ECAASU Announces 2021 Award Winners

Washington, DC- The East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU) is excited to announce the winners for the annual Trailblazer and Community Builder Awards.

The Trailblazer Award is given to an individual who has gone above and beyond to inspire, educate, and empower Asian/Americans in their community. The goal is to highlight an outstanding student who is paving the way for activism and advocacy in Asian/American spaces.

Elizabeth (Liz) Lee (she/her) has been selected as the 2021 Trailblazer Award winner.

Lee is a recent graduate from Duke University with a B.A. in Sociology and Certificate in Documentary Studies. Lee has held multiple leadership positions in the Asian/American community at Duke, spearheading transformative initiatives and creative campaigns to emphasize her communities’ needs, identities, and stories. Whether it be through film, motion/graphic design, or audio documentary, Lee always brainstormed unique and intentional ways to artistically outreach and form community with her work.

Lee was nominated by several peers for her work on campus as a consistent and intentional leader within Duke’s Asian Students Association and Asian American Studies Working Group. Through podcasts, zines, multimedia-media projects, fundraising, teach-ins, and more, Lee was recognized for taking on a range of projects - from advancing political education to building coalitions to address anti-Blackness and imperialism to “single-handedly carrying” Duke’s Asian/American Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

ECAASU is honored to recognize Elizabeth (Liz) Lee for the 2021 Trailblazer Award. We also wish to congratulate the finalists, Lily Tang (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and Nortee Panpinyo (Binghamton University) for their dedication to making change within Asian/American communities.
The **Community Builder Award** is given to an organization, coalition, or campus that has brought together and uplifted students and communities to support social justice, among and within an Asian/American community. The goal of this award is to highlight an organization that has brought together and uplifted their communities through efforts related to race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, health and wellness, gender and sexuality, civic engagement, and more.

Congratulations to the **Alliance of Queer and Underrepresented Asians in Recognition of Intersectionality to Uphold Solidarity (AQUARIUS)** at the University of Pittsburgh for winning the 2021 Community Builder Award.

AQUARIUS seeks to empower the university’s queer Asian community and its allies through educational programming and providing a platform for individuals to share their experiences. The organization unites the mosaic of identities that exist in the queer Asian community and broadly in Asia–Asia being merely a geographic term that can not broadly describe race, ethnicity, culture, religion, socio-political climate, and countless more found throughout diverse Asian nations. Thus, AQUARIUS internalizes the intersectionality of gender and sexuality with other identities; recognition of communities in West, East, South, Southeast Asia and those that identify under the Asian umbrella term is critical. AQUARIUS furthermore recognizes the Pacific Island communities in regions including but not limited to Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and those that associate under the term Pacific Islander. AQUARIUS is dedicated to creating a safe space for anyone in the LGBTQIA+ community overall.

AQUARIUS was nominated for their ongoing work and extensive programming that recognizes how one’s AAPI identity is intrinsically tied to other identities, including gender and sexuality. They have facilitated discussions on a wide variety of topics, from experiences dating while AAPI to the role of AAPIs in colonialism. Founded in 2018, “this organization has created a much needed safe space for queer Asian Americans in the collegiate Pittsburgh region, being the only one of its kind among the six different Universities in the area” and welcoming students from all schools into their spaces.

Congratulations, again, to both of the 2021 Award Winners! **Nominations for ECAASU’s 2022 Trailblazer and Community Builder Awards will open in Fall 2021.***

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*Run solely by volunteers, The East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to inspire, educate, and empower those interested in Asian/American issues.*

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