

**Preface**  
**to the**  
**Asian/Asian-American**  
**Baseline Essays**

**Spring 2001**



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# The Asian Baseline Essay Project

The concept of Baseline Essays was introduced by Dr. Asa Hilliard III, a consultant to the Portland Public School District, in 1982. The phrase baseline essays when used by the Portland Public School District means a series of essays that provides fundamental information about the history, culture and contributions to overall human heritage. For each geocultural group, a set of essays covers the subjects of:

- Art
- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Music
- Science
- Social Studies

The set is meant to highlight the essence of any civilization. It also provides the reader with relevant and positive information, presented from that group's worldview.

The inhabitants of the United States are divided into six geocultural groups:

- African-American
- American Indian
- Asian-American
- European-American
- Hispanic-American
- Pacific Islander-American

These divisions, with the exception of Hispanic-American, are based upon the land masses where humankind could be found approximately 5,000 years ago, in this instance. America is used as a synonym for United States. All residents of the United States are acknowledged as hyphenated Americans with the exception of American Indians, the first inhabitants of the Americas.

The Asian-American Essays are the fourth set in the series of Baseline Essays. These essays cover the early history of people who lived on the continent of Asia as well as the contemporary history of people in the United States whose antecedents originally came from Asia. The essays acknowledge the ethnic and cultural diversity that exists within the continent of Asia.

The primary audience for the Baseline Essays is the 3,000 plus elementary, middle, and high school teachers, administrators and support staff in Portland Public Schools. The essays are a resource and their content is to be infused, as appropriate, into all subjects from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

In early 1993, the Asian/Asian-American Curriculum Committee was formed as an advisory committee to guide the development of the Asian-American Baseline Essays. The Committee consisted of scholars from the Asian community representing Afghani, Arabs, Burmese, Chinese, Indian, Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, and Vietnamese, among others.

The Asian/Asian-American Curriculum Committee faced numerous challenges in the early planning stages. The term Asian-American was problematic especially for recent immigrants to the United States. There was a concern that the term Asian-Americans would not reflect the ancient history of Asia and would mainly cover information about Asians in the United States. On the other hand, some of the committee members were concerned that the term Asian Baseline Essay would not reflect the history of Asian-Americans and further would separate Asian-Americans from other Americans. Thus, for the purpose of inclusion the term Asian/Asian-American was selected to be part of the title.

The next challenge concerned the definition of Asian/Asian-American, with regard to the geocultural division of the world. The definition of the term in dictionaries and encyclopedic references is to a people who themselves or their antecedents originate from the continent of Asia. However, it was recognized that this collective identifier may not be the term preferred when referring to a given cultural group or individual. Accordingly, people should be addressed by the terms they prefer.

Another barrier was addressing the controversial issues that exist between nations, cultures and ethnic groups on the continent of Asia. The discussion resulted in the following criteria:

- Each essay should cover the history, culture and contributions of different groups and regions of Asia.
- Each essay should contain information that is enlightening, uplifting and written in the voice of the people.
- The content of each essay should be broad enough to be inclusive of the diversity that exists within and between various ethnic populations of the Asian/Asian-American groups, while brief enough to generate the kind of interest that encourages the reader to do additional reading and research.

A national search by the Asian/Asian-American Curriculum Committee obtained a pool of consultants for each subject area. The continent of Asia was divided into regions of East, West, South, Southeast, North and Central Asia. For each essay a consultant from one region was selected. In addition four or five reviewers who represented other regions of Asia were selected to review each essay. A general Consultant, Dr. Shirley Hune, was selected to oversee the project and review all six essays. A three draft process was designed for each essay, but in reality, each essay was reviewed many times by the contracted reviewers, the general consultant, the Asian/Asian-American Curriculum Committee members, community members and finally by Dr. Tracy Dillon, the editor for the Asian/Asian-American Baseline Essays.

It is important to acknowledge that throughout the Asian/Asian-American Baseline Essays North and Central Asia (refer to the map on page 13) have less information compared to other regions of Asia. Many factors have contributed to this matter. Primarily, most sources recommended to us have been written in the Russian language and are not available in English. Importing and translating the information is beyond the scope of the Baseline Essay Project.

There were several major obstacles during the development of the essays. Williams Lillys, the author of the Art Essay, passed away. Another national search was conducted. Dr. Pratapaditya Paul, SoKam Ng Lee and Christine Knoke included the visuals and completed the art essay. The wife of Professor Shawn Wong, the co-author of the Language Arts Essay, passed away. Dr. Arjun Gupta, the co-author of the science essay, had a major heart attack in the spring of 1999. However, through the dedication and hard work of the consultants and the reviewers these essays have been completed with the exception of the science essay. Although we will work toward the completion of the science essay we did not want to delay the project. So the Asian/Asian-American set was published without the science essay.

The Essays are written in a style and tone that make them reader-friendly without detracting from or minimizing the communication of major points, recurring themes and critical topics. The content, structure and organization of each essay is the responsibility of its author. However, the perspective in each essay is the result of a collaborative effort of the respective authors, the general consultant, reviewers and the Asian/Asian-American Curriculum Committee. In addition to the committee members, 76 consultants, reviewers and specialists, all experts in their fields, have worked on the essays. With confidence it can be stated that many diverse points of view from a variety of different cultures and ethnic groups have been represented. As with other Baseline Essays we do not claim to present a perfect document to satisfy every need. However, this is just a starting point for the Asian/Asian-American Baseline Essays. Future editions will incorporate the feedback that results from this first edition.

The consultants and reviewers for each essay are listed on the pages that follow.

Carolyn M. Leonard  
Coordinator of Geocultural Baseline Essay Project

# Essay Teams

## Art Essay Team

William Lillys	Author
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## Author Profiles

### Aseel Nasir Dyck, Author

Aseel Nasir Dyck was born, raised and educated in Iraq. She is a historian and librarian with graduate degrees from the American University of Beirut and the University of California at Berkeley. She has worked extensively in university libraries worldwide and has developed several curriculum projects, educational resources and multicultural educational activities for the past two decades. Most recently, she has worked as a consultant to the Portland Public School District.



### Mounir Farah, Author

Dr. Mounir A. Farah is a Research Historian, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, and Associate Director of the Middle East Studies Program at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He was born and raised in Syria. He obtained his undergraduate and Ph.D. degrees in the United States. Dr. Farah has lectured at many national and international conferences. He was a consultant to the World Bank and the European Union projects in Jordan and to the Jordanian Ministry of Education. He was named Outstanding History Scholar-Teacher in New England and was a recipient of the Connecticut Social Studies Annual Award. He is a contributing writer to several books and has authored numerous articles and reviews. Dr. Farah is senior author of *World History: The Human Experience* and co-author of *Global Insights: People and Cultures*.



### **Ramesh Gangolli, Author**

Dr. Ramesh Gangolli was born in India and educated at the University of Bombay, Cambridge University and MIT. He held the Cambridge Society of India Scholarship while at Cambridge University, and was a College Scholar at Peterhouse. During 1966-68 he was a Sloan Foundation Fellow. In 1967, the Committee of the French Academy of Sciences awarded him the Paul Levy Prize. At present he is a professor of Mathematics at the University of Washington, Seattle. He has been active in mathematical research as well as in mathematics education and has held visiting positions at many universities in the U.S. and abroad. He has served professionally in several capacities: Chair of Mathematics of the Committee on Education of the American Mathematical Society, member of several committees of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council. He is also a musician specializing in the Classical Music of India, and is an Adjunct Professor of Music in the School of Music at the University of Washington.



### **Arjun Gupta, Author**

Dr. Arjun K. Gupta is Distinguished University Professor and former Chairman of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Bowling Green State University, Ohio. He has held visiting positions at many universities in the U.S. and abroad. In 1990, he was given the Olscamp Research Award. Dr. Gupta has written extensively on Multivariate Statistical Inference and related topics in over 200 papers and 10 books. He is a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, Fellow of the Institute of Statisticians, Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society and an elected Member of the International Statistical Institute. He has served on the American Statistical Association Committee on National and International Standards, Committee on International Relations and on the Committee on Continued Education.



### **Naseem Hines, Author**

Naseem Akhtar Hines was born in Raipur, India. She has lived and worked in India, the Middle East and the U.S. She has a Ph.D. in Asian Languages and Literature with an emphasis on the devotional literature of India and has lectured at many national and international conferences. Dr. Hines is a member of several musical and cultural associations, and has participated in performances of the Sufi music. She has published her poetry, fiction and scholarly articles in English, Hini and Urdu languages in American as well as International journals and publications. Her travels throughout Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand have afforded her a deep insight into the literature, art, music and cultures of the world. Most recently she teaches the Hini and Urdu languages and Literature at the Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.



### **Shirley Hune, Author**

Dr. Hune was born in Toronto, Canada, as a third-generation Chinese-Canadian. She was educated in Canada and the United States with a focus on history and American civilization. Her scholarly research interests include international migration and its implications for nations and cities; social organizations, social change and policy making; and the development of Asian-American studies. Dr. Hune is Acting Associate Dean for Graduate Programs at the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to her appointment at UCLA, Dr. Hune served as Associate Provost of Hunter College where she had primary responsibility for graduate education and research. Dr. Hune is the author and editor of 6 books and monographs and some 34 other publications since 1977. Her work has been translated and published in national and international journals in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. She has a national reputation for her work in the development of Asian-American Studies, and social policy concerning immigration and education.



**Khalid Khan, Author**

Dr. Khalid Khan was born in India and moved to Pakistan after independence where he was raised and educated. He received his B.S. in Mining Engineering from the West Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology (1967). He came to the U.S.A. in 1969 for graduate studies and obtained a M.S. and Ph.D. in Materials Engineering from North Carolina State University, Raleigh. Dr. Khan joined the Oregon Graduate Center in 1975 as a Research Associate and Director of the Electron Microscopy Laboratory. He joined the University of Portland in 1979 where he is currently Professor of Mechanical Engineering.

**William Lillys, Author**

Born in New York, William Lillys had extensive associations with Asian art and culture beginning with parental origins in Istanbul, Turkey. Studies in design and painting at Pratt Institute and at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris led to a museum career. He was first a designer of exhibitions at the Newark Museum and later became the Director of Education at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He obtained his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Columbia University with special attention to Persian painting. His last project was directed to the development of media programs in the visual arts for teachers. During this time he was the Director of Museum Education at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

William Lillys passed away on December 4, 1996

**Pratapaditya Pal, Author**

Dr. Pratapaditya Pal was born in British India (present day Bangladesh) and educated in India and at Cambridge University. Dr. Pal is an internationally known authority on various aspects of Asian art and culture. He has authored and edited over fifty books and has written hundreds of articles. Currently he is a Fellow for Research at the Norton Museum in Pasadena, California and visiting curator at the Art Institute of Chicago.



### **Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, Author**

Dr. Sakata is a Japanese-American (born in California) who has lived and worked in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. She has a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology with an emphasis on music of Asia, especially that of East, South and Southwest Asia. Dr. Sakata has received many awards, fellowships and grants from the University of Washington, Fulbright Scholars Program, the Smithsonian Institution and the Indo-U.S. Subcommission on Education and Culture. She has served as chair of the University of Washington Ethnomusicology Division and Archives, School of Music. Currently Dr. Sakata is Professor of Ethnomusicology and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the School of the Arts and Architecture at the University of California, Los Angeles.



### **Shawn Wong, Author**

Shawn Wong received his undergraduate degree in English at the University of California at Berkeley in 1971 and a Master's Degree in Creative Writing at San Francisco State University in 1974. He has taught at Mills College, University of California at Santa Cruz and San Francisco State University. Shawn Wong has served as Chairman of the Seattle Arts Commission, Coordinator of Seattle's Bumbershoot Festival Commission and as a consultant for public arts agencies, including the National Endowment for the Arts. He is presently an Associate Professor of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington. In addition to the publication of his poetry, fiction, essays and reviews in periodicals and anthologies, Shawn Wong was also the recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship.

