

亞洲節上

越裔律師 Angela Thi Bennert 感慨作為亞裔美國人的自豪

Good afternoon Mayor Jackson, members of City Council, and public officials. I would like to express a special thanks to Madame Ryan and the Asian Pacific American Federation for inviting me to briefly address you today about the art of balancing traditional Asian culture with today's all-American culture. There are three things that I will discuss:

- 1. my personal challenges on becoming "Americanized";
2. how I grew to appreciate and embrace my Asian culture; and
3. how I now balance my Asian culture in my personal and professional life.

When my family moved to America after the fall of Saigon in 1975, we settled in East Cleveland. Yes, East Cleveland, not LA, New York, or Chicago, where there were and still are large communities of Asians. When we settled in East Cleveland, we were the only Vietnamese family, in what felt like a thousands of miles away. In addition to being a first generation Asian American, I was bi-racial, half Black, half Vietnamese. So I am acutely aware of the readily apparent cultural and physical differences between Vietnamese culture and American culture.

So here I was, this little half Black, half Vietnamese, curly haired girl running around East Cleveland, where no one looked like me. While I made friends very easily, I always felt different, and never quite felt like I fit in anywhere, either as an American or a Vietnamese. With the racism and hostility I experienced as a little girl, I knew right away that there was something different about me that generated negative feelings. The wounds from the Vietnam War were fresh and deep.

And like many other Asian Americans, I was faced with conflicted feelings of choosing between maintaining my cultural identity or becoming "Americanized." So as I became older, I chose to become "Americanized." I didn't want to be different. I came to view our traditions as outdated, irrelevant, sexist and unfair. I would tell my mom on countless occasions, "I'm Americanized", or "I'm not in Vietnam anymore, I'm in America." I remember becoming embarrassed if my mom spoke Vietnamese in public. I absolutely rebelled against anything I thought was Vietnamese.

So to learn English, I watched Sesame Street, Electric Company, Mr. Rogers Neighborhood, everything on WVIZ I could watch. The other difference was that the girls that I grew up with were so confident, outgoing, and fashion forward. And here I was, this awkward, little girl, who was lucky to be able to get her hair into a decent ponytail, and to make matters worse, my parents refused to shop anywhere other than Woolworth's, Zayre's or Pickway shoes. So, when I became old enough to work, I did so I could purchase the fashions that would make me "fit in." Then there was the hair issue. In junior high, I abandoned the long hair for a shorter feather cut to look like everyone else.

But as I became older, more mature and developed a stronger sense of self, I realized that I didn't have to abandon my cultural identity in



an attempt to completely assimilate into American culture. That no matter what I did, I would always be different. So, I began to embrace, appreciate and celebrate my differences. I stopped allowing people to try to force me to choose one ethnicity over the other. I came to understand that I what I viewed as "sexist" was grounded in respect and courtesies that men and women extended to one another, in different yet, equally important ways. When my grandfather passed away, my Ong Ngoai, I realized that my history was passing away as well. But more importantly, as a mother, I wanted to preserve my Vietnamese culture for my children and my children's children. And fortunately, my children have embraced their diverse cultures and have a curiosity and desire to learn and be a part of our rich traditions and history. So, how do you balance the two cultures?

PERSONALLY

On a personal level, become active in a local community group. If you do not have a local community group within your culture, create one. It can be as informal as a group of friends gathering in your home to play cards or share stories. If there is one, join it and become active. Bring your children so they can interact with the community members and children and become exposed to their culture. And, if there's an opportunity to share your culture with your children, either through a class project or a culture day, take advantage of it. You would be surprised at how excited and proud your children will be. Just recently, my mother was invited to my son's 3rd and 4th grade class to share our Vietnamese culture. Because of her work schedule, my son, begrudgingly accepted me as a substitute. In addition to bringing photos, music, and wearing our native dress, I brought food - spring rolls, dried coconut, dried

squid and wafer sticks. I wasn't quite sure how the class would receive some of the food, especially the dried squid, but they were surprisingly open and receptive, and were willing to experiment with everything. It was so successful that my son, who would normally avoid me like the plague in front of his friends, walked me to my car and told me he was now the coolest kid in school.

Also, try to preserve your native language. Unfortunately, there's the group like me, who can speak so few words that it equates to not being able to speak the language at all, or have only learned to say the bad words. And then, there's the group who can speak the language, but can't write or read it. While it may be challenging to force our children to learn it, it's one of those things where they may not like it or understand it now, they will appreciate it later. I challenge you to organize intergenerational language classes in your community, where the older generation can learn English and the younger generation can learn how to speak, read and write your native language, so that your native language is not lost.

Preserve your culture during the holidays. At any given holiday, it's not unusual for our dinner table to have turkey, greens, yams, spring rolls, fried rice, and banh xeo, with chocolate cake and lychee fruit for dessert. Teach your children how to make the dishes. Engage them in the preparation.

And don't just expose yourself and your children to only your culture, help them become familiar with other cultures. America has a lot of communities that make up America. By getting to know other cultures, you develop a sensitivity to and appreciation for others. And through that exposure, you'll find that you have common interests and become more tolerant and inclusive of one another.

PROFESSIONALLY

On a professional level, maximize the benefits of your cultural identity, without becoming stereotyped or labeled:

- > Join organizations, groups and associa-

tions, such as the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association that support and advance your interests. And if there isn't one, or if one has become inactive, emulate Barbara Lum and jump start one, such as the Greater Cleveland Asian American Bar Association. Become active politically in advancing your community's interests. For instance, attend the first Ohio Asian American Pacific Islander Legislative Day at the Ohio Statehouse on June 8.

> Market your fluency, or even proficiency in a foreign language. This can be a desirable asset, especially when a company's client base is diverse, or even international in scope. But, remember, fluency in English is still a business priority.

> Market your ability to be culturally sensitive to different cultures and peoples. Knowing what is proper behavior in one culture and rude behavior in another culture is a valuable employment skill.

CONCLUSION

As we are all aware, much progress has been made, not just nationally, but right here in Cleveland. Just look at us today - celebrating National Asian Heritage Month at Cleveland City Hall. When we first came to Cleveland in 1975, there was only one Asian grocery store and the only Asian food that was familiar to Americans was "Chinese". Now, we have Asian plaza, #1 Pho, Korean House, Siam Café, Café Tandoor and a host of other Asian restaurants. And we are finally not all being classified as one group - finally dispelling the all too common notion that "All Asians look alike."

I'm sure you have had heard references to America as a melting pot or a salad. But to me, America is not a melting pot or a salad - it's a stir fry, full of colorful, unique ingredients that together, make a beautiful dish.

So, as we leave today, I encourage you to embrace, appreciate and celebrate our differences. Because the reality is, we can all take pride in our cultural heritage and be successful Americans at the same time. We don't have to choose one culture over the other. But together, we can forge a stronger, more successful multi-cultural society.

Thank you and Happy Year of the Tiger!

慶祝亞洲節活動感言

5月10日,在克利夫蘭市政廳,有關方面隆重舉辦了亞洲節活動,市政官員和亞裔代表200余人出席了當天的活動。杰克森市長作了熱情友好的講話,當天大家欣賞了豐富多彩的文藝節目,觀看了亞洲藝術展,品嚐了亞洲食品。

回顧歷史,不忘功績,為了紀念華工修建橫穿全美東西兩岸鐵路以及亞洲太平洋裔對美國的貢獻,美國國會於1978年通過法案,宣佈每年5月4日至10日為亞洲太平洋傳統周,年年慶祝,值得亞裔驕傲和自豪。

美國南北戰爭結束後,林肯總統成為解放黑奴的偉人,實現了南北統一,但是聯邦政府的權力在東岸,東西兩岸相隔長達4公里,交通極為不便,這對國家的政績,經濟和科技等的發展很不利,要解決這個嚴峻的問題,必須建築東西貫通的鐵路。

1863年1月3日,鐵路破土動工。其中一條要越過內華達山嶺向東區推進,那一帶

都是崇山峻嶺,其中有一百英里是懸崖峭壁,是堅硬花崗岩石。工程艱巨,無機械設備,就靠雙手。而且那里是高山氣候,瞬間萬變,常遭暴風雨襲擊。鐵路工的生活艱苦,他們紮營野居,膳食粗劣,缺醫少藥。儘管這樣,亞裔勞工經過六年零四個月的苦戰,完成了貫通東西兩岸的鐵路。在征服群山峻嶺中有不少華工付出了生命。

這項史無前例的創舉,為19世紀美國聯邦政權的集中統一,為美國的發展和繁榮奠定了堅實的基礎。1869年5月10日,美國貫穿東西的鐵路完成,在慶祝的日子里,華盛頓國會大廈外升起五彩繽紛的氣球,萬眾歡呼。三藩市市長表揚了華工的貢獻,並以三藩市有華人社會為光榮,州議會通



本文作者任學武(右)與市議員

過第217號提案表揚華工鑄造鐵路的功勞。

今天,在慶祝亞洲節的日子里,我們更加緬懷那些在美國歷史上立下功勞的華工們。載入美國史冊的亞裔勞工的光輝業績將成為美國人民永遠的敬意和追思。

常青公寓 任學武 2010年5月12日

聯誼假期《伊利華報》行程特色:

- 1. 世博特別安排:一日或多日門票,盡覽世博
2. 超級豪華5*酒店:豪華舒適,超級享受,贈送每日豐盛自助早餐
3. 品嚐各地美食:同仁堂"藥膳",南翔小籠包,弘曆王朝--乾龍宴,水鄉風味--松鼠鱖魚,南京鹽水鴨,杭幫風味(西湖醋魚,東坡肉等)
4. 獨具匠心的行程安排:
*上海:世博會,城市規劃館
*無錫:蠡園,世界頂級佛教宮殿--梵宮 世界最高的靈山大佛,欣賞"九龍灌浴"
*蘇州:四大名園--留園,李公堤,獨一無二的天幕電影
*南京:世界保留最完美的城池--東水關明城牆遺址,南京長江大橋,月色秦淮河,夫子廟商業街
*杭州:西湖遊船,花港觀魚,漫步蘇堤,龍井品茗
5. 聯誼假期精美禮物贈送:上海檀香扇、蘇州刺繡、無錫泥人、杭州天竺筷、南京雨花石
※ 清楚的標明購物點、旅遊品質最有保障 ※

此特惠團僅限於北美華人!

中旅集團 聯誼假期《伊利華報》

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免團費

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Table with columns: 天數, 出發日期, 報名費, 世博一天(酒店+門票). Rows include 8天, 9天, and +北京后续2天 options.

報名條件: 限於18歲以上美國籍華僑
九天團單房差: \$320.00/人 十一天團單房差: \$420.00/人
17歲以下小童以及非華僑人士加收: \$180.00/人
另外加訂上海五星級酒店: \$60.00/人/晚(含自助早餐)
另外加訂世博門票: \$25.00/1日票, \$70.00/3日票
另外加訂世博接送: \$16.00/人/單程, 8:30AM送

* 聯誼假期會跟隨貨幣匯率波動而調整價格,無需事先通知。敬請留意。