

Presentations

- **Chinese Association of Western MA (Linda Hill, Lian Duan)**
 - Represent all of western mass
 - Using cultural activities to promote culture, heritage, understanding
 - Recent event: Asian Family Day at the zoo, want to expand next year
 - Serves mostly first generation chinese immigrants in pioneer valley, second generation chinese-americans in their school experiences and community engagement
 - Invite everyone so people can experience or learn their culture and heritage
 - Be proud of where they come from
 - Proud to be part of asian family, togetherness, sharing
 - Connections with other ethnic groups
 - Challenges
 - Safety: break-ins targeting asian families in longmeadow area (korean, chinese, japanese families)
 - Offenders admitted they targeted the chinese american restaurant owners
 - Communication with school: bullying and racial encounters, lack of cultural understanding, outdated cultural understanding
 - School can be kind of arrogant
 - More chinese students speaking up!
 - Story of a kid who put scissors on wrist, school admin went straight to parents, didn't consult asian teachers to see how best to go about this
 - School can be really resistant to addressing issues
 - Unique challenge of asian first gen immigrants: how to challenge school decisions, how to fight them, how to communicate with the school, even when they themselves are highly educated
 - Racial encounters in locally provided leisure spaces
 - Staff lack training in dealing with racism or unwilling to deal with racism
 - No clear path to file complaints and track responses
 - Lack of support in challenging local government organizations to change
 - Ex: child called a slur, and no one really knew what to do about it
 - Conscious about recruiting new members, first-gen immigrants
 - Even in amherst-hadley area, there is a lack of understanding of how to find resources, provide education, access, civic activities for first gen
 - Don't know who to ask for help

- Reached out to CALex for help because they saw them doing great things, has learned a lot
 - Importance of seeking mentorship through this listening session and in general
- **Bayanihan Association (Olive Melaya, Irene Rivera, Emma Hubart)**
 - Started in 2011, out of need for org for filipinos and filipino-americans in western mass
 - Also helped people help their families in the philippines
 - One of first events: was going to have a fundraiser for someone with cancer, she died but they still did the fundraiser to cremate her and send her remains to philippines and give money to her son
 - Promoting events, gathering, fundraising
 - Bayanihan christmas party every year
 - Goes to new york for philippines independence day each year for march
 - 7-10 events per year
 - Want to be an organization so that members and their families can lean on them, financially, emotionally, or however
 - Bayanihan means spirit of unity
 - Issues
 - Discrimination at work, school, public life
 - Finding jobs, especially for people with limited education
 - Asian hate
 - Inflation and rising prices
- **TBD: Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association (Trinh Roblinski)**
 - Sick, couldn't come
- **Nam's Taekwondo School (Jin Nam, Sarah Nam)**
 - Came to US 20 years ago, struggled
 - Started taekwondo in PE classes at local public schools because they didn't have a PE teacher, turned into an afternoon program
 - Has nonprofit organization for free taekwondo programs for people who can't afford voucher programs but still can't afford classes
 - Does arts and crafts, festivals, events
 - Serves local kids, not specifically asian american
 - Didn't know where to start, lots of obstacles and unfairness from license process (supposed to take 3-6 months, took 2 years)
 - Mayor visited because eventually it was taking so long and it automatically got done because of him
 - Building manager didn't understand what taekwondo
 - Now has a bunch of parents behind him
 - Want to be able to help others in similar situations

- Son was called dum-dum (like the candy) because last name Nam, parent reaches out to teacher, teacher does nothing
- Korean culture is not stepping on the teacher's shadow
- Ended up moving kids to chinese immersion school, no longer feels like a minority
- Had tried so hard in public schools, but was never given any resources, help
- **Amherst Regional High School - AAPI Club (Sea Kay Leung who is one of our Youth Council members, Sonisai Loeung-Rinehart, Talvin Dhingra, Ivy Lau)**
 - Inaugural AAPI club in amherst highschool
 - Mission: represent the amherst asian community and to write our own narrative, share collective and diverse experiences in amherst and massachusetts
 - Want to work together with other communities to develop pragmatic solutions
 - Asians almost 14% of amherst community
 - Ivy Lau
 - Often has been isolated, pushed away, bullied
 - Didn't understand why they were being bullied until age 13, when they learned online about racism in other parts of the world, realized it wasn't just there problem, it was actually other people's problems in other places
 - Talvin Dhingra
 - Lack of time spent on AAPI history and literature
 - Positive correlation between curriculum representation and: class engagement, GPA, graduation rates, post high school education
 - Last year was the first time he saw south asian representation in book he read for english class, and that was a book he chose
 - History teachers think it would be hard to put AAPI history into american and world history courses because they are already packed
 - He thinks that the best thing is for there to be mandated ethnic studies classes through
 - Sonisai Loeung Rinehart
 - Fetishization of asian people, leads to violence
 - Often passed off as preference
 - Asian men demasculinized
 - A couple of weeks ago, a kid said he would never date a POC except asians
 - Kid said it was just a preference
 - Little diversity in education
 - This causes things like the issue above
 - They don't learn about what fetishization and how it affects the asian community in films, school, etc
 - Anna Li

- Books with diverse representation
 - Representation in history textbooks
 - English books written by AAPI authors
 - Teaching respect and be open to different perspectives
 - Connect AAPI students (urban and rural) across massachusetts
 - Technology
 - Annual unity event
- **UMass Amherst Asian American Student Association (AASA) (Jordan Cao, Diana Li, and Christopher Tran)**
 - Founded in 1975
 - 2019: 350 members; 2022: 610 members officially, more unofficial ones
 - Largest cultural organization at UMass Amherst, one of the largest student orgs
 - Mission: to create a supportive atmosphere that promotes the understanding and awareness of all asian and asian american students at umass amherst. To advocate unity among asians and asian americans and surrounding communities to promote thee views, voices, ...
 - Home away from home for asian community
 - Large range of events: study events, advocacy events, movie nights
 - While a lot of events are specifically advocacy, there is always advocacy in creating environment promoting asian cultures, making people feel welcome
 - Open to people of all races (asian interest)
 - Collaborates with other groups: ex: halloween event collaborated with black student union
 - Winter ball (500+ attendees, sold out in less than 12 hours, lots of cultural groups performing)
 - Asian Night: guest artists (eugene lee, hoji last year), attendees from all over the US, over 1700 attendees in the past, this year probably even more than that
 - Groups and people can audition and perform from all over the US
 - Sponsors from all over for giveaways
 - Event to give away to the community and showcase asian culture
 - Has a magazine that is yearly and showcases student work
 - Collaborates with every asian org for asian heritage week leading up to aapi heritage month
 - Future direction
 - When founded was meant to be a social safe space on campus, and this has absolutely been a success
 - Hoping to expand more into directions of advocacy
 - Platform asian artists, visionaries

- Wants to know how to reach these advocacy resources, for support, for dealing with bureaucracy
 - Wants to connect with broader AAPI communities in western mass rather than not just on campus
- **Vira Cage, former Commissioner**
 - Was on amherst school board
 - Amplify people's experiences
 - Has brought people to city hall in springfield to talk about where funding goes and how communities benefit
 - Connecting leaders and resources and communities
 - Chicken and the egg: don't have the infrastructure, the staff, the non-profit org
 - Must demand that our towns and cities make it a more transparent process, to make it simpler
 - Things seem race based sometimes, not a ton of AAPI
 - Latino chamber of commerce → think in that way of connecting local and statewide
 - At one point there was a western mass staff member for aapic, now there isn't
 - Listening and hearing turning to action and fruition
 - Many kids are misclassified and not getting education they actually need
 - Need advocates/support for parents in school meetings
- **Asian American Law Student Association of Western New England Law School (Monique Hoppe, Thao Pho)**
 - 3% of the law school is asian american
 - 5% of lawyers in the US are asian american
 - Since 2009, asian americans entering law schools has gone down 49%
 - Just got approval from their school 2 weeks ago
 - It has been lonely being asian american in schools, work, life in western mass
 - The law school, orgs wants to be a resource
 - They are available to help, but don't know how to reach out to people
 - Wants to work with AAPI community

Q&A

- Lots of groups are wanting to work together!
- Pressure on UMass Amherst group because they are just students also trying to do so much
- There is also a UMass Amherst group that does advocacy
 - Priority is keeping their communities safe, but worry that they have been too passive
 - Not just representing asian culture you can learn and engage in but also as a reality people live

- Vira: was chair of AASA! Also agrees that there should be more connections
 - Worker rights, AFLCIO
- People haven't ever officially really learned AAPI history
- At UMass, there is a certificate program for Asian American Studies
 - Also exists separately for the 5 colleges
 - There is a lack of support from the administration for addressing racism, microaggression
 - How do we get the administration to respect us and create structural changes to protect and support AAPI students and staff?
- "I see my story built into every one of you guys, but it's disconnected"
 - "How do we leverage each other's culture and identities to build?"
- Recognition that you can't just be strong to get through racism
- Want to continue working together
- Boston area group working for ethnic studies
- Other states have done it, now we need to
- "We can deal with it individually or we can look at the root of the problem"
- Ethnic studies, anti-racism should start in elementary school, from the very beginning
- Lots of chicken and the egg problems
 - Systematic obstacles
 - Pioneer valley chinese immersion charter school, provides space to other minorities as well
- Wants to keep meeting!
- Meena thinks we could facilitate quarterly conversations
- Future: want state legislators to agree to action steps
- AAPI: let's stand together
- Also shift from safe spaces to brave spaces
- Meena: people should think of five reasonable actionable steps before we leave

Lunch/End Discussion, facilitated by Commissioner Richard Chu

- Brainstorming action items
 - In-person quarterly meeting for AAPI community groups. Zoom meetings also an option if needed for time-sensitive topics
 - Important to have concrete goals and timelines to measure progress
 - Also important to reach out to members of communities not in this room today, people at the margins
 - Newsletter to update groups on progress
 - Recreating AAPI Commission's prior Western MA coordinator role (40 hours/month, part-time) to aid in outreach
 - 40 hours/month may be insufficient to effectively make contact with AAPI community members, especially those who are marginalized/isolated

- Social media group/account to invite community groups/members to join
 - Discord, Slack, Facebook?
- Setting up an AAPI Commission satellite office staffed with interns - physical SPACE for groups to gather
 - Prior to pandemic, plans were in the works already to set this up
- Have to advocate within the AAPIC for budget equity for Western Mass
 - Western Mass has very few professionally staffed organizations, whereas in comparison there are significantly more near Boston
- Outreach to State Rep. Bud Williams (Joint Committee On Racial Equity, Civil Rights, And Inclusion)
- Womens commission has an advocacy event, we should make sure an AAPI group goes there
- Richard, Leo, and Vira will come up with a job description to propose to the commission
- Young Leaders Symposium (AAPIC convening) held in Western MA
 - AASA could be involved in this, already has something somewhat related
- Flag raising ceremonies
- Allocate/advocate more of AAPIC budget to be felt in Western MA - community members attending AAPIC monthly meetings when budget is being drafted and discussed/voted on
- Advocacy event similar to MA Commission on the Status of Women
- Unity Event (Amherst Regional HS AAPI club idea)
- Responding to physical safety concerns in Longmeadow (house intrusion, robbery) - suggestion of police academy in Springfield was given by community member
- Bayanihan Association has events coming up! Find info on their Facebook
- Next steps
 - Commissioners Richard Chu and Leo Hwang, Vira Cage, AAPIC ED Yasmin Padamsee Forbes will inquire about Western MA office space, drafting job description for Western MA intern
 - Commissioners Richard Chu and Leo Hwang will inquire with Education subcommittee on diversity in K-12 education initiatives