

ian farmer's field and were suddenly confronted by his sons. "They were tough and courageous. We, on the other hand, played adventure video games in air-conditioned suburban palaces." His friend Moshe took out a well-worn copy of the Torah and gave the book to the Arab boys' leader, indicating it was a gift. Steinberg was ashamed at the time because it is taboo in Jewish tradition to give away a holy book, especially to an enemy.

Prison helped changed Steinberg's view of that incident. "We had been taught to place the Other on a narrow spectrum of pity, suspicion, and hate....But Moshe...knew the holiness of the book was in sharing it." In prison, as on the West Bank, he writes, book-sharing is taboo. "I met people on the outside of prison who made it clear they didn't want their tax dollars funding a pretty library for violent criminals." Steinberg understands that, just as he understands "the misery we had felt as kids relinquishing our holy book to the enemy. It involved crossing a very real boundary. What did we accomplish by it, or by running a library for convicts? Perhaps nothing. But there was a greater danger in not doing these things—or, at least, in not being willing to try." ~NELL PORTER BROWN

A Milestone for Asian American Alumni

ORGANIZED BY THE Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance (HAAAA), the three-day Asian American Alumni Summit on October 15-17 drew more than 400 people from six decades and all of Harvard's schools (<http://summit.haaaa.net>). "We are immeasurably diverse as a group, yet we share many of the same goals," said Jeannie Park '83, who co-chaired the event with Jeff Yang '89.

The summit celebrated progress made since the 1970s, when an Asian-American presence was virtually nonexistent on campus, and examined remaining challenges faced by Asian Americans today. During the opening plenary session, "Where We Stand: The Changing Asian-American Experience at Harvard," William F. Lee '72, managing partner of WilmerHale and the first Asian American to serve on the Harvard Corporation, spoke of a time when encountering another

Harvard Arab Weekend

The Harvard Arab Alumni Association and the Middle East and North African Groups (MENA) at Harvard hosted a fourth annual gathering at the University on November 18-21. Among the major speakers were Queen Noor of Jordan, who gave the opening speech, and Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, who presented "A Saudi Foreign Policy Doctrine for the New Decade." Panel discussions focused on the global economy in the Middle East, as well as on career opportunities in medicine, public health, design, and education. For additional details, visit www.harvardarab-alumni.org/MENAweekend/index.php.

Asian student at Harvard was a rarity.

Yet by the time Jane Bock '81 arrived on campus in 1977, a critical mass of Asian-American students was ready to be politically organized. They worked to gain minority status for Asians at Harvard, and Bock's sociology thesis, "The Model Minority in the Meritocracy: Asian Americans in the Harvard/Radcliffe Admissions Process," prompted a Department of Justice inquiry into the treatment of Asian-American college applicants. The number of Asian-American students at Harvard doubled in the next four years. Not quite 20 years later, HAAAA co-chair Jeff Yang could point out that the group's summit venues on campus included both the Fong and Tsai auditoriums.

The summit's 50 speakers and presenters ranged from Secretary of the Cabinet Chris Lu, J.D. '91, to novelist Gish Jen '77 and professional poker player Bernard Lee '92, A.L.M. '94. There were panel discussions on topics such as social entrepreneurship and public service, film screenings, and an "elevator-pitch" competition.

Affirmative action and race-blind admissions were recurrent themes. Several speakers expressed concern that enrollment of Asian-American students at the College, currently 17 percent, has remained flat for the past 30 years despite that group's growing representation in the applicant pool.

The summit was also a forum to advocate academic study of Asian-American culture at Harvard. Eileen Chow '90, former assistant professor of Chinese liter-

ary and cultural studies, who helped develop the Asian-American studies minor track in the East Asian studies program, was among the speakers, as was Athena Lao '12, who helped with that effort and is co-president of the Asian American Association (AAA) student group. The AAA can help bring the more ethnically specific Asian cultural groups at Harvard together, Lao says, and encourage students who identify with the Asian-American community "to say it proudly."

Reaching across divides within that community was also a theme in the keynote address by Chris Lu, who serves as an assistant to his law-school classmate Barack Obama. Lu emphasized responsibilities beyond Harvard, pointing out that although the "model minority" stereotype applied to all the Harvard graduates in the room, it didn't necessarily apply to the Hmong high-school dropout. "Let us commit ourselves to those who have not fared as well," he said.

Lu asked the audience to raise their hands if their parents were immigrants, and nearly everyone did. "My story is your story. It's the quintessential immigrant story," he said, after narrating his then 18-year-old father's arrival in America, which included a five-day bus ride to Tennessee during which the traveler consumed nothing but hamburgers and milk, the only items he could name in English. Many other speakers also cited the importance of their immigrant parents' having given them the opportunity and, in some cases, the freedom to pursue their dreams.

All the same, if there's any constant at Asian-American alumni gatherings, it is jokes about overbearing parents. During the panel "The Road Less Traveled: Asian Americans in Atypical Careers," Georgia Lee '98, director of the film *Red Doors*, said her parents told her, "You can do anything you want—as long as you are a biochemist, doctor, or lawyer." ~SARAH ZHANG

**Harvard's 360th
Commencement will take place
on May 26. For information re-
garding tickets, events, and alumni
gatherings, visit www.commencementoffice.harvard.edu.**