



## The **SIETAR**USA Newsletter

Society for Intercultural Education  
Training and Research

### **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**



Dear Colleagues,

For those of you who notice such things, I've change the heading from "Message" to "Letter From the President." I did this because I realized that's what it feels like to me as I write to you. Which, I suspect, is one of the unconscious reasons I have opened each letter with the salutation, "Dear Colleagues." Enough of that.

In announcing the newly formed committees last time, Mitch Hammer was designated chair of the Rapid Response Taskforce and Tatyana Fertelmeyster, chair of the Oral History project. Since that time good fortune, in the way of work, has befallen each of them to the point they have each withdrawn from those positions because they did not feel they could carry out their responsibilities in a manner that both we and they expect. Imagine that, the desire to eat, house and clothe themselves won out. Sandy Fowler, as she so often has in the past, volunteered to chair the Rapid Response group on a temporary basis. We'll be looking to replace her as soon as possible. Any volunteers? Basma Ibrahim DeVries has taken up the Oral History Chair, which is much appreciated.

Our board retreat in Portland, OR, on April 3 – 6, went very well. The goals express our vision of what we want SIETAR to look like and operate like in 5 years. The goals are posted on our website in the members section. Additionally, we have chosen a site for our [2009 Conference - Raleigh, North Carolina](#). We chose Raleigh because so many organizations are attempting to help New Orleans get back on its feet that there was very little flexibility for dates and cost associated with the dates we wanted. Raleigh is part of what is called the Research Triangle that includes the cities of Durham and Chapel Hill and the halls of learning of Duke University, The University of North Carolina and North Carolina State. Additionally, there are several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) and smaller colleges and universities in the area. North Carolina is a pretty state and should be in bloom when we meet in April.

I also want to alert you to the fact that the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (lovingly known as SIIC) will open its doors for the 23rd year on the campus of Reed College in Portland, OR., on July 9th. If you haven't attended, you should take advantage of a powerful learning environment. You may attend for one week, two weeks or all three. For additional information, go to their website at [www.intercultural.org](http://www.intercultural.org). Hope to see many of you there. It is an experience not to be missed.

**Andy Reynolds**

*SIETAR-USA President*

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[SietarUSA.org](http://SietarUSA.org) - Visit our blog! **NEW!**

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends:

Sometimes life gives you an opportunity to learn lessons that you were trying to avoid. This happened when I entered the hospital for a total knee replacement six weeks ago. Although I had been warned that recovery is long and painful, I was pretty sure I would come home from the hospital and quickly be back to normal. Wrong. As I was sent off to a rehab center, I realized I was in for the long haul that everyone had predicted.



(My grandchildren, accustomed to hearing about rehab in terms of Hollywood stars recovering from addictions, seriously inquired if Grandma had a drug problem and wrote me a note asking if I had seen Britney Spears.)

So what did I learn in the last six weeks?

1. How to be helpless and definitely not in control which generally requires giving up any sense of modesty. It is actually easy to become dependent on others.
2. Being transported in a wheelchair sitting high in the back of a medical transfer van is really fun.
2. Learning to function in a very new environment and under unfamiliar conditions requires considerable humility and a reasonable level of adaptation skill.
3. It is amazing how quickly a community can form and people can learn to care about and for each other. The usual first question, "What are you in for?" did, however, give a sense of being in a very posh prison.
4. Institutions are high context and rehab centers are no exception. You learn a lot from other patients, many of whom have only been there a week or so longer than you. They tell you about things you can ask for and share information about other patients and what they may need. The staff does not tell you everything and almost nothing useful is written down.
5. Relearning skills you took for granted is not easy. The therapist job is to get you to be mobile. So you are challenged to do really hard things, like WALK.
6. Staff in these kinds of institutions are truly committed, caring, and concerned. They also have lives so it is good to be excited when a therapist learns the gender of her unborn child, to ask how plans are coming for another's wedding, and congratulate a CNA on getting a new job in another location.

7. Working is not admired. I was back on the computer immediately and no one thought it was a good thing. They did, however, have wifi.

8. Your world can become very small when you are focused on major health challenges and in any kind of institution. An afternoon outing to visit home feels strange and you are glad to get back into a secure place where there are handrails, wheel chairs, helpers within reach and access to meds.

9. There is still only 2 degrees of separation in the world. I actually met two young men on the staff from The Gambia who knew my friend in that, admittedly, small country. They were truly amazed that I had been there. It was a very multicultural environment.

10. You have to learn patience, not one of my strong virtues.

Now that I am at home, walking reasonably well, and in outpatient re-hab, my first thought is that the lessons learned fit any transition. This has definitely been an intercultural experience and I am now going through reentry to my "real" life and recently gave up my walker.

If I have failed to answer an email or respond to a request, chalk it up to the narcotics but I apologize anyway.

### **Peggy Pusch**

*SIETAR-USA Executive Director*



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## LOCAL GROUP NEWS

### SIETAR Houston

June 2008 Program—Asian Texans: Our Struggles for Texanness by Irwin Tang

The history of Asian Texans centers on their struggles to survive and live with dignity, honor, and respect. The speaker, Irwin Tang, will tell the story of how Asian Texans fought for and earned their Texan identity. The talk includes historical narratives of Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and other Asian Texan ethnic groups. The history spans the period from the days of the Texas Republic to the present.

Irwin A. Tang is an Asian Texan author who was born and raised in College Station. He is the editor and chief author of *Asian Texans: Our Histories and Our Lives*. Over the course of five years, Tang led the efforts of twenty writers and researchers to produce this work. He is a co-author of *When Invisible Children Sing: A True Story of Five Street Children, an Idealistic Young Doctor, and Their Dangerous Hope* (Tyndale House) and sole author of *The Texas Aggie Bonfire: Tradition and Tragedy at Texas A&M*. He works as a freelance writer for magazines, NPR, and film. Tang holds an M.A. in Asian Studies from UT-Austin and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Southern California.

The Annual Potluck follows that meeting. Details are as follows:

Date: 6/21/2008

Time: 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Location: Upper Kirby Room - Upper Kirby District Bldg

Address: 3015 Richmond Avenue - Houston, TX 77098

### SIETAR Minnesota

In May, SIETAR MN held its annual spring intercultural social. The agenda focused on food, fun and frivolity, and a little bit of local business. The main issue on the floor was a decision to organize a strategic planning meeting, allowing members to focus on the local group's future – concepts like organizational capacity, formality of structure, membership development and sustainability were at the forefront. Christopher Deal, SUSAs Local Group Liaison motivated much of the discussion - Christopher routinely organizes networking among leadership of the local groups and his recent efforts really got members of SIETAR MN's local planning committee talking!

SIETAR MN will hold its strategic planning retreat this summer. Membership on the local planning committee is open to all interested parties - contact [sietar.mn@gmail.com](mailto:sietar.mn@gmail.com) for more information.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 32 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT THE SIETAR GLOBAL CONGRESS 2008

To date 32 countries are represented in the several hundred registered participants for the congress. We are strong in many parts of the world but far less active in Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America. Many of us have contacts and colleagues spread throughout the world. How about taking the initiative to invite and encourage them to attend? This is a great chance to not only see colleagues from afar but to add to the diversity and richness of our gathering in Granada. We will keep you posted on the participation level of the congress on a regular basis and on the programs that are being planned. The opening speaker is our own Miquel Gandert who provided a stunning keynote speech with his photographs in Albuquerque, NM a few years ago.

The next SIETAR-USA Conference will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina in April 2009. So make plans now to join together with us and the larger Global SIETAR community in Granada next October! Remember...

Granada Spain October 22-26, 2008

Registration details:

<http://www.sietar.org/granada2008/registration.htm>

The theme of the conference is *How globalization affects cultures & cultures shape globalization*. The purpose of the conference sessions is to inform, update and stimulate participants in their work. Therefore the emphasis is on the value added by the research or practice in terms of breaking new ground and questioning assumptions, demonstrating innovative tools and techniques, and showing creative expression. The next SIETAR-USA Conference will be held in April 2009. So make plans now to join together with us and the larger Global SIETAR community in Granada next October!



## SPECIAL FEATURE!

# SIETAR-USA MEMBER PROFILE

*Editor's Note: Occasionally, SUSA News profiles the work of SIETAR-USA Members representing the diversity found across our our membership of Education, Training and Research professionals. If you would like to either serve as an interviewer or interview subject in a future newsletter issue, please contact us.*

### Intercultural Blogging

By Bettina Hansel

I owe it all to SIETAR.

It's not just the long-lasting bonds with colleagues from around the world whom I first met at SIETAR conferences. These are part of the personal connections that link me to other places and cultures, similar to the ones I have formed over the past 28 years at AFS Intercultural Programs.

It's also the revolutionary ideas that sometimes make one SIETAR session a career turning point.

Back in November 2007 in Kansas City, I attended the SIETAR session on blogging organized by Michele Martin, Christine Martell, and Rob Pusch. I knew about blogs. I'd been reading a neighborhood blog for a year or so, signing on with my husband's avatar and reading about various new restaurants, apartment queries, lost cats, and crime scenes in my neighborhood. But I hadn't considered blogging to be a serious way to accomplish my work in intercultural learning at AFS, so when Christine remarked that her website began attracting many more visitors once she started blogging, I sat up a bit straighter in my chair to help me focus better.

It's about communication. It's about community. It's about learning. In the time it takes to click a mouse, I realized I needed to do this.

What would I write? How would I get started? Unlike writing a book, Michele assured us, blogging is an ongoing work in progress. Some of her most appreciated posts, she explained, were those where she struggled to think through her ideas and felt them unfinished. Blogging is a public conversation you start and one you join, and anyone interested stops by to find out what you have to say.

Did I have anything to say? It was easy to get started when I realized that I already had written my first three "blogs" as a sort of intercultural newsletter on the AFS Intranet. These internal posts may have gone largely unread on the particular date they were posted, since they were simply updates about research I was doing and thoughts I had about where I wanted to lead the organization in the educational sphere – in short, nothing urgent for my co-workers around the world who were dealing with a variety of administrative and logistical concerns related to the comings and goings of some 13,000 AFS participants who need travel ar-

rangements, host families, school placements, reassurances to parents, and so on.

I resurrected the earlier newsletters and reposted them as blogs, along with a new one, my 4th Issue of AFS Intercultural Eyes that joined its predecessors on line, available to anyone in the world at <http://interculturaleyeyes.org>. A few selections on some simple software, and I became a syndicated blogger.

Six months later, with a bit of publicity to the AFS network, the site is receiving about 400 hits a week and growing. Many readers find the site through a Google search, usually with "intercultural" in the search list, but occasionally someone finds the site quite by accident, most memorably the person who searched for Rowan Atkinson's sunglasses and found something related on my site.

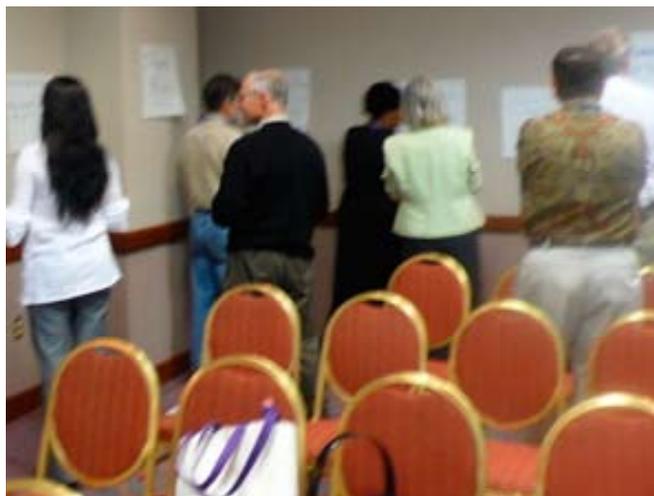
But more interesting to me has been the fact that reading other blogs and searching a wide variety of web sites has now become the most common way for me to learn something new that relates to intercultural education and to the experience of other cultures. I've found individual and community blogs written by expatriates in Hong Kong, Canada, and the Netherlands, and blogs by our own AFS students. I've been directed through blogs to language learning tools and sites for practicing your skills. I've joined "edu-bloggers" and read about what some teachers are trying to do in their classrooms and on the web.

Later this year I'll be blogging from SIETAR Global in Granada, Spain. Who knows what could happen at SIETAR this year?

*Bettina Hansel is the Director of Intercultural Education and Research for AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc based in New York City. In her role, she oversees major international research projects and develops intercultural training materials and resources for worldwide use.*

<http://sietearusa.com/2007/11/09/the-art-and-practice-of-blogging>  
**SIETAR USA 2007 Conference session on blogging.**

Photo is of participants including Bettina Hansel, using paper to simulate writing posts.



## INTERCULTURAL PUBLICATIONS

### NEW DVD! "Arno Peters: Radical Map, Remarkable Man"

This new DVD was just released by ODTmaps.com (DVD, 30 minutes). This documentary traces the life of Arno Peters and contains the only English language interviews of Dr. Peters ever recorded. Filmed on location in Dr. Peters' home in Bremen, Germany, just 15 months prior to his death, this analysis explores the passion Peters had for his "one world view." From his childhood and his parents' activism through the history and development of the controversial Peters map, this film tells the remarkable story of historian, cartographer and world-class thinker Arno Peters. It also includes reporting on the faith-based publishers who took the risk of printing the radical Peters Projection Map, despite the resistance of traditional cartographers.

This DVD is a fantastic resource to cover a variety of social justice issues, which were at the heart of Arno Peters' motivation to create his innovative map.

A YouTube Trailer is available on the web at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osQN7aSQV9w>



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## FINAL THOUGHTS

### A MOMENT TO SAVOR : Election 2008

by Peggy Pusch

I write this on a Saturday in June, the very day that Senator Hillary Clinton has ended her campaign and endorsed Senator Barak Obama as the Democratic candidate for President of the United States. Both have been outstanding candidates who have enhanced the political process and captured the attention of many who have not previously been active in that process and given hope to others. However, the most amazing aspect of this campaign is that the candidates are a woman and a man of color, decidedly, given his parentage, African-American. We need to stop, for at least a few minutes, and marvel that this was possible. If you remember and perhaps were engaged in the civil rights movement and the women's movement, you realize how extraordinary this is. Forty years ago, this would have been impossible and scornfully laughable. That history is recent and the issues are not fully resolved, but whodda thought?

We, in the intercultural field, question our impact on public life. In fact, that lies behind Andy's appointment of the Rapid Response Team.

Many who now call themselves interculturalists were part of those earlier movements. We, and they, can now be part of a new movement, the Intercultural Movement, that is international, that is domestic, that is directed toward justice for all human-kind. We may find ways to do that work in many arenas, but we can come "home" to refresh, to learn, and to discover new ways to be in the world. Rather than bemoan our lack of impact, we need to savor the accomplishments of our predecessors and move forward committing ourselves to a broader campaign of making the world safe for difference and identifying our efforts as "intercultural."

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