



NEW RESOURCE CENTERS. Portland State University recently opened the doors to its two newest cultural resource centers — the Pacific Islander, Asian & Asian American Student Center and the Pan-African Commons — that provide computer labs, lounges, study spaces, and more to students. The grand opening of the centers was held November 2 and included performances (top photo), informational booths (bottom photo), and more. (AR Photos/Jan Landis)

PSU opens two new resource centers for students of color

Portland State University (PSU) recently opened the doors to its two newest cultural resource centers: the Pacific Islander, Asian & Asian American Student Center and the Pan-African Commons.

The two new centers join PSU's three other cultural resource centers: the Multicultural Center, the Native American Student & Community Center, and La Casa Latina.

In recent years, students had requested centers for African-American and African students as well as Asian-American, Asian, and Pacific Islander students. Last December, students convened a Speak Out event to publicly describe their experiences and challenges.

"When the students went up in the front of that room and started to tell the administration with so much passion and love and grace what they needed, I realized that something was going to happen," said Cynthia Gómez, executive director of the university's Cultural Resource Centers.

Shortly afterward, PSU president Wim Wiewel announced the formation of the two new centers. In the months since, the leadership team of the Cultural Resource Centers has engaged students and solicited feedback to determine the role the centers should play in the community; even the names of the centers were chosen by public discussion and vote. PSU students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to continue that effort to help craft the missions for the new centers.

All of the university's cultural centers offer resources such as computer labs, lounges, and study spaces. They also provide event and program facilitation, as well as opportunities for student leadership, employment, and volunteer work.

"When someone walks into our space, they should be able to see themselves," said Makerusa "Mak" Porotesano, director of the Pacific Islander, Asian & Asian American Student Center. He hopes visitors to the centers will see themselves in the art and in the faces around them, that they'll hear themselves in the music, and that they'll think, "I'm from here."

To learn more, visit <www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers>.

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Space reservations due:

Wednesday, November 16 at 1:00pm

Artwork due: Thursday, November 17 at 1:00pm

Exhibit lays bare Portland's annexation east of 82nd Avenue

By Ryan Nakano

The Asian Reporter

The room is dark. Mounted on the walls are large posters bleeding red, black, and white like old political propaganda pieces. Underneath the posters sit stacks of cardboard boxes once filed away with documents that most of the people in the room were unfamiliar with until October. The art exhibit is part of a city-funded program, but the endeavor itself is a critique on the city, its funding, and the projects that developed from a long-forgotten history of neighborhoods east of 82nd Avenue.

The artist, 42-year-old Sabina Haque, stands at the entrance of the display held in Portland's Jade District, fielding questions from a group of guests. To her right, a set of three televisions simultaneously screen the testimonials of residents who grew up in east county.

One of the residents featured on the televisions, Bonnie McKnight, a community activist, talks about the annexation process, explaining how each citizen of the unincorporated region would be worth around \$7.50 to Portland, likening it to a giant grant program for the city. One map of the area, which was annexed between 1983 and 1987, shows that approximately 140,000 people lived there.

"There was never any transparency when it came to the annexation," McKnight says in the video. "It was generally, 'here is what we are going to do.'"

According to Haque's artist statement and explanation about the exhibit, "82nd Avenue served as the easternmost boundary of the city of Portland. In the 1980s, Portland expanded the city's boundaries roughly to 182nd Avenue ... Longtime residents, neighborhood activists, and an influx of Southeast Asian immigrants came together in this evolving geographical space in a decade marked by economic and political turmoil."

Today, Haque's statement continues, east Portland is the most diverse and rapidly growing section of the city, encompassing one-quarter of its population as well as nearly 40 percent of its youth.

A large projection in the exhibit shows the transformation of 82nd Avenue over the past 100 years, a visual landscape of the history of the existing multicultural melting pot of the region told through storefront billboards and neon signs.

The area became the home of many immigrants. Before the '80s, the region was unincorporated, meaning it was not officially part of Portland. It was not even connected to the city's sewage system.

RACC grant

The Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) granted funding to the City of Portland Archives & Records Center (PARC) to host an artist in residency. It would be the second opportunity for PARC to connect with a local artist, so they put out the call.

There was the selection process: hours of reviewing applicants and more than 100 informational sessions. Sabina Haque was chosen.

Haque, who was born in Columbus,



ANNEXATION & TRANSFORMATION. An art installation by Sabina Haque that focuses on neighborhoods east of 82nd Avenue is open for viewing on Thursday, November 17 from 6:00 to 8:00pm at the Jade/APANO Multicultural Space, located at 8114 S.E. Division Street in Portland. (AR Photos/Ryan Nakano)

Ohio, but grew up in Karachi, Pakistan, has spent the past 10 years living in Portland with her husband and two kids. She is a visual artist and a professor of art at Portland State University.

In past projects, Haque has worked with students, teaching cultural and oral histories through the arts. She has coordinated activities tackling the issue of annexation and assimilation from an Indian and Pakistani perspective.

Before connecting with PARC, Haque knew very little about the history of east Portland. So for the last year, she and a team of research assistants have been digging. What immediately struck her was the absence of transparency by the city and the lack of voice given to residents of the unincorporated region.

"Things were done behind closed doors," Haque said. The city told residents to "please come to these community meetings — after they had already made the decision to incorporate the east."

Haque believes the lack of transparency continues to be a challenge when it comes to the city and its relationship with the communities that exist within it. She went on to say that while her exhibit serves as a means of historical documentation, it is also a way to address possible solutions.

"How do we find our voice? How can we come up with solutions that work for everybody, not just the people in power? How can cities effectively work with citizens?" — These are questions she hopes the exhibit elicits.

Stepping into the display, there are a couple very noticeable things. One is the documents themselves.

"Because most of this specific part of the city went underrepresented and under-documented for so long, I wanted to make the information that

I found as big as possible," Haque said. "I wanted to shine a light on these neighborhoods east of 82nd so people could experience its presence in a big way."

And then, of course, there is the venue where the exhibit is currently housed — the working space of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), which is located at the corner of 82nd Avenue and Division Street.

Even before Haque was selected for the residency, city archivist Diana Banning had chosen east Portland as the topic.

"We chose east Portland because we wanted to shine a light on 82nd to hopefully introduce the idea that these communities existed and still exist in the records and that the city archives have records that pertain to all of its city's citizens," Banning said.

Banning also mentioned how the team was really excited for the exhibit to be on view within the community it represents.

By displaying her work at the Jade/APANO Multicultural Space (JAMS), Haque has been able to bring art to the forefront of the community it is reflecting. Banning likens the research process for the artist-in-residency program to that of falling through a rabbit hole.

For some viewers, Haque's art exhibit of Portland east of 82nd might feel very much the same. But after seeing it, she hopes they will not say to themselves, "look at what happened," but rather "what will become of it?"

Another viewing of Haque's exhibit takes place on Thursday, November 17 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at the Jade/APANO Multicultural Space, located at 8114 S.E. Division Street in Portland. The event also features an artist talk at 7:00pm. To learn more, call (971) 340-4861 or visit <www.apano.org>.