

Getting Along after 9-11: Battling Bigotry Workshop for Teachers



a photograph from the recent Changing Worlds exhibit at IAC

In an effort to respond to discrimination, prejudice and hostility in the wake of the World Trade Center terrorist attacks, the Education Project of the Indo-American Center, the Chicago Children's Museum, and the "Changing Worlds: Photographs and Oral Histories of Families in a Chicago Neighborhood" project have collaborated to offer a unique workshop opportunity for elementary and middle school teachers entitled, "Getting Along After 9-11: Battling Bigotry." During interactive sessions held at the Indo-American Center and the Children's Museum in March, local area teachers increased their understanding of the history and culture of South Asian immigrants. They also examined current incidents of harassment and discrimination, learned strategies for coping with emotions nurturing bigotry, and considered ways to protect diversity and encourage respect for differences.

Teachers also explored ways to utilize exhibits, including "Face To Face: Dealing with Prejudice and Discrimination" at the Chicago Children's Museum and "Changing Worlds" at the Indo-American Center, in their school curriculum. During the March 9th session at the Indo-American Center, teachers participated in interactive dialogs with Indian immigrants from the Devon community. Participants also received materials for use in their classrooms earned Chicago Public Schools Lane Promotional credit. Workshop sessions were held on Saturdays February 23 and March 23 at the Chicago Children's Museum at Navy Pier, and Saturday, March 9 at the IAC. This session also featured a neighborhood tour and lunch.

The workshop series was made possible through generous support from the Joyce Foundation.

"Changing Worlds," Photographs and Histories of Chicago Families

In March 2002, the Indo-American hosted the "Changing Worlds" exhibit of photographs and text documenting experiences of ten immigrant families who came to Chicago and enrolled children in Hibbard School during the 1990's. The exhibit includes photos of students, parents, grandparents and siblings as well as artwork created by Hibbard students. Visitors had the opportunity to view the exhibit on a walk-in-basis throughout the month of March. In addition, a mural created by Chicago area immigrant and refugee youth was also featured. Youth from eight different countries worked together at the Newcomer Center at Taft High School to express through drawings, painting, and poetry their fears and hopes about living in America, culminating in the creation of the mural. Translations of text used in the "Changing Worlds" exhibit were also available in a dozen languages including Gujarati, Hindi, and Urdu, making the exhibit accessible to a wide audience. The exhibit has traveled to several venues including the Field Museum of Natural History, the Daley Center, and most recently the Boulevard Art Center in Chicago, before arriving at the IAC.

Indo-American Center Mission

The mission of the Indo-American Center is to promote the well-being of South Asian Americans through services that facilitate their adjustment, integration, and friendship with the wider society, nurture their sense of community, and foster appreciation for their heritage and culture

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Celebration of Peace 2002 Gandhi/King Essay

Students currently enrolled in grades 9-12 are eligible to enter the Celebration of Peace 2002 Gandhi/King Legacy Essay Contest sponsored by the Dharma Foundation, the Indo-American Center, and The Center for Asian Arts and the Media at Columbia College. Applicants should submit an official entry form and an original 800-1000 word essay on the topic: "The Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.: How It Shapes My Life in My Community." Entries should be submitted by March 31, 2002 to the Indo-American Center. Each essay must contain a specific description of the writer's activities in his or her own community and how they relate to the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. The essay must include a brief analysis of Gandhi's and King's basic beliefs and actions. All applicants receive recognition. Winners will be announced by May 31, 2002, and will receive scholarships consisting of five shares of stock from the Dharma Foundation. Chicago area winners will receive tuition for a three credit hour course at the Columbia College High School Summer Institute. Official entry forms and some detailed contest information is available on-line at the www.indoamerican.org website. "Nonviolence is the greatest and most active force in the world." --Mohandas K. Gandhi "The only way to change humanity is to keep love at the center of our lives." --Martin Luther King, Jr.

Public Benefits Outreach & Interpretation

A recent client of the Indo-American Center's Public Benefits Outreach and Interpretation project lamented that she would never be able to sort out the confusing Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) paperwork and policies needed to correctly determine the amount of federal food-stamp assistance her family was entitled to. "All this is so difficult, especially as we need the help as soon as possible as my husband has been unable to work for two weeks now due to a back injury," the client stated. With the assistance of IAC staff and with close cooperation with caseworkers and managers at the local IDHS office, her family's public benefits were correctly re-determined so her household could receive the benefits assistance they were entitled to.

"Often times its just a miscommunication because you do not understand English or its a technicality and then your family suffers, its not right," comments another recent benefits client. The IAC has been assisting immigrant families with interpretation and advocacy at local IDHS offices to ensure that South Asians have the same opportunity to receive public benefits to which they are entitled as other communities. A good working relationship and has been developed with the local Northern District IDHS office, located on Western Avenue, which serves most IAC clients. Assistance applying for Federal Food Stamps, Medicaid, Assistance for the Aged Blind and Disabled, and Illinois State Food Benefits have been offered to over 200 individuals from Chicago's South Asian communities since the program's inception in 2001.

The program, jointly funded by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and the Illinois Department of Human Services, also offers referral services to a wide variety of community support agencies. Since major welfare reform efforts in the 1990's, city, state, and county social service agencies have been scrambling to assist clients cut off from federal programs that formerly assisted recent immigrants. For more information on benefits assistance programs or referrals to community support agencies in your area, please contact Faisal Hadi (773) 973-444 or at fhadi@indoamerican.org.

IAC Teen Talk Group Engages in Cultural Exchange



A variety of cultural, linguistic, and generational gaps were bridged during a recent IAC Teen Talk visit to Chicago's Chinese American Service League



A student receives a crash-course in using chop-sticks while her peers look on. Lunch at a local Chinese restaurant followed the exchange.



IAC Teen Talk members learn to write their names in Chinese characters from a CASL member who had been eager to take part in the exchange.

Each weekend for the past several months, the Indo-American Center has been host to a new group of teen leaders actively discussing and taking part in a variety of community projects in the Chicago area. The young group, the IAC Teen Talk program, has been organized through the help of the Coalition for African, Asian, European, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois (CAELII) Community Building Project, and actively takes part in a variety of city-wide projects focusing on cultural exchange and immigrants rights. The aim of the CAELII project is to bring a diverse range of immigrant communities together in hopes of finding commonalities and differences that can serve as a resource for various public advocacy efforts.

The IAC Teen Talk recently took part in a cultural exchange in Chinatown, where the Chinese American Service League hosted the group to a tour, a historical and cultural overview of Chinese American immigrants, and a brief history of the neighborhood. This activity was a planned cultural exchange facilitated by CAELII. The IAC will in turn play host to Erie House and the Instituto del Progreso Latino, two Latino community organizations in the Chicago area, later this May.

Teen Talk participants meet weekly on Saturdays to take part in the CAELII Community Building Project. Here, teens participate in group discussions on current events and issues specifically related to the South Asian community while engaging in a range of leadership activities. The forum provides them with a safe space outside of school and the home where they can voice their opinion and develop their own individual ideas. Some recent Teen Talk activities have included personality assessments, group projects, career discussions, anti-hate-crime public service announcements, and workshops on hate-crimes and neighborhood safety.

Tim Novak, one of the project's coordinators at the IAC, called the program "one of the most tiring yet rewarding activities" he has engaged in at the Center. "You may not think students are really making connections or bridging barriers, but every now and then you see something that just amazes you." Tim cites the eagerness of seniors at the Chinese American Service League to communicate with IAC teens as a truly memorable moment. To help develop young leaders, Tim himself took part in a 6-week leadership training through CAELII. He "hopes to take elements of that training and develop a youth leadership workshop for the teens."

Special Thanks

Carter Klein

Partner, Jenner and Block, LLC, Chicago

*for all your continued support and assistance for the Indo-American Center
thank you on the behalf of IAC staff, community members, and directors*

CONGRATULATIONS to MR. GOVINDLAL PARIKH

***Literacy Volunteers of America and Rotary Club of Chicago
2002 Tutor of the Year Award Recipient***

IAC Adult English Literacy Tutor

The Search Is On For an IAC Development Director

Are you a dynamic, creative and visionary individual with good writing and communication skills? Are you passionate about community service? Have you had experience with fund raising and writing proposals? If so, you might be just the person the Indo-American Center is looking for! The search is on for a person to fill our newly-created position of Development Director. This is a wonderful opportunity for an energetic person to help shape the Center as it expands the scope of its services.

The Development Director will be responsible for all activities associated with fundraising, including writing and submitting grant proposals for existing and new programs, developing and implementing public relations activities, special events and newsletters, maintaining contact with all funding agencies and donors, and developing and maintaining a data base of donors and clients.

Applicants must have an undergraduate degree. Candidates with a Master's degree are preferred. Experience in proposal writing and working with community organizations and good computer skills are essential.

Please forward your resume and a cover letter for the position to R.S. Rajan, Executive Director, Indo-American Center, 6328 North California Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

Senior Sangam Program Continues to try New Flavors and Activities

Wednesday afternoons at the Indo-American Center have been full of fragrant spice, the smell of onions sizzling, and the heady aroma of basmati rice and saffron harmonized in a variety of South Asian and international recipes. The IAC Senior Sangam program is currently hosting a series of Wednesday afternoon cooking workshops where Sangam participants and community members share new and familiar culinary delights while building a vital sense of intergenerational community and camaraderie.

The Senior Sangam program group is also collecting recipes shared during the workshops for a collective cookbook that can be distributed to interested groups and individuals. Sarah Waheed, IAC English Literacy Coordinator, finds that the "recipes on lasagna, vinaigrette salad, vegetable biryani, and Mexican quesadillas, which been distributed amongst the students for them to try at home, are also a great way for students to improve their English skills."



volunteers lead a cooking craft workshop for Senior Sangam members

Continuing Senior Sangam activities also include afternoon card parties, weekly yoga classes, internet classes, seminars, and chai-chats. Benefits assistance with Social Security, Public Aid, and Kid Care programs also continues to be provided to program participants. Fieldtrips and community exchanges with groups and organizations around the city also occur on a regular basis. The program is also preparing to offer language classes in Hindi and Urdu to interested students in the Chicago area. Contact Faisal Hadi (773) 973-4444 for details on these continuing and upcoming opportunities or volunteer needs.

Adult English Literacy Program Adds Evening Classes to Repertoire

IAC now offers evening adult literacy classes in addition to its daily offering of classes. Regular seminars on a variety of special topics have also been added to the literacy lineup. Regular health seminars are intended to empower women who know little or no English to gain the basic vocabulary, skill set, and confidence required to take care of their and their family's health, and to communicate effectively with a physician. These seminars are led in English by Shivangi Bhatt, a 2nd year medical student at UIC, and are translated by female staff members. Topics have ranged from the importance of women's health to Osteoporosis, Menopause, and Heart Disease.

In early February, the monthly Job Skills workshop also kicked off to a start, with two representatives from Asian Human Services who gave a presentation on job preparedness. Students learned how to fill out application forms, answer particular kinds of questions at job interviews, where to look for jobs, and learned many other practical skills involved in obtaining a job. Students were also given a packet that contained useful information when searching for employment.



students take part in interactive English learning activities at IAC

This winter, Intermediate (Level 1) and Advanced (Level 2) students have also started writing their biographies and narratives for the Immigrant Stories Project, a long-term project that has been rejuvenated from the previous year in partnership with Insight Arts. Exercises included so far have focused on the cultural differences between South Asia and the United States, family life, folk tales from native countries, geography, clothing, religious holidays, and marriage customs. If you would like to volunteer to tutor English at the Indo-American Center, please contact Sarah Waheed at (773) 973-4444.

Upcoming Events at the IAC...



Students in the IAC Children's Academic Tutoring Program engage in fun and interactive weekly activities, facilitating enhanced language skills and scholastic achievement. This year's summer fun enrichment program for youth will also feature fun and engaging fieldtrips, workshops, activities, and volunteer opportunities. Sign up now by calling the Indo-American Center at (773) 973-4444. Program is free and open to all children. Teens are welcome to volunteer.

May 2002

Childrens Academic Tutoring Program Ends
Asian American Awareness Month
Hindi-Urdu Classes for Adults Begin at the IAC
Neighborhood Cultural Exchanges for Teens/Seniors

June 2002

Summer Fun Youth Program Begins

July 2002

Chicago Neighborhood Tours, Register Now

August 2002

IAC Community Building Project Fair at Truman College

September 2002

Indo-American Center Annual Banquet

Indo-American Center

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