

Lisa Ko: PV Intern Journal

By Katherine Andrews

The Winter With the Writers Literary Festival has concluded, but the esteemed guests, students, faculty and interns sit aglow with the newfound knowledge gleaned from the gracious and quirky Lisa Ko. Wednesday, February 22nd brought Ms. Ko, whose generous praise and kind laugh beckoned all of us closer, to an elegant cocktail reception held at President Cornwell's stunning lakefront Barker House. She was first introduced to a select few individuals and eager interns excitedly awaiting her arrival. Breeze slipping in the French doors to cool off the humid night, clever conversation surrounding stories and life, mingled together creating a bubble of pleasure felt by all attendees.

Thursday dawned bustling with activities and commotion, starting with an intimate intern lunch with the Director of the Festival, Carol Frost, and the final week's two authors, Lisa Ko and Elliot Ackerman, held at 310. Laughter and excitement were exchanged by all grouped around the long wooden table as food and stories were shared and exchanged, allowing everyone present glimpses into the author's histories and personal lives.

After an entertaining and informative lunch Lisa Ko's Master Class began at 2:00 PM in the Suntrust Auditorium. Brimming with students, writers, and interns, Ko's class was a combination of thematic and stylized critique paired with genuine praise and suggestions in a round table fashion. Her encouragement and positive regard for the craft of writing and the herculean effort it takes to make something worthwhile buoyed the crowd with comfort for a shared struggle.

As the afternoon gave way to evening, Ms. Ko was part of a joint reading in Bush Auditorium with Elliot Ackerman. Ko read from her novel *The Leavers* and shared two poignant chapters with the packed house that allowed the reader an impression of the connection and conflict within the entire book. As Ko gave voice to her two beautifully humanized main characters Deming and Polly, showing the intricacies of their dialogue, cultural background and love for each other, the story became so much more alive and real in the author's tones and inflection.

When the readings had concluded an in-depth question and answer session commenced. Questions surrounded the authors and Ms. Ko shared her thoughts on the empathy behind assimilation and belonging that drove her to write this fascinating book intersecting immigration, adoption, family, culture, and choice. For Ko, her lifelong obsession about home and longing helped build clarity and strength within her characters and gave voice to the stories surrounding language and lived experience.

The Rollins campus and the surrounding literary community are better because of her visit and we, as a collective whole, are grateful for her temporary presence shining light and expertise into the process of writing.