# Audio file

[MSJ April 23, 2024.mp3](https://livemissouristate-my.sharepoint.com/personal/sof159_missouristate_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/MSJ%20April%2023,%202024.mp3)

# Transcript

Announcer

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Sofia Perez

Each may our country celebrates Asian Pacific Islander Desi American or APIDA heritage month. It's an opportunity to explore and pay tribute to this group of people who has not only helped to shape America's history and culture, but also is vital in its future success. In Fall 2023, Missouri State University had about 2% of its student population that identified as APIDA.

I'm Sofia Perez. Today I speak with Sam Wang, a history and anthropology second year student at Missouri State about his experience as an Asian American student in the Ozarks. I also speak with Dr. Nina Barudzic, director of multicultural programs at Missouri State, about events planned to celebrate APIDA heritage month.

Sam Wang

I'm local so I'm pretty much born and raised from here. I understand predominantly Springfield is a white community. The high school I went to was very small. I remember my graduating class was myself and one other student who was Asian American identifying. I think I recognized that even though Springfield was a pocket of diversity in the Ozarks, Missouri itself was not exactly as diverse as say stuff on the West Coast or the East Coast. But I actually was really debating going to UMass Boston. It was one of the most diverse schools in the country. But I think upon exploring more of Missouri State, I did realize that there were a lot of different people coming in from across Missouri, across the US from across the world, really. While Missouri State might not be as diverse as, say, UMass Boston, I still think we take a lot of pride in our diversity. And I think the people who are here again are really proud of that. So, coming to Missouri State, I was really exposed to a lot of different cultures and identities. I was very familiar with the campus, but I didn't really know how diverse this campus really can be.

Sofia Perez

Wang currently serves as the Diversity and Inclusion chair of the University Ambassadors, an on-campus organization responsible for giving tours to prospective students.

Sam Wang

What really drove me to that position was just like, how can we, as university ambassadors, you know, we're the first face that a lot of people see on campus. How can we not only diversify our pool but also become more knowledgeable of people's different experiences and stories and understanding intersectionality and that no two people have the same story and have all these unique perspectives? And things that they bring to MSU and how can we enunciate that to families that are visiting but also share our own stories to build connections with students as well? Over the summer, I probably gave 40 tours, and I met so many amazing potential students from across Missouri. I loved sharing MSU's diversity. With them, there were a couple of times where I'd have students, you know, I'd be showing them the MRC talking about our different principles of inclusive engagement and our different initiatives. It just really warms my heart to hear them say, you know, before we started today, I wasn't really considering Missouri State as one of my choices. But after today I am and I think that just really amazed me a lot of students, especially first-generation students, they're coming to Missouri State and English might be their first language, like I'm a second-generation immigrant. I speak English. Unfortunately, I do not speak Chinese. But you know, my father speaks really good English and Chinese, but my grandma does not speak English. She's completely fluent in Chinese and Korean, but her English is not the best. Looking at audio translators because even though the students might be able to absorb what they're learning from the tour, like how can we make sure that the families that they're coming with or the guests that they're coming with as well are able to feel included when they're visiting Missouri State?

Sofia Perez

Wang also emphasized the importance of celebrating heritage months on campus. Dr. Nina Barudzic, the director of Missouri State multicultural programs, speaks to some of the events planned for the public. On April 16th, Lela Lee will be on campus.

Nina Barudzic

And she's a cartoonist, writer and actress whose experience as a woman of color and as a child of immigrants in America intersects to create an identity that is layered by race, gender, culture and traditions that are old and new. She went to college, so she looked into Asian American studies and women's studies. She created a little video that was the angry little Asian girl. And so that piece kind of really inspired her to dig deeper into her roots, but also to show an experience of Asian girl that was not really represented or seen anywhere at that time. Critics from LA Times and LA Weekly picked up the angry little Asian girl and people began talking about it. And so that's how she kind of became well known in that kind of area of film and and she also was an actress and she had small parts in Friends, Will and Grace, Grey's Anatomy.

Sofia Perez

She encourages members of the community to attend this event and the May 2nd event, a talk on Asian history in Hollywood.

Nina Barudzic

We need to acknowledge that our community Springfield is not very diverse. Right? And so, this will be a very nice opportunity to meet people who don't necessarily look like us and also hear about their stories and live the experiences, but also it is a fun event. I think it gives you the opportunity to do network. And meet with other people who are part of your community and get to know them, but also at the same time learn a little bit about each other and hopefully that will create a more inclusive and welcoming environment here in Springfield.

Sofia Perez

Find out more about these events on the multicultural programs website. I'm Sofia Perez for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer

For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397, the Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.