It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.
-Maya Angelou

On Saturday, October 6th, 2012, the East Asia Institute (EAI) at UTSA in collaboration with the Texas Diversity Council hosted “GenerAsian Next Youth Leadership Summit: East Meets West,” running from 8:30 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. Participating students came from 15 difficult local schools and were with a variety of ethnic backgrounds, many of whom were of Asian descent and all were all quite eager for the day’s event.

The opening remarks were delivered by Mimi Yu, Associate Director of EAI, and Angeles Valenciano, Vice President of Business Development, Texas Diversity Council. During this time, the speakers were introduced, that included Dona Kilby-Costa, Director of Recruiting, Romano’s Macaroni Grill; Crystal Kohanke, Vice President for Human Resources, Christus Santa Rosa Health System; Judge Peter Sakai, 225 District Court, Bexar County; and Pastor Ginger Lee Pierce of Living Christian Center. The rising role of Asian-Americans in our society as well as the significance of the role of Asian nations as important trade partners for the United States were explained. Both Valenciano and Yu aimed for this Youth...
Leadership Summit to help young students take steps towards understanding Asia and the cultural heritage of Asian Americans.

Crystal Kohanke’s presentation began with an activity for the students, who were asked to make charts showing “what they know,” “what they think they know,” and “what they don’t know they don’t know.” This activity demonstrated that the participating students came from a variety of backgrounds but had a generally similar, positive outlook on the contents of the seminar.

This understanding was further showcased when the students split into groups to discuss content-based questions together. The students answered in innovative and creative ways, displaying their understanding of the lectures. Dona Kilby-Costa’s activity involved the students drawing a pyramid, which was used to display that their experiences was stacked under the beliefs, actions and result to help make the participants into the people they are today.

Despite the differences in the presentations, all were connected by a quite a few important recurring themes. One subject that was discussed and dealt with was being true to one’s culture and, more importantly, to be true to one’s self. Each speaker added their own personal stories to illustrate and expand upon this point.

Kilby-Costa talked about the prejudice issue and how she stayed strong throughout the ordeal and the experience helped shape who she is today. Sakai and Lee Pierce shared similar personal stories.

“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities”
Stephen R. Covey
about the discrimination challenges they faced and how they overcame it.

Another important topic that was discussed was the issue of diversity. Kohanke as an HR representative pointed out she appreciates people of diverse backgrounds. After the seminar portion concluded, an Asian cultural and educational resources fair was held. Activities that represented many cultures including China, Korea, and Japan were available for students and volunteers to participate in. Students were able to get a taste of language as well as traditional crafts such as origami and calligraphy. In addition, the participants were allowed to try out a traditional Korean drum, *Buk*.

The students were thrilled to obtain new experiences through the activities offered at the seminar. “This seminar was amazing,” exclaimed one of the many participants, “I really learned a lot. The speakers gave really insightful presentations and the activities were interesting and educational.” Though the day was long, the participants thoroughly enjoyed the seminar.

“We are hoping to hold similar events next year,” announced Valenciano, “Holding seminars such as this is only possible when there are participants willing to attend. I am overjoyed to see so many young people take an interest in expanding their cultural horizons.”

The EAI and the Texas Diversity Council would like to thank all speakers, participants, sponsors that include Romano’s Macaroni Grill and H-E-B and volunteers from the Boeing Company and the East Asia Institute for making this event possible. “It takes a village to raise a child”, said Mimi Yu, “And it’s also true that it takes a community to raise a global citizen. All of the young participants today are one step closer to understanding diversity and how diversity can be a useful element for the pluralist society we live in.”