



Asian American Artists Collective-Chicago presents:
THE 2ND NATIONAL APIA SPOKEN WORD & POETRY SUMMIT 2003
"First there was the word...then there was the Fist"

August 1, 2003

Dear Summit Participants,

On behalf of the Asian American Artists Collective – Chicago, we welcome you to the Mid-coast and the 2nd National APIA Spoken Word & Poetry Summit 2003, **First there was the WORD...then there was the FIST!**

When members of Isangmahal and I Was Born with Two Tongues first came up with the idea for the Summit, the conversation went a little like this (the names have been changed to protect the reputations of IM and 2T as keen masterminds):

yoyo: you know what would be great to have?

marvin: a mango lychee drink and spamagi?

aneeta: no, a mass gathering of dope Asian American artists?!

naya: yeah, oh my god, that would be hella tight!

marvin: word. hella dope, son.

From those humble beginnings, the fist Summit proved to be more than anyone could have expected. Over 120 people were transformed from attendee to familia through a demonstration claming I SPEAK ENGLISH, peer workshops, group challenges bridging myth and oral history, and a four-hour performance that spilled out onto 7th and Jackson. What followed was the biggest, most tearful group hug Seattle's ever seen, rippling through Asian America. We stayed to support our fellow brothers and sisters in the National Poetry Slam, and we were rewarded with the work of Beau and Bao on the finals night stage. We left wanting to reunite this family as soon as possible. The listserv went crazy, the thousands of photos that were taken were posted, and a video went into production.

And so now you are here. Emerging artists - you've saved all that money by eating nothing but ramen for the last three months, emptied that piggy bank, begged your parents, put in that overtime, got rid of cable, gave up watching surf girls and trading spaces, and didn't buy that new book or CD. You've survived the rental van full of teens, the most crammed seat on that ATA flight, all the Greyhound stops, or hid yourself in a balikbayan cargo box on Amtrak. Elders, mentors, and heroines and heroes of Asian American artistry – you were contacted and begged. We said we didn't have the funding or the formality to do this "the right way." You came anyway. We cherish and respect the groundwork you've laid out. We salute you, and thank you for remembering that every great act begins penniless and do-it-yourself.

The aim of this summit is simple: to learn to love our impending selves through the reflections and stories of our fellow Asian American brothers and sisters (that was said a bit later in that initial IM & 2T discussion, trust us). We are living history. We are here to speak and to listen to the thirteen-year old and the elder-whose-age-must-not-be-named-year old alike. We are blessed with warm faces in welcoming mirrors all around us this weekend. Understand that although many say Asian America is a mythical nation, you are here to make that nation come alive, so you can carry it back with you and live it.

As you feel the warm fuzzies, know that the DePaul University Women's Studies Program and Hostelling International – Chicago have contributed greatly to make this Summit happen. The Asian American Artists Collective – Chicago is comprised of an all volunteer staff, your personal Asian American, Chicago-based militia team, if you will. We are on guard and on point as guide and protector on your journey through the harsh, war-torn flat lands of Chicago. Thank you for coming. Now, let's do this!

Best,

Jona Mercado
Kelly Tsai
Anida Yoeu Esguerra
Robert Karimi
Marlon Esguerra