

# MIADC Newsletter : Asian Indians in Action.

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On January 11th at the first general body meeting of 2009, the new board was elected under the leadership of Gopi Nair and committee members Jayanthi Balakrishnan and Rakesh Kapoor. The proposed slate for the Executive board were Jayashree Kommareddi as Chair, Mahendra Kenkre as Vice-Chair, Sheetal Patel as Secretary and Tej Jhamb as Treasurer were approved unanimously by the members present.

Also elected to the board were the following members: Mukesh Bhargava, Kumar Bhatt, Gurbachan Mann, Bobby Mukkamala, Swarn Rajpal, Jogeshwara Rao, Ratna Rao and Rita Ravikrishnan. Ramesh Verma stays on board as Immediate Past Chair.

In his exergual comments, outgoing chair Ramesh Verma thanked the MIADC board and members for their support over the last four years and listed MIADC's accomplishments under his leadership. Incoming chair Jayashree Kommareddi was effusive in her praise of Ramesh Verma under whose dedicated leadership the organization has become

one of the most effective caucuses in the party.

Mark Brewer, chair of MDP, state senator Hansen Clarke, Mike McGuinness, chair of the Oakland County Democratic Party all paid tribute to Ramesh's leadership of MIADC. And, what an inspiration it was to listen to newly elected state representative Rasheeda Taleeb, the first Arab American woman elected to the Michigan House of Representatives share her experiences on the campaign trail!

Please take a moment to check out our website at [www.miadc.org](http://www.miadc.org) for pictures and full transcripts of the outgoing chair's and incoming chair's message and other important information.



2009-2010 MIADC Leadership Team

## *Meet Your Committee Chairs*

At the first strategic planning meeting held on March 22nd, board members reflected on past accomplishments and charted a course of action for the upcoming election cycle and beyond. Heading the various committees are:

Finance: Tej Jhamb

Sheetal Patel: Communication

Bylaws: Mukesh Bhargava

Membership: Ratna Rao

Political Internship: Kumar Bhatt

Events: Rita Ravikrishnan

India Day: Jogeshwara Rao Peddiboyina

Genesee County Chapter: Bobby Mukkamala

Liaison to Sikh Community: Gurbachan Mann

"...each member brings to the board, skills that our organization needs; knowledge of issues, marketing, fundraising, campaigning, technical skills and experience"

Jayashree Kommareddi—  
MIADC Chair

## *MIADC wishes best of luck to member Meg Rao as she heads to D.C!*

MIADC member and webmaster, Megan Rao, applied for a highly coveted internship with the Democratic National Committee in the first week of January 2009. In late March she was interviewed by a DNC staffer. On April 27th she was offered the DNC internship in the office of Organizing For America, which is a new division of the DNC and follows President Obama's vision for ongoing DNC activities in communities across America. There are 6 OFA offices at DNC, each with a Regional Field director. Megan will be working directly with one of the six regional field directors. Megan was also offered an internship at the Washington DC office of Senator Levin, which she had to regretfully decline because of the DNC internship. All the best to Megan as she heads off to D.C.!



Megan Rao

## *Dr. Swarn Rajpal MLK Jr. Freedom Award Winner*

On April 25th the annual Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner was held at Cobo Hall in Detroit. Every year at the dinner a recipient is chosen to receive the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Award. The recipient is chosen by the Chair of the Michigan Democratic Party to honor an individual for his/her work to promote equality and inclusion of all people from every race, creed and gender in the Democratic Party. This year this honor was bestowed upon MIADC's very own Dr. Swarn Rajpal.

Swarn Rajpal's name will be engraved on the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Award Plaque that is displayed at the Hart Kennedy House.

Dr. Swarn Rajpal is General Surgeon, Senior staff physician, Henry Ford Health System, Sterling Heights, MI. Most recently was chosen to cast vote in the historic electoral college ceremony at the state capitol officially electing Sen. Barack Obama as President of the United States. Dr. Rajpal is also appointed as member-at-large to the Democratic Party State Central Committee.



Dr. Swarn Rajpal

## *Former MIADC Chair Ramesh Verma new MDP Treasurer*

In February of 2009 at the MDP convention former MIADC Chair, Ramesh Verma was elected to the Executive Board of the MDP as Treasurer.

Ramesh joined Michigan Indo-American Democratic Caucus in 2002 and was elected as chairman from 2005-06 and then reelected for 2007-08.

In 2005, Governor Granholm appointed Ramesh as Commissioner to the office of services to the aging and Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs. In 2006, Novi city mayor appointed Ramesh in the city library board of trustees and he is now Vice President of the board.

MIADC congratulates Mr. Verma on this great accomplishment!



Mr. Ramesh Verma

## *MIADC Movers and Shakers Around The State*

MIADC Chair, Jayashree Kommareddi was elected to executive board of State Democratic Women's Caucus and Genesee County Democratic Party.

MIADC member, Sara Pajerla elected to executive board of Oakland County Democratic Party.

MIADC member, Sunny Dhoorh was presented the Humanitarian Award for 2008-2009 from the State of Michigan for his long involvement in humanitarian activities and for working to improve the lives of others and reduce suffering. Mr. Dhoorh is Vice Chair of Kent County Democratic Party as well as State Central Committee member.

Congratulations to Jayashree, Sara and Sunny and Thank you!

## *Meet MIADC 2009 Political Summer Internship Candidates*

The Political Internship committee headed by Kumar Bhatt met with applicants and have selected two very bright and accomplished students to represent MIADC this summer.

Nina Bhattacharya, a Freshman at the University of Michigan. Nina has worked on the Obama Presidential campaign as a Campaign for Change Intern. Nina also serves as UM College Democrats Executive Board Member and UM College Democrats Healthcare Committee Co-Chair.

Arthi Chandrasekaran, a Sophomore in Political Science from Wayne State University she is captain of the Wayne State Forensics Speech Team and member of Professional Fraternity Delta Sigma Rho/Tau Kappa Alpha. Arthi recently started Political Blog: [ArtfullySpeaking.wordpress.com](http://ArtfullySpeaking.wordpress.com) and is a Chinmaya Mission Ann Arbor Youth Committee Member.

We would like to thank the Political Internship committee ; Kumar Bhatt and Mukesh Bhargava for meeting with and selecting the candidates.

Our goal has always been to expose our interns to a wide variety of experience in the political process at both state and local levels. To provide them with a rich and diverse experience as they promote MIADC around the state.

This summer will be no different. Possible placement opportunities include but are not limited to, working with Organizing for America (OFA), working with Oakland County Democratic Party or with the Genesee County office of the John Cherry for Gov. Campaign are all options for our interns.

For more information on the Summer Internship Program please see our website [www.miacd.org](http://www.miacd.org)

## *MIADC Hits the Ground Running in 2009*

The year started with a **General Body Meeting on Jan 11** for electing a new board. The meeting was attended by invited guests, Mark McGuiness (Chair, OCDP), Mark Brewer (Chair, MDP), State Senator Hansen Clarke and State Rep. Rashida Talib. All the invited guests recognized the contributions made by the Indo-American community in the general election campaign of 2008, providing resources and votes to elect democrats at all levels.

The election of the new board was followed by a gathering of the membership at the **State Democratic Party Convention on Feb 21** at the Cobo Hall. As is the custom at the convention, many elected officials and party members visited the caucus meeting and addressed the attendees. Guests included Lt. Governor John Cherry (candidate for governor), Mark Brewer, Rashida Talib, State Senator Deb Cherry, State Rep Lee Gonzales, State Rep Dian Slavin, Wayne County Circuit Judge Mark Slavin and Sandy Burgess (past-chair of Troy Democratic Club). A good part of the meeting was in an "open mike" forum, allowing members and other attendees to engage in a dialogue on a whole range of issues facing the Indian community, the state and the country.

The new board met for a **Strategic Planning Retreat on March 22** in Grand Blanc and spent a full day working through goals, priorities and planning for 2009-10. The board leveraged the lessons learned of the past few years and the diversity from several new faces in the new board to develop a common understanding of what MIADC does well, what needs to change and what new areas to explore. The result of the meeting was to create a blueprint for action for the next two years.

MIADC Membership Chair Ratna Rao along with member Megan Rao, conducted a **Community Outreach to Detroit Telugu Association on April 4** during the DTA celebration of Ugadi in Commerce Township. Ratna reached out to many attendees, distributed MIADC flyers and several people filled out a survey. Such reaching out to a major Indian cultural association, in an organized way, was a first for MIADC.

**A Membership Meeting on April 19** took place at the residence of members Dr. Guruswamy and Jayanthi Balakrishnan in Bloomfield Hills. Many of the attendees were new to MIADC and were favorably impressed in getting to know the caucus. Judy Karandjeff, Executive Director of the Michigan Women's Commission was the main speaker at the meeting. Judy spoke on many issues including health care and laws protecting women. Special guests in attendance were Barbara McCallahan, representative from US Senator Debbie Stabenow's regional office for southeast Michigan, Jocelyn Benson, candidate for Secretary of State, Sook Wilkinson, Chair of ACA-PAA (Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs) and Chair of the newly created Asian Pacific American Commission and Natalie Mosher, candidate for 14<sup>th</sup> congressional district. A heartfelt thanks to the Balakrishnan's for opening up their home and to events chair Rita Ravikrishnan for helping organize the event.

**On April 25<sup>th</sup>**, MIADC was well represented at the Jefferson Jackson dinner which is the annual fundraiser for the Michigan Democratic Party. The Jefferson Jackson lunch hosted the same afternoon by the State Democratic Women's Caucus was also attended by MIADC chair Jayashree Kommareddi, events chair Rita Ravikrishnan and member Jayanthi Balakrishnan. (cont'd on next page)

Bobby Mukkamala, chair of the Genesee county chapter organized an ***Issues Event in Flint on May 2<sup>nd</sup>***. Bobby highlighted the issues detailed by SAALT (South Asian Americans Leading Together.) The main topics covered were Political Participation, Civil Rights, and Immigration. Along with Indo-Americans, the event was attended by Arab American, Black, and Hispanic caucus representatives. Elected representatives in attendance were State Rep. Lee Gonzales, State Rep. Richard Hammil, and State Senator Deb Cherry. Other special guests in attendance were Jack Minore, Chair of Genesee County Democratic Party, Gerri Hall, Chair of Black Caucus and Vice-chair of Genesee County Democratic Party, Sally Shaheen Joseph, Trustee of Mott Community college. Many in attendance narrated their personal anecdotes on racial profiling and slow processing of immigration applications. The meeting afforded an opportunity for the elected representatives and others to directly hear about issues facing Indo-Americans.

Great job, Bobby!

The year thus far has been very busy. In addition to working on more events for the Fall, board members are also working behind the scenes to update the bylaws and website, recruiting members, hosting fundraisers, working with interns and communicating with our members. Please visit our website image gallery for pictures of these events. <http://www.miadc.org/media.html>

### ***MIADC Plans For Summer Volunteer Projects In Support of MDP Blue Tiger Project***

MIADC members are working to organize youth volunteer projects for the summer months. We are currently looking for 9th and 10th grade students who would like to volunteer for various projects this summer. More information to come on this.

Please contact Sheetal Patel at [sheetu\\_70@hotmail.com](mailto:sheetu_70@hotmail.com) or Ratna Rao at [rrao79@yahoo.com](mailto:rrao79@yahoo.com) to volunteer.

### ***MIADC Voices Support for Legislation and Denounces Insulting Comments to Indians***

The caucus has stood behind to support the legislation SB 0159, the anti bullying legislation in schools sponsored by Michigan State Senator Glenn Anderson will protect kids from being bullied in schools. Of particular interest to the community is that the bill specifies that all minorities both racial and religious as well as children with disabilities will be protected under this bill. To follow Michigan Legislation please visit [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(cfgeff454oo5a1f1hqvg5mjx\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=home](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(cfgeff454oo5a1f1hqvg5mjx))/mileg.aspx?page=home)

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MIADC was one of 19 organizations that supported the press release put out by the American Center of Justice denouncing Rush Limbaugh's comments calling Indians who worked on outsourced jobs in India "Slumdogs". USINPAC Chairman Sanjay Puri said "that the use of the term slum dog in a derogatory manner by a very popular radio host is a terrible distortion of the message of an award winning movie. The use of the term in such a manner must stop since it gives a message that it is acceptable to use that term to denote a group of people or a profession. To show your protest, please click on the link below to sign the petition launched by USINPAC, sign it and forward it to your contacts. These signatures will be provided to the producer of the Rush Limbaugh show. Your voice is our strength! Visit our website [www.miadc.org](http://www.miadc.org) for more information.

<http://www.petitiononline.com/USINPAC3/petition.html>

### ***Join Us in Accomplishing Our Goals!***

The following goals were set by the board at the strategic planning meeting in March of this year:

- Increase Membership and encourage members to join MDP
- Continue our two paid summer political internships
- Update Bylaws & Website
- Form Student Chapters in at least one college campus and form a chapter in West Michigan
- Educate members on hot button issues and the importance of grassroots political action
- Increase the number of precinct delegates
- Add another Blue Tiger project
- Collaborate with other caucuses and non partisan organizations on issues and events
- Encourage members to run for elected office
- Increase MIADC representation on various units of the Democratic Party and increase visibility at party meetings

While the board is working hard to accomplish these goals, there are many ways you can help us move our agenda forward. Please call or e-mail us to find out about the volunteer opportunities available for our members.

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## We are on the web!

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Michigan Indo American Democratic Caucus  
[Www.miadc.org](http://www.miadc.org)

Check out our website to:  
Find out about membership options  
Latest on legislation that effects our  
community  
See what events are coming up  
To get in touch with board members

## Upcoming Events...See You There!!

Our events are opportunities to learn more about issues, meet key lawmakers and party officials and network with a very diverse group of members. Please jot these dates on your calendar and join us at the following events:

**June 24<sup>th</sup>, 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.**---Fundraiser for the Michigan Senate Democrats at the home of Dr. Prasad and Jayashree Kommareddi with State Senators Deb Cherry & Mike Prusi. For more information or to attend please contact Jayashree at

[jkommareddi@yahoo.com](mailto:jkommareddi@yahoo.com)

**India Day**---August (date to be confirmed)

**September 20<sup>th</sup>, 3-5 p.m.** Understanding the Structure of the Michigan Democratic Party & Indian American Voting Patterns in the 2008 Election

**November**---MIADC Holiday Party

We are also working on a date for a follow up on the women's issues meeting held in April.

You will receive e-communication as we get closer to the event.

*MIADC was established in 2002 with the vision to advance the values, principles, interests of the Michigan Democratic Party and to serve the Michigan Indo-American community.*

*Our mission is to enhance political awareness among the Michigan Indo-American community and to promote the interests of Michigan Indo-Americans at the local, state and federal levels. Our aim is to support active participation of the community in the political process and to draw young Indo-Americans into mainstream politics.*



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## We want to hear from you!

As the summer steams ahead at full steam we want to hear from our members and friends. If you have :

- Political events in your community.
- Legislation you feel strongly about.
- Issues you want to get the word out about.
- Ideas on how we can do better.
- An event where we can speak to your organization about MIADC.

We want to hear from you!!