## AAPIC Fall Western Mass Quarterly Meeting Saturday, October 26th, 10:00 AM UMass Center at Springfield

Attendance

- 16 people
  - 3 Commissioners, 1 Intern, remainder are community members and organizations
- 5 different organizations represented
  - AAPIC (Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission)
  - CAWM (Chinese Association of Western Massachusetts)
  - Bayanihan Association of America Inc.
  - Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association, Inc.
  - APALSA (Asian Pacific American Law Student Association)
    - Western New England University

Organization Updates

- Past Events
  - CAWM
    - July 20th, Dragon Boat Festival in Springfield
      - Featured a variety of cultures, not just Chinese
      - Was able to host/sponsor teams for age groups/communities
    - August 23rd, Springfield 250th Anniversary
      - Marched in the parade
    - September 14th, Volunteer and Sponsor Appreciation Event
      - Important to recognize and show appreciation for volunteers
      - Helps to maintain support and encourage new support
    - October 5th, "A Vibrant Tapestry of Art and Heritage: AAPI Cultures in Western Mass"
      - Collaborated with Indian, Filipino, and Vietnamese communities
      - Featured variety of traditional art, music, performances
        - Cultural fashion show
        - Lion dance, Hawaiian dance group
      - Sponsored by AAPIC
    - October 25th, Greenfield Courthouse "Cultural Appreciation" training
      - Members from CAWM went to Greenfield to share Chinese culture
        - Taught traditional calligraphy
          - Went past timeline due to much interest
  - Bayanihan Association of America, Inc.
    - September 28th, Queen of Bayanihan pageant/fundraiser
  - Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association, Inc.

- Vietnamese New Year Fundraiser
- Future Events
  - CAWM
    - No events for the rest of the year (break for the holidays)
    - Next event will Lunar New Year in January
  - Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association
    - Next event will be in January
  - Bhutanese Oral History Project (Dr. Chu)
    - Documentary/Compilation of recordings to be published in November
  - Springfield, Chinese Woman Conductor performing at Symphony Hall
- Insight on Events
  - Trying to find ways to balance increasing costs (some events have lost money)
  - Wanting to improve fundraising efforts
  - Obtaining more youth involvement
  - Outreaching to other races and cultures for events
  - Working with refugees to help and support them
    - Language support
    - Housing, healthcare
    - Education, work
  - Need help receiving more funding and applying for grants
    - How can the Commission help with grant-writing?
      - Grant-writing workshops?
      - Providing feedback on grants
      - Helping organizations find other grant opportunities

## Key Issue Areas

- Many attendees did not fill out the form
  - Attendees also did not disperse the survey to the rest of their communities
- Top response on the survey: mental health

- One adult attendee who responded with that explained the importance to him
  - Increasingly bad mental health among younger generations
    - Particularly impacts AAPI youth when it comes to school
      - College/career anxiety, competition, and burnout
- Two high school aged attendees shared their perspectives as current students
  - Pressure comes from both within and outside of the AAPI community
    - Stereotypes and assumptions about being AAPI
      - Students' aspirations to be in fields such as medicine or law are reduced to just them "following the crowd"

- Additionally, if students do not aspire to work in those fields, they face criticism of "not being like the rest"
- Stereotypes of AAPI students being "naturally smart" results in hard work not being recognized or appreciated, instead it is viewed as something they naturally have from being Asian
  - Likewise, if they are not smart or academically successful, they are especially seen as a failure because Asians are "supposed to be smart"
- Affirmative Action / Other Discrimination
  - Many colleges still have higher standards for Asian students even after affirmative action was overturned
  - White high school teachers within these communities getting in trouble for grading harder against Asians
- Next top response (on form): Anti-Asian Hate
  - Very overt during the pandemic, now becoming less obvious but still exists
    - Aspects of Asian cultural expectations being taken advantage of
      - Asian workers are often passed over for promotions because they are expected not to advocate for themselves
  - Recognizing internal issues or cross-cultural racism within the AAPI community
    - Disparities between recent immigrants vs. grand/children of immigrants
    - Disparities between refugees/asylum seekers vs. immigrants coming from more wealthy/privileged backgrounds (having an education)
  - Finding ways to holistically address racism while maintaining strong identity
    - Discussing cultural values that are being weaponized against AAPIs, finding ways to maintain values while not letting them be used against us
- Next top response (on form): Arts and Culture
  - Dr. Hwang mentioned that the Arts and Culture grants were really well-written
    - Attendees questioned why then they weren't awarded the grants...
- Free Discussion about Key Issue Areas
  - Attendees think Youth Involvement is very significant
    - Many issues with youth involvement currently
      - Students/youth are interested, but not committed
      - Lack of transportation
      - Not aware of volunteer/involvement opportunities
      - Currently, most volunteers are non-AAPI
      - Lack of time, or busy during the wrong times
    - How to improve?
      - Providing more incentive (food, money, boba)

- Look at different perspectives (?)
- Show that volunteer work is appreciated/recognized
- Potentially implement a new internship for student coordinating

Nominations for Unity Dinner

- Nomination form due Monday morning
- Organizations that have already been awarded cannot win the same award
- Looking for sponsors for Unity Dinner

Next Western Massachusetts Regional Coordinator Intern

- Expectations/Goals of the position
  - Familiarity with the communities and the area
  - More meetings
  - Community *organizer*, rather than *coordinator* 
    - Emphasis on bringing/rallying communities together
    - Reaching out to other Asian communities
    - Gathering people, helping to promote events
  - Community member highly preferred
    - Maybe increase pay, extending hours and contract length
    - Change label of 'internship', discourages non-student applicants
    - Forming a separate internship for students to organize AAPI students
  - Goal for next coordinator: improve/increase Islamic AAPI representation
- How to cultivate/train the next leader
  - Managing the transition and developing leadership (?)
  - Ensuring next intern fully understands the purpose of the role
  - Key Initiatives Coordinator (?)