

East-West Center Oral History Project: Vijayan Munusamy



Vijay Munusamy

Coming to the Center from Bagan Serai, Perak, Malaysia as a degree fellow in 2001, **Vijayan Munusamy** quickly became a leader among EWC students. As president of the EWC Participants' Association, he initiated the 'Global Peace Circle' at the East-West Fest 2002, an event signifying multicultural understanding where 1000 student-made ti leaf leis were given to the public. An Asian Development Bank scholar, Munusamy has been recognized numerous times for his achievement in academic work and community service. Among others, he is a recipient of The Wall Street Journal Student Achievement Award, Booz Allen Hamilton Outstanding Recognition Award and East-West Center Distinguished Service Award. Munusamy started his career as a mechanical engineer in Malaysia, making his first “cultural crossing” towards social engineering after observing that many of the conflicts in the workplace and in society were due to cultural misunderstandings. Recognizing cultural education as a powerful tool, he founded a social enterprise to promote the sharing of children’s stories from different cultures in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. The lessons he learned from this experience and the need to develop expertise in cross-cultural issues led him to make his second “cultural crossing” by becoming an East-West Center degree fellow. Munusamy is currently a researcher at the Center for Creative Leadership, Asia Campus.

Read Munusamy's interview narrative (see separate pdf)

- **Personal Background**
- **Life at EWC** - The 2000s - Best Memories/East-West Fest - Alumni Conference 2002 - Tsunami Relief Effort, 2004 - Impact of 9/11
- **EWC's Impact** - On Perspectives - The Mission - Future Priorities
- **Ties That Last** - Alumni Network

Interview Quotes

"I took on the task of organizing the East-West Fest in 2002, an event to showcase the cultural diversity of the United States and the Asia Pacific region. I conceived and initiated a "Global Peace Circle" as part of this cultural event in response to the 68 wars that were happening in various parts of the world and growing tension between the United States and Muslim nations. I strongly felt that multicultural students in Hawai'i could convey the message of global togetherness and the possibility of world peace through this festival in a symbolic way."

These narratives, which reflect interviewees' personal perceptions, opinions and memories, may contain errors of fact. They do not reflect positions or versions of history officially approved by the East-West Center.

LINK (as of 06/12/2020)

<https://www.eastwestcenter.org/research/research-information-services/oral-history-project/vijayan-munuswamy>