA)

A firestorm of irate criticism and eye-rolling ensued after Rev. Melissa Mummert, a community minister, noted in a recent sermon on the UU Church of the Larger Fellowship website ([clf.uua.org](http://clf.uua.org)) that she had witnessed a Starr King of Ministry staff meeting where a faculty member announced, “Because of the racist connotations of the phrase brown bag, we will now be using the term BYOL, ‘bring your own lunch.’” During Jim Crow, the brown bag test was used to perpetuate a hierarchy within the African American community — a way to judge ‘merit’ for admission to certain clubs or organizations based on whether one was darker or lighter-skinned.



Rev. Mummert dismissed this as “typical Berkeley PC drabble” and mused that such bans on useful terms could make people like herself “so fearful of messing up that we can stifle genuine dialogue and deeper learning.”

UU bloggers from far and wide also weighed in on how ridiculously hyper-sensitive this ban was, and how since no one was being “harmed,” that the faculty member had made a mountain out of a molehill by raising this issue in such a fashion. “Why announce it? Why not just do it?” the author of *The Chaliceblog* ([chalicechick.blogspot.com](http://chalicechick.blogspot.com)) asked. Few who commented seemed to get that words are *powerful* — and how and why we use certain words says a lot about our own beliefs — including our attitudes about race and racism.

It’s possible that someone of African descent did indeed take offense, or that somehow the faculty member had been made aware that some individuals may potentially be offended. As one exceptionally astute blogger noted, “It’s good manners to be aware of how others feel and of their preferences and how what we do, even without hurtful intent, can affect them. Taking such terms out of your vocabulary is like not farting in your shared office: a form of shared consideration for other people.”

Good manners, indeed. So why is it that so many UUs (not to mention the general public) are so

quick to act defensively when their small acts of inconsideration or insensitivity are noted? Why not just say, “Thanks for pointing that out,” and accept it? Are people that ignorant? I chalk it up to embarrassment and shame — turning on a defense mechanism that employs counter-attack or ridicule as its chief weapons.

My own experience bears this out again and again. A recent example: I live in a community that is about 50% Asian American (South Pasadena, a nearby suburb of Monterey Park, Alhambra, etc. in the LA area). When I was grocery shopping at a large chain supermarket last month, I was surprised to hear a well-dressed middle-aged white man say to me “Shieh, shieh,” when I put down the plastic rod to separate his order from mine. I looked him in the eye and said, “Is that Chinese? What makes you think I speak Chinese?” He replied that I “looked” Chinese and assumed I spoke the language. I patiently explained to him that he appeared Jewish to me, but I certainly did not presume that speaking Yiddish to him in this context was appropriate. (I refrained from adding that there are dozens of dialects of Chinese, not to mention 40+ distinct languages represented by Asian Americans in the greater LA area, so his assumption could easily have been erroneous.)

I simply said that I found his assumption to be offensive. (I DIDN’T say that I have lived virtually all my life as a perpetual foreigner in my own country, and I was tired to being treated like an alien in my hometown.) He retorted that he had every right to assume what he wanted, and that he wasn’t to be silenced — that he would not allow high profile cases such as the recent firing of radio shock-jock Don Imus for non-PC remarks about a black women’s basketball team to stop him from saying whatever he wanted.... no matter who took offense.

Now admittedly, I am *particularly* sensitive, but I feel I have the right to be. What this man thought was a clever thing to say (like when people say to me “Sayonara” assuming I’m Japanese) was in fact hurtful to me. Not because the words themselves were so stinging, but because they represented a pattern of behavior and speech that have plagued and marked me most of my life. When I sought to educate him in my own way, he reacted, probably out of embarrassment, by denying my feelings and rejecting my viewpoint as being valid.

This seems to me a parallel to eliminating the term “brown bag,” — once someone is educated about the racist connotations of a term,

(see *Brown*, 6)

*(Kiddie — from page 1)*

The ecumenical and interfaith efforts are alive within the adults religious leadership. Also, it is customary for a new Christian group to put up a pre-school center as an evangelical tool to spread the faith and to earn extra income from the fees paid by the children.

The UUCP Kiddie Center is the evangelical response of the UU Church of the Philippines, Inc. to the ever dominant presence of Trinitarianism, particularly Roman Catholicism. It is essential to teach the values of our UU faith to the children, UUs and non-UUs alike, because these values are crucial to shaping their spirituality now, and later in life, become the frame of religious reference for them. It is necessary to open the minds of the young ones to the importance of living in harmony with neighboring religions in order to attain peace. For this purpose was born the UUCP Kiddie Center in Brgy Aquino, Canlaon City, Oriental Negros.

This is the first private pre-school owned by a church in the village of Aquino, and as a UU religious institution of education, the first of its kind in the Philippines. The fees charged here are minimal and affordable to all. In addition to the general curriculum, the Center will be using UU pre-school curricula including *One Body Many Parts* by Rev. Colleen MacDonald which teaches gender sensitivity.

The Center will be managed by Myrnalyn Caballero and Candelaria Fajardo; both have degrees in elementary education. It begins operation in June 2007, with classes starting on June 4th.

Funding for the center has come from individual and group donations from around the world, through a fund-raising effort by Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes. These donations were used for the construction of a one-room school building, a comfort room, installation of light and water, purchase of curriculum and learning/library materials, classroom materials such as kiddie chairs, tables, posters, teacher's materials, etc. With its vision for growth, some of the funds was used as down payment for the purchase of an adjacent lot for future expansion.

Currently, the Center needs a television set in order for the children to view the Knowledge Channel, Discovery Channel, and National Geographic Channel. Another need is for a sound system for graduation exercises, meetings, and to play audio

materials such as phonetics for the children.

The Center now serves 25 children who would otherwise not be able to receive a pre-school education and therefore ineligible from further education in the government school system. UUCP Kiddie Center is well on its way to helping these and other children attain a brighter future!



*Teacher Myrnalyn with some of the supplies for the Center*

*(Letter, from page 2)*

taking place. His murder is a symbol of my struggle, internally and externally, for acceptance as a Real American. Chin's murder was the seminal event that sparked the Asian American civil rights movement, one that gave a voice to previously silent Asian American communities across our country.

At this year's General Assembly in Portland, the Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus will observe the 25th anniversary of Vincent Chin's murder by showing Renee Tajima-Peña's award-winning documentary, "Who Killed Vincent Chin?" on Saturday, June 23rd, at 10:15 pm in the Alaska Room of the Doubletree Hotel. Please stop by the DRUUMM booth in the exhibit hall for more details.

In Faith,  
Young Kim  
UU Church West, Brookfield, WI

## Singapore UU Fellowship

by Ben Bleicken (Singapore)



Bob Guerraro (left) from Manila visits with Singapore UUs Gina Soh, Chan CW, George Bishop and Ben Bleicken

A new and upcoming Unitarian Universalist group meets every Sunday morning at the heart of Orchard Road, Singapore's famous shopping district.

Ben Bleicken, a Unitarian Universalist from Atlanta who now lives in Singapore, was anxious to meet up with other UUs in Singapore. So, in late 2005, he contacted the Church of the Larger Fellowship, an online church for UUs lacking a convenient church to attend regularly, and asked for introductions to any other members living in Singapore. He was able to meet up with Gina Soh, another fellow UU in Singapore, and the two decided to meet regularly and began searching for other potential members. While the group now has 19 members registered on its email list, around 5 to 7 are "active" with most members waiting until after the group is more established and able to offer regular sermons in a proper venue for services.

Some members have joined the UU group with their own unique stories. Mia joined up after posting this email on the group's email list which tells her story best. *"My name is Mia. Last week during a crisis I searched the Internet for some words of solace and found a sermon by Rev Joel Miller of the UU in Buffalo, New York. I then began to read more about the UU and found its principles appealed to me. I would love to meet up and learn more about the group and its goals, if any."* Victoria de Silva, a Singaporean, lived in Los Angeles and attended a UU church before returning to Singapore and similarly, Joseph Moody, an American, had been

an active member in a UU congregation in Canada before moving to Singapore.

Singapore, as an international business center, sees many visitors each year and UUs are among those visitors. The group has received visits from UUs visiting from London, Manila and San Diego.

Singapore as an ideal place for a UU from a spiritual growth perspective as so many of the world's faiths are represented on this one small island. For instance, driving around Singapore one sees mosques, Buddhist temples, Catholic and Protestant churches, a Jewish temple and even a Freemasons hall all within a few miles of each other so it's a great place to learn about many faiths.

So if you're heading to Singapore any time soon, be sure to visit the group's website at [www.uusingapore.org](http://www.uusingapore.org) for details.

(Brown — from page 4)

what would be a legitimate excuse for him/her to continue to use it? The fact that not everyone is aware of these negative connotations should be considered to be an even more important reason for not only eliminating it from one's vocabulary, but explaining to others why that decision was made.

As an Asian American, I am constantly explaining to people why I don't want to be labeled "Oriental" — why it's considered pejorative and offensive (and only appropriate to label vases and rugs, but not people) because of the word's origins and how it has been used throughout U.S. and European history to subjugate and separate people who looked like me as being "alien, foreign, undesirable, radically different and inassimilable."

It's the same reason why UUA President Bill Sinkford realized almost immediately his *faux pas* when he unwitting said to me, "I'm being shanghaied to another room" when his podium was being moved from one location to another at a General Assembly workshop a few years back. In this case, this humble and self-aware man immediately apologized and assured me it was a slip of the tongue. "No offense taken," I said, noting silently that no one, not even the black president of our white denomination, is immune from semantic entrapment. So beware, my friends. There are big linguistic potholes out there! Step gingerly and warn others if you see them first!

## First MFC Internship in Asia/Pacific Islands

by Joseph Santos-Lyons (Portland, OR)



Joseph preaches at the Bicutan Fellowship

The UU Church of the Philippines (Dumaguette, Negros Oriental), held a commissioning worship service on March 18th, 2007 commemorating the ministerial internship of American student minister Joseph Santos-Lyons. Rev. Henry Legaje, President of the National Church of 28 congregations led the ceremony, with reflections from internship committee members Rev. Nihal Attanayake (originally from Sri Lanka), Rev. Rebecca Quimada-Sienes, Bob Guerrero, Lenna Desuasido, Michael Lim, Rev. Fred Muir (Annapolis), Rev. Monica Cummings (Los Angeles) and Rev. Jory Agate (Cambridge MA). Joseph led the development of a middle-class outreach ministry in Quezon City, meeting at the University of the Philippines and at the Peacemakers Circle in Loyola Heights, a UU radio show, worship and adult leadership development with the congregation in Bicutan, Taguig City in Metro Manila, and started and advised two new youth ministries.

This internship took root as an idea in 2004 after a visit by Joseph and his partner Aimee who grew up in Manila, and gained steam with a formal request from the UU Church of the Philippines Board and a formal request for approval with the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee. After dozens of conversations and emails, this unique, yet comprehensive internship took form with special thanks to Rev. Fred Muir who served as co-supervisor. Fred studied for his Doctor of Ministry in the Philippines and wrote *Maglipay Universalist*, an excellent religious and historical look at the UU Church of the Philippines with in part, a liberation theological lens.

Unitarian Universalism in the Philippines developed organically 50 years after former Unitarian General Assembly Moderator and US President Wil-

liam Taft served as colonial governor after the Spanish-American War. While Catholics refused the laity access to the Bible, Protestants who in the wake of the United States colonization were more liberal. One fell into the hands of a powerful religious seeker and orator Toribio Quimada (father of Rebecca), who after personal study articulated a gospel of universal love and salvation. His leadership spread UU to the farming and fishing communities where he grew up and worked, and he organized those who moved to lead new congregations across the Visayan Island of Negros. Today there are over 1,000 members in the 28 congregations on Negros Island, and two new starts in Metro Manila. For more information visit [www.uuphilippines.org](http://www.uuphilippines.org).

## A/PI UU Ministers Double In Numbers

by Joseph Santos-Lyons (Portland, OR)



(Left to right) Cheng Imm Tan, Chris Long, Leslie Takahashi Morris and Joseph Santos-Lyons with daughter Miyka

Rev. Dianne Arakawa is widely recognized as the first Asian/Pacific Islander descent UU minister to be fellowshipped by the UUA in 1979, followed by Rev. Hyun Kim in 1983. It would be almost a decade before the next A/PI minister, Rev. Chang Imm Tan, would emerge in 1991. Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, an immigrant from India, was called to our ministry in 1998, and then in the last 4 years, Revs. Leslie Takahashi Morris, Karen Tse, Manish Mishra, Leela Sinha, and Jennifer Ryu have been fellowshipped and/or ordained. Joseph Santos-Lyons, Cathy Chang, Catie Chi Olson, Bonnie Lee, Chris Long, and hopefully more will be ordained in the near future. If you're a minister, seminarian, or are interested in Unitarian Universalist ministry/professional leadership, we'd like to be in touch. Joseph is volunteering to convene an A/PI Ministerial Caucus. Contact [jsantolyons@post.harvard.edu](mailto:jsantolyons@post.harvard.edu).

## Milestone

**R**ev. Jennifer Youngsun Ryu was installed as Co-Minister of the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists with her ministry partner and husband, Rev. Preston Moore, on Sunday April 1<sup>st</sup>.



### Website Address List in this Issue

<http://uuphilippines.org>

<http://friendster.com/uumanila>

<http://clf.uua.org>

<http://chalicechick.blogspot.com>

<http://www.uusingapore.org>

## Become an A/PIC Member!

A/PIC membership is open to all individuals who self-identify as partly or wholly Asian or Pacific Island in heritage or origin.

To become a member, simply state your intention by sending an email to [steering@apiuu.org](mailto:steering@apiuu.org) with the following information:

- ◆ Your full name
- ◆ The name of your congregation or UU organization with which you claim affiliation
- ◆ Your ethnic identity
- ◆ Contact information: mailing address and phone number
- ◆ A statement of intent (eg. I, \_\_\_\_\_, intend to be counted as a voting member of A/PIC.)

Membership privileges include:

- ◆ Voting
- ◆ Holding elected offices
- ◆ Accessibility to the members' only section of our website
- ◆ Scholarships to conferences and meetings
- ◆ Subscription to the members' only email list
- ◆ Receiving minutes of all Steering Committee phone conferences
- ◆ Receiving bi-annual updates on our Membership Directory
- ◆ Receiving copies of Hot Rice three times a year

*And..... There are no membership dues!*

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