

Rock the Quiet Crisis

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First Annual Gathering of Asian American Professionals
March 21, 2002
Sushi Rock
Cleveland, Ohio

Hello, Everyone.

My name is Stephen Ong, and I'm one of the founding members of MotivAsians for Cleveland. On behalf of MotivAsians, it's my pleasure to welcome everyone here tonight.

What you just saw is a brief glimpse of how Asians have influenced the landscape of Cleveland. I say "brief glimpse" because, for the sake of the brevity of this program, we had to edit quite a bit of information that was originally included in the presentation. But the message is still loud and clear – **Asian Americans have played a significant role in shaping Greater Cleveland.**

And it's not by chance that the last bullet point represents our gathering here tonight – because from here, **we** will play a significant role in influencing the landscape of Cleveland going forward. That's what MotivAsians is all about.

MotivAsians is about getting involved in our community. We are about developing leadership skills so that we can meaningfully contribute to shaping our community. We are about developing relationships – both professional and social – so that we can have a network of friends and colleagues to work hard with, play hard with, and to live life with. And overall, **MotivAsians is about shaping Cleveland.**

When we sent out our announcement about this event, we mentioned the "Quiet Crisis." So, what is this "Quiet Crisis"? Well, it's a term that was coined by the Plain Dealer last summer to describe the state that our city was in. They pointed to our declining population, our reliance on a shrinking manufacturing base and the absence of new business sectors, the exodus of bright and talented young professionals that some called, the "brain drain", and the poor state of our school system – just to name a few. That was the Crisis. At that time, they considered it a "quiet" crisis because it appeared that the city was still resting on its laurels of our recent renaissance, and nobody was paying any attention to these factors that surely were going to influence the future state of our city.

And then it happened – LTV was in trouble. The economy went into a tailspin, and was further weakened by the events of 9/11. The auto and airline industries began laying off workers. And most recently, TRW looks to be the next casualty. Now even the Plain Dealer is saying, “This Quiet Crisis isn’t so quiet anymore.” And they’re right. Now everyone can’t help but pay attention, because all those factors are right in front of us.

But what does the Quiet Crisis have to do with MotivAsians? Well, it has nothing to do with us, and it has everything to do with us. It has nothing to do with us because we recognized the need to get involved in our community even before all this talk about the Quiet Crisis. We already recognized that the “brain drain” was happening to us – our friends and family we all moving to other places like New York, San Francisco, and Seattle – all places that seem more hip and trendy than Cleveland. And we wanted to change that. That’s how we originally got together and that’s why we would still be here today even if there were no Quiet Crisis.

But it has everything to do with us because it points out that, more than ever before, it’s critical that we are involved. To not be involved is no longer an option. It’s critical that we are involved in shaping Cleveland if Cleveland is anywhere in our futures. If this is where we work and where we live, we have to get involved in shaping the city into what **we** want it to be – **because nobody is going to do it for us**. There’s an old adage that says, “The time to start digging for a well is **not** when you begin to get thirsty.” Well, Cleveland is thirsty and people are planning to dig. And we can’t just sit back and watch and hope that the water is shared with us. **We need to be part of the planning, and we need to be part of the dig.**

So how do we do it? Well, we are in the process of planning various programs that will help us get involved in the community. We also have plans for programs that will help us develop our leadership skills so that we can make meaningful contributions when we’re out there in the community. And we’re also planning programs, such as this one, that will merely provide a way for us to get together informally so we can build professional and social relationships that go a long way toward making this a better community.

Community Development

University Mentoring Program – Working with area undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools to provide mentorship to students, thereby encouraging them to stay in the area

Community Involvement Fair – Partner with other community organizations to help drive volunteerism in the city – offer an afternoon where all residents (Asian and non-Asian) can come and learn about different volunteering opportunities

Asia Town Development – Help revitalize the Asia Town area to broaden its appeal beyond Asians, making it a destination for both tourists and residents

Web Portal – Serve as the central hub for all information related to Asian Americans, especially targeted at young professionals and people new to the area

Leadership Development

“How to Work with the Media” Workshop – Training on how to work with the media to gain professional exposure and act as a valued resource to the media and community

“Different Leadership Styles” Workshop – Learn and understand about various leadership styles, how to identify your style, and work with other leadership styles

Professional Mentoring Program - Match members with more experienced community and corporate leaders in their field or outside their field; similar to University Mentoring Program, but this one is for MotivAsians members

Leadership Lecture Series – Invite current corporate and community leaders to discuss their experiences and paths to success and leadership

Information Session on “Cleveland Bridge Builders” – Learn about this emerging leadership Development Program for Young Professionals

Relationship Development

Happy Hour – quarterly

Dim Sum – monthly

Bubble Tea Mixer (hosted by Turbo Four Café for MotivAsians) – special event

Asia Night @ Groovee (hosted by Head Rush Entertainment)

Sushi Making Night – repeat based on demand

As you can see, we have a lot of good ideas for programs and events. But I'm sure there are a lot more that everyone can think of. And we need a lot of help and support to make these things happen. I hope you can help these plans come to life.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, MotivAsians has already developed into a network of Asian American professionals that others have tapped into for resources. At least once a month, I've been contacted by various groups and organizations that are interested in including this growing segment of our population into their mix. Each of these inquiries is an opportunity for members of our group to get plugged into the community and to make a difference.

Members of our group have been featured in Inside Business; have been named to Crain's "40 under 40"; have been asked to speak on executive panels; and have been appointed to boards of prominent community organizations – all directly as a result of being a member of MotivAsians. Just last week, I was contacted because there is interest by a local university to have an Asian serve on their board of trustees because they recognize the value of having diverse input, particularly in light of the increasingly diverse student population. And the population of Greater Cleveland is no different, and those leaders are also reaching out for our input.

So that's a long way of saying that the opportunities are out there. **But we need to prepare ourselves for them so that we can meaningfully contribute, and those wanting our input need a place to go to find us.** That's the value that MotivAsians can add.

I've talked long enough. Now, I'd like you to hear from some of the other founding members MotivAsians for Cleveland to hear what they think about Cleveland and about MotivAsians.

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This is MotivAsians for Cleveland. This is what we're all about. This is not about putting on cultural festivals. This is not about organizing Chinese New Year celebrations. All those things are important, but this is not the Organization for Chinese Americans, and this is not the Japanese American Citizens League or Asian / Pacific American Federation. In other words, **this is not your father's civic organization**. This is MotivAsians for Cleveland, and **this is your organization**. I hope you will be a part of MotivAsians so that you can be a part of shaping the future landscape of Cleveland.

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