

Nichi Bei Times

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APALI: LEARNING ABOUT ASIAN AMERICAN ISSUES



WUZ CRACKIN, MY ASIAN HOMIES?

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Columnist

Ahh, is there a nicer feeling than sleeping in your own bed for the first time in weeks? I think not, unless using your own bathroom or cooking in your own kitchen counts. Or writing a column on your own computer, that's up there too. Indeed, I have been away for over a month, jetting off to Salt Lake City, and then Portland, and then San Jose. What an eventful month!

I just returned from a month-long stay with my aunt and uncle in Saratoga, California. I was in the Asian Pacific Leadership Institute of Silicon Valley (APALI) at De Anza Community College in Cupertino, which is outside of San Jose.

I had expected APALI to be like any other summer class. After all, the official course schedule said "Contemporary Issues in the Asian American Community" and "Ethnic Identity and Social Stratification." As head intern at APALI and good friend Betty Duong said, "Hey, I'm a contemporary Asian American and I have issues!"

But APALI was more than just Asian Americans with issues. APALI was loooove. APALI was an experience. APALI was family! In fact, there is talk that Head Intern Betty invited everyone in APALI, all 60 of us, to her house for Thanksgiving, even though Betty herself will be in Vietnam with a water buffalo. Now that's love!

It is amazing to me how every-

one in APALI, 60 students and interns, ranging in age from 15 to 26, become such a close family in only 15 days. We laughed together, we cried together, we learned together, we grew together. Oh, the cheese. After 15 days of lectures, guest speakers, field trips, projects, essays, and class discussions, everyone emerged more enlightened, more empowered, more ambitious.

Through learning about the Asian American civil rights movement, International Hotel in San Francisco, United Farm Workers Movement, the push for Asian American studies in colleges, the history of Asian Americans in the United States, gentrification, and so much more, I found my identity as a young, female, middle class Asian American. Through learning about the legal system, civic service, policy, and jobs in politics, I realized my role and my duty as a young, female, middle class Asian American in the community.

One of the highlights of the program was presenting a project to a mock city council in Cupertino. On the council were the current mayor, former mayor, current city council members, and other important members of the community. It was stressful, to say the least! My group pro-



LEFT: APALI
Class of 2005

SCHOOL'S OUT,
BUT
LEARNING'S IN
— (Below):
clockwise from
left: Nabeel Alam,
Vincent Li,
Steven Le, Tony
Suen, Annie
Noguchi, Cindy
Nguyen, Bambi
Mac and
Christine Duong.



photos by Andre Nguyen

posed to set up a bilingual translation service, since nearly 50 percent of Cupertino is Asian American, and many of them are immigrants. We were up until 4 a.m. the night before our presentation, doing research, typing up the report and the PowerPoint, and practicing our speech. It was a good lesson on working in a time crunch and doing thorough research. Even though we were working right up until we took the stage, our presentation went smoothly and everyone enjoyed it. Whew!

There were many wonderful parts

of APALI and it would take pages and pages to describe them all. And even then, I might not be able to put into words the effect APALI had on me. In APALI, we have a saying... "It's like alcohol... it creeps up on you!"

Annie Kim Tomita Noguchi, 16, will be a high school junior in Sacramento. She enjoys dancing, music, piano, sports, reading, eating, and hanging out. Send comments, criticisms, and plenty of Cheetos her way to nikkei@nichibeitimes.com