

The Asian Reporter

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AsiaFest: Portland's celebration of diverse Asian cultures



INFLATABLE FUN. The kids' area at this year's AsiaFest celebration included "body boppers" — inflatable donut-shaped toys with handles — and more. Held in celebration of Asian Heritage Month, the festival featured music, dance, cultural performances, a trivia challenge, arts-and-crafts and information booths, Asian cuisine, bubble tea, and more. Read about the sixth annual event on page 16. (AR Photo/Jan Landis)

AALDEF releases report on Asian-American voting in 2008 election

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) has released detailed findings from its nonpartisan, multilingual exit poll of 16,665 Asian-American voters during the November 2008 presidential election, the largest survey of its kind in the nation. AALDEF polled Asian-American voters in 11 states on election day: New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Michigan, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, Nevada, and Washington, D.C.

"In the historic 2008 presidential election, Asian-American voters were engaged in the political process like never before," said AALDEF executive director Margaret Fung. "The AALDEF exit poll offers unique insights into the Asian-American electorate, which will continue to have growing influence on our nation's political landscape."

AALDEF staff attorney Glenn Magpantay presented the results of the 2008 multilingual exit poll on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Key findings from AALDEF's report, "The Asian American Vote in the 2008 Presidential Election," include the following:

■ Asian Americans are a growing segment of the electorate, with a large proportion of first-time voters and foreign-born

naturalized U.S. citizens. Nearly four out of five (79 percent) Asian Americans polled were foreign-born naturalized U.S. citizens. Almost one third (31 percent) of those polled said they voted for the first time in the 2008 presidential election.

■ Asian Americans shared common political interests, even across ethnic lines. In the presidential election, Asian Americans voted as a bloc for the same candidates and identified common reasons for their votes. Every Asian ethnic group selected economy/jobs as the most important factor influencing votes. The 10 largest Asian ethnic groups in the exit poll were Chinese (32 percent), Asian Indian (15 percent), Korean (14 percent), Bangladeshi (eight percent), Vietnamese (six percent), Filipino (five percent), Pakistani (four percent), Indo-Caribbean (four percent), Arab (three percent), and Cambodian (two percent).

■ More than three-quarters (76 percent) of Asian Americans polled voted for Barack Obama for president, with 23 percent supporting John McCain. In 30 of the 45 congressional districts where the exit poll was conducted, a majority of Asian Americans supported Democratic candidates. Among Asian Americans polled, 58 percent were registered Democrats, 13

percent were registered Republicans, and 26 percent were not enrolled in any political party.

■ Overall, the most important factors influencing Asian Americans in their vote for president were economy/jobs (66 percent), healthcare (40 percent), and foreign policy/war in Iraq (31 percent). Other top issues included education (27 percent), civil rights/immigrant rights (23 percent), terrorism/security (14 percent), and crime in neighborhoods (six percent).

■ Of those who expressed an opinion, nearly four out of five (79 percent) respondents supported the provision of health insurance and medical coverage to all persons irrespective of their immigration status.

■ More than one-third (35 percent) of Asian-American voters polled were limited-English proficient (LEP), defined as speaking English "less than very well." One in five (20 percent) respondents identified English as their native language. Among the different Asian ethnic groups polled, Korean Americans had the highest concentration of LEP voters, with more than half (54 percent) identifying themselves as LEP, followed by Vietnamese-American (53 percent) and

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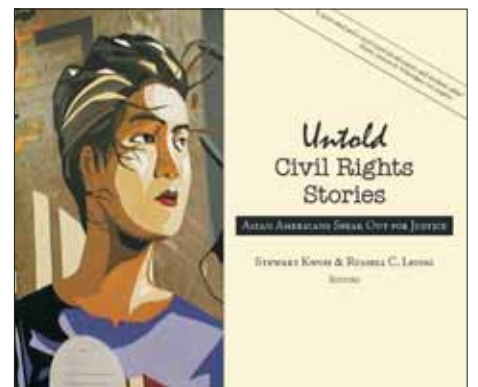
South Korea completes first space center

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Puppets meld cultures and teach language

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Asian experience focus of UCLA textbook

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OBT offers Obonfest commemorative lanterns for purchase

The Oregon Buddhist Temple (OBT) is offering commemorative lanterns for purchase as part of its annual Obonfest, held Saturday, August 1 from 4:00 to 9:00pm. The festival commemorates the lives of loved ones who have passed away.

Lanterns are strung in memory of friends and family. White lanterns commemorate the deceased, whose names are written on the lanterns in *kanji* (Chinese characters), *katakana* (simple Japanese), and/or English along with the date of passing. Red lanterns may have any name, including businesses.

Lanterns are available for \$25 each. Previously purchased lanterns may be strung for \$15.

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**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE
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To download a PDF version of our special issue honoring this year's awardees, which was published May 19, 2009, visit www.asianreporter.com or www.ARFoundation.net.



FACES OF ASIAFEST. The AsiaFest 2009 entertainment stage featured many performers, including (clockwise from top left) the Portland Art & Cultural Center Dance Team, the Hmong Sunflower Dancers, the Cambodian Dance Troupe, and the Natasinh Sao Lao of Oregon Dance Team. The Kids' Area was a popular destination for people of all ages. The area featured (counterclockwise from bottom left) a basketball shooting game; face, hand, and arm painting; crawl-through tunnels; art and craft activities; and more. (AR Photos/Maileen Hamto, Jan Landis, Alfred She, Eugene Wong, John Wong, and George Wu)

AsiaFest: Portland's celebration of diverse Asian cultures

By Julie Stegeman
The Asian Reporter

Asian Heritage Month was brought to a close in Portland at AsiaFest 2009, a grand celebration of the cultures of Asia and the Pacific Islands. An officially sanctioned Rose Festival event, AsiaFest was created six years ago to "share, educate, and celebrate the many wonders of the Asian culture," according to organizer Jason Lim.

Nearly 3,000 people attended the family-friendly, daylong event at the Oregon Convention Center, where they enjoyed performances by regional groups, Asian food, informational and cultural booths, activities, and more.

Upon entering the event site, visitors were challenged with a "cultural treasure hunt" — a series of Asian-related questions, such as "Which country's highest point is Doi Inthanon?" or "In what year did the groundbreaking for the Portland Classical Chinese Garden occur?" Answers could be found by visiting various festival vendors. Those who completed the treasure hunt could turn in their answers to earn a spin on a "wheel of fortune" and win a toy or other prize.

The festival offered an opportunity to visit nearly 50 food, information, and culture booths. There was a wide range of exhibitors present and festival attendees could find information on everything from immigrant assistance at the Asian

Family Center/IRCO display to adoption from Asian countries at the Associated Services for International Adoption (ASIA) to Buddhism from the Oregon Buddhist Temple's booth. In addition, exotic objects from around the globe were presented for purchase at The Monkey & The Rat's booth.

Several exhibitors offered giveaways or services. At the Spirit Mountain Casino booth, adults could play a hand of blackjack to win casino vouchers, including overnight stays or access to the buffet. For those who were feeling stressed or tense, G&L Acupuncture & Wellness Center offered mini-massages at reasonable prices. Hungry people could enjoy free sushi at the Chips & Palace Casinos' booth or make their way to the food court to check out the delicious Asian cuisine offerings from Wong's King and Sandy's Asian Cuisine, tea with big, dark tapioca balls from Eastland Sushi & Bubble Tea, and ready-to-eat items from Uwajimaya.

The 20 entertainment groups performing at AsiaFest were as varied as the cultures they represented — China, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Tibet, Hawaii, Japan, the Philippines, and India. Entertainment included the Portland Lee's Association Lion Dance Team's energetic lion dancers moving through the audience to the heavy beat of drums, the graceful movements of the young women of the Au Co Viet dance group, and the acro-

batic prowess of the Wushu Xtreme Team. The performance stage also included the haunting melodies of performers from the Tibetan Cultural Center and elegant hula dances and songs from the Ke Kukui Foundation, among other talented groups. The wide-ranging performances truly highlighted the great diversity of culture that is encompassed by the generic term "Asian."

The event also featured a silent auction. Festival-goers had an opportunity to bid on goody baskets filled with items such as apparel, hotel stays, salon treatments, and more.

An immensely popular kids' area kept the little ones busy at the event. Children could choose from craft activities, including decorating dragons, fans, or Chinese lanterns; face painting; or more physical activities, such as shooting baskets, crawling through tunnels, or playing with "body boppers" — inflatable donut-shaped toys with handles that allowed kids to play "bumper-car style." The only problem with the area was trying to get the children to leave when parents were ready.

Platinum sponsors of AsiaFest 2009 were American Family Insurance, FamilyCare, Spirit Mountain Casino, the Portland Development Commission, and *The Asian Reporter*.

To learn more about AsiaFest, The Asian Reporter Foundation, or next year's events, visit <www.ARFoundation.net>.

