

# CROSSCURRENTS

Annual Newsmagazine of the **UCLA Asian American Studies Center**



**BRIDGING RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY SINCE 1969**

2025 EDITION | VOLUME 47

3230 Campbell Hall  
405 Hilgard Ave, Box 951546  
Los Angeles, CA 90095  
[www.aasc.ucla.edu](http://www.aasc.ucla.edu)  
(310) 825-2974

EDITOR & DESIGNER CINDY QUACH

EDITORIAL & DESIGN ASSISTANTS CHLOE SERRANO & SAMANTHA LEONG

CONTRIBUTORS MELANY DE LA CRUIZ-VIESCA, MEG THORTON, ABIGAIL CHUN, ARNOLD PAN,  
RENEE TAJIMA-PEÑA, PHIL TIMOTEO, KAREN UMEMOTO, ELLA CHONG, ETC.

For over 50 years, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center (AASC) has worked to deepen scholarship and public understanding of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) lives towards a healthy, just, democratic, and compassionate society for all.

As the newsmagazine of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, **CrossCurrents** keeps readers informed of Center activities, including academic programs, research projects, student achievements, and relevant university and community issues. **CrossCurrents** also covers important events and projects related to Asian American Studies and AAPI communities not directly sponsored by the Center. Past issues can be found on the Center's website.

If you wish to support the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, please scan the QR code or visit <https://giving.ucla.edu/aasc>.



Your donation, regardless of amount, has a powerful impact on the research and educational activities that take place within the Center and in the greater AAPI community. We greatly value your help in making our work possible.

Alumni and friends interested in making a gift to the Center by endowing a scholarship, supporting faculty research, making a planned gift or other major contribution, should contact **CHRISTI CORPUS**, Director of Development, UCLA Institute of American Cultures, at (310) 794-2396 or [ccorpus@support.ucla.edu](mailto:ccorpus@support.ucla.edu).

## CENTER STAFF

Morgan and Helen Chu Chair and Foundations & Futures AAPI Multimedia Textbook Director

**KAREN UMEMOTO**

Deputy Director & AAPI Nexus Journal Managing Editor

**MELANY DE LA CRUZ-VIESCA**

Information Technology Manager

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Senior Management Services Officer

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**MEG THORNTON**

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AASC Press Editor & Amerasia Journal Associate Editor

**ARNOLD PAN**

Publications and Communications Coordinator

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Pacific Islander Studies Project Coordinator

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**CHRISTOPHER NAKATSUKA**

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Academic Researcher

**TRITIA TOYOTA**

Amerasia Journal Editor

**VICTOR BASCARA**

EthnoCommunications Director

**RENEE TAJIMA-PEÑA**

Foundations and Futures Co-Director

**KELLY FONG**

Foundations and Futures Managing Editor

**ROBERT KU**

Foundations and Futures Content Editor

**MISHA CHOUDHRY**

Foundations and Futures Communications & Development Lead

**ABIGAIL CHUN**

Foundations and Futures Senior Content Manager

**CHRISTINE LEE**

Foundations and Futures Content & Curriculum Assistant

**NATALYA HILL**

Foundations and Futures Outreach Co-Coordinator

**ARLENE INOUE**

Foundations and Futures Outreach Co-Coordinator

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**WILLIAM CHENG**

**ALBERTO LUCAS**

**FERNANDO LUCAS**

Foundations and Future Information System & CX Researcher

**JOSHUA YOO**

Foundations and Future Web Designer

**ANDRAE CHIN**

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**ALYSSA HEMLER RYAH HORIO**

**NIDHI SATYAGAL PRISCILLA SOUN**

Undergraduate Student Researchers, Assistants, & Coordinators (2024-2025)

**ALEXA LE**

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**FANNY HUANG**

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**SERENA ONG**

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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



It has been painful to witness the deeply troubling events around us. They remind us that “democracy is not self-executing.” Any society has to protect human rights, civil liberties, and basic freedoms as well as those exercising them in defense of life and justice. None should be taken for granted.

Education is a coveted sphere for the discovery and creation of knowledge and ideas that can improve the collective well-being of people and the planet. There have been efforts to dismantle the US Department of Education, defund scientific research and humanistic pursuits, intrude into university operations and instruction, suppress protest on college campuses, censor books, and eliminate programs related to the study and advancement of historically marginalized groups. These threaten to undercut a major pillar of democratic life.

Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies has shed light into American history and contemporary life in ways that challenge us as a society to better live up to the values we often purport. Research and civic engagement activities have led to positive changes for many communities. Some call this anti-American. But we say it’s necessary for the building of a multicultural democracy where inclusion and compassion overshadow division and fear.

The Civil Rights, Black Power, anti-war and student movements of the sixties led to the establishment of Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies and other educational reforms. We are now called upon to preserve these advances and further the gains for the next generation.

We hope you will join us in the new year for our spring launch of *Foundations and Futures: Asian American and Pacific Islander Multimedia Textbook*. We also thank you for your invaluable support so we can provide timely policy research under our AAPI Policy Initiative and advance the Bruins Rising Initiative to expand Pacific Islander and Indigenous presence at UCLA. Onward!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Umemoto'.

**Karen Umemoto, Ph.D.**  
Helen and Morgan Chu Chair and Director  
of Asian American Studies Center

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# (RE)GENERATIONS

## UCLA ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDIES REUNION



On October 18, 2025, over 275 UCLA Alumni, faculty, students, and community members joined us for a full-day to celebrate Asian American & Pacific Islander Studies at UCLA for the past five decades. This year, as the autonomy of universities came under fire, the purpose of our reunion pivoted from remembering the past to defending the future. The day began with welcome remarks from Kenyon Chan, Suzi Wong, Denise Pacheco and Karen Umemoto. It was followed by a panel, **Unity Now More Than Ever: Ethnic Studies Center Directors**, moderated by Professor Purnima Mankekar in conversation with Directors and Professors Shannon Speed, Lorrie Frasure, Veronica Terriquez, and Karen Umemoto. A special recognition of AASC co-founders and donors Helen and Morgan Chu was given by IAC Vice Provost David Yoo. A panel of UCLA Alumni Association's Gold Shield Alumnae, led by Candice Yokomizo, featured student fellows and interns. The panels concluded with **By Us, For Us, About Us: Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies for All with Foundations and Futures**, which included a demo of the landmark digital resource and insights from authors and scholars Lisa Uperesa, Artnelson Concordia, Lauren Daus, and May Ying Chen. During lunch, guests had the pleasure of listening to Kristina Wong's special keynote address. Also, Mike Murase presented a special recognition to Colin Watanabe, an AASC co-founder and major donor. After lunch, the attendees broke up into groups for the **Building A Community: Talk Story** sessions to discuss personal experiences and thoughts on strengthening Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies. The panel sessions closed with **Rising to the Challenge: A Call to Action** with Angela Srunarisirakui, Daniel Mayeda, and Karen Umemoto.



The **(Re)Generations Host Committee** comprised of many pioneers and founders of the field. This event could not have happened without Kenyon Chan, Suzi Wong, May Ying Chen, Florante Ibañez, Susie Ling, Vivian Matsushige, Daniel Mayeda, Angel Arunarsirakul, Cindy Quach, Abigail Chun, Carol Mochizuki, Mike Murase, James Okazaki, Tony Osumi, Meg Thornton, Phil Timoteo, Cas Tolentino, Karen Umemoto, Eddie Wong, and Candice Yokomizo. We'd also like to shout out Kenyon Chan and Suzi Wong for their incredible leadership as co-chairs of the committee.

Together, we saw solidarity in action with UCLA's four Ethnic Studies center directors, uncovered new histories with the Foundations and Futures textbook, and forged intergenerational connections at our Talk Story sessions. We ended the day with an incredible performance by Tinig Choral and a boba bar!



Left to right: Karen Umemoto, Veronica Terriquez, Lorrie Frasure, Shannon Speed, and Purnima Manekar.



Left to right: Jeff Furumura, Lilian Nguyen, Maia Ward, Shirley Hune, Daniel Tran, Julie Ha, and Min-Jung Kim.



Left to right: (top) Alena Kwan, Xuan-Mai Vo, Melany De La Cruz-Viesca, Meera Patel, Sophia Nguyen (bottom) Justin Dela Cruz, Lilian Nguyen, and Zongyun Deng.



Left to right: Lisa Uperesa, Artnelson Concordia, Abigail Chun, May Y. Chen, and Lauren Daus.



Left to right: Katelyn Do, Kristina Wong, and William Chin.



Left to right: Suzi Wong, Kenyon Chan, and Angela Arunarsirakul.

The UCLA (Re)Generations Asian American & Pacific Islander Studies Reunion was presented by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Department and in collaboration with UCLA Alumni Association, Asian Pacific Alumni, and UCLA Pilipino Alumni Association. Thank you to UCLA Pacific Ties, UCLA Asian Pacific Coalition, Save Cantonese at UCLA, and Tinig Choral for your partnership.



*Foundations and Futures* redefines the American narrative by bringing Asian American and Pacific Islander stories into every home and classroom around the world. Combining distinguished scholarship, open access technology, and ethnic studies pedagogy, *Foundations and Futures* will strengthen students' historical empathy, opening unlimited possibilities for building a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic future for all.

For many educators, the curriculum filled a long-standing resource gap and provided both the tools and confidence to teach about AAPI histories with fidelity and authenticity. Educators also shared that many students saw their backgrounds represented for the first time in a history curriculum, which created powerful moments of visibility and engagement. “My students were introduced to a whole new topic they had no prior knowledge [of]. It was an eye opening experience,” stated one beta tester. “My students told me it was an eye-opening experience to learn about Asian American history. They were inspired...” shared another.

## TEACHER EDUCATION & CHAPTER PREVIEW EVENTS



### CUNY Foundations and Futures Preview

On April 24, 2025, CUNY Hunter College Asian American Studies Program, CUNY Asian American/Asian Research Institute, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), May Y Chen, Margaret M. Chin, Rocky Chin, Antony Wong, Chris Kwok, Vivian Louie, and Julie Azuma hosted a *Foundations and Futures* preview.

### Oral History as Community History: UCI Teacher Academy Workshop and Celebration

In June 2025, the UC Irvine Humanities Center and the School of Education's Teacher Academy hosted a two-day workshop, *Oral History as Community History*. Local educators participated in hands-on learning sessions facilitated by UCLA Assistant Professor Thuy Vo Dang and Sacramento State Professor Will Gow.

### Conferences, Presentations, and Workshops

From February through November 2025, Foundations and Futures's outreach staff had the opportunity to attend over 20 conferences across the country.



### Preserving Our Histories & The Freedom to Tell Our Stories

On June 28, 2025, *Foundations and Futures* hosted the third installment of its textbook chapter preview series, spotlighting an exclusive conversation with journalist, author, and Emmy-award-winning filmmaker Julie Ha.



**Conferences attended:** Asian American Journalists Association Convention, AAPI Lead National Summit, APALA Convention, Hmong History and Cultural Studies Model Curriculum Conference, Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) Conference, Asian Educators Alliance (AsEA) Conference, California Council for the Social Studies (CCSS) Annual Conference, California Association of Asian and Pacific Leaders in Education (CAAPLE) Conference, APISBMA Spring Mixer, AFT TEACH Conference, and more to come.

## Foundations and Futures: Looking Forward

With all 50 chapters commissioned, *Foundations and Futures* is excited to launch our full website and publicity campaign in early 2026. In the meantime, our team is hard at work finishing editorial production, multimedia licensing, and front and back-end website development. Please be on the lookout for more exciting updates and fresh educational content, shared regularly with our newsletter subscribers and social media followers.

*Foundations and Futures* enters the world at a time when our right to tell our stories is threatened by book bans and policies such as California's AB715 that could silence our histories. We remain committed to Ethnic Studies education, but we can't do it alone. Here are ways you can help:

- Contribute to our fundraising campaign!
- Follow and share us on your social media.
- Spread the word with your friends, family, and community.
- Interested in connecting our team with your school? Contact [textbookoutreach@aasc.ucla.edu](mailto:textbookoutreach@aasc.ucla.edu)

## STAY CONNECTED!

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Newsletter



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@foundationsandfutures

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Facebook



## Donate to *Foundations and Futures:* *Asian American & Pacific Islander Multimedia Textbook*



There are many ways to make a gift, such as a multi-year pledge, a planned gift or annuity that can also provide tax benefits on top of the satisfaction of being part of this monumental effort to educate by preserving AAPI stories. Please contact the Asian American Studies Center if you can help with a gift or have leads for us. You can also make an online donation by scanning the QR code on the left. Please email Abby Chun ([abigailechun@ucla.edu](mailto:abigailechun@ucla.edu)) if you have any questions or would like further information.

## Asian American & Pacific Islander Policy Initiative

The AAPI Policy Initiative supports and produces research in collaboration with nonprofit advocacy organizations and policy makers to uplift AAPI perspectives in civic life and public decision making in California and across the nation. It includes over 20 AASC faculty advisory committee members and researchers who conduct public-facing, policy-oriented, and applied research. Dr. Natalie Masuoka has served as the faculty director of the AAPI Policy Initiative since July 2023. She holds split appointments in the departments of Political Science and Asian American Studies.

### 2025 INITIATIVES

Produce timely policy reports to address the needs of AAPIs

Promote and improve access to Policy Initiative reports

Develop curriculum in Asian American Policy Studies

Strengthen partnerships with community organizations, government and more

Grow policy and research opportunities and activities for faculty and students

### RESEARCH REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

In response to the wildfires that broke out in January 2025, the AASC partnered with the **UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge**, **UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute**, and **AAPI Equity Alliance** on a rapid response research effort that produced a report, “**Asian American Language Needs in L.A. Wildfires.**”

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly 50,000 Asian Americans reside within the Los Angeles County evacuation zones during the January 2025 wildfires, with over 12,000 needing language assistance due to limited English proficiency.
- In the evacuation zones, the most commonly spoken Asian languages are Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese, but dozens of other Asian languages, which vary by evacuation zone, are also represented.
- Older Asian Americans experience significantly higher rates of limited English proficiency (61%) compared with younger generations (15%), making it more difficult to navigate emergency response and recovery.



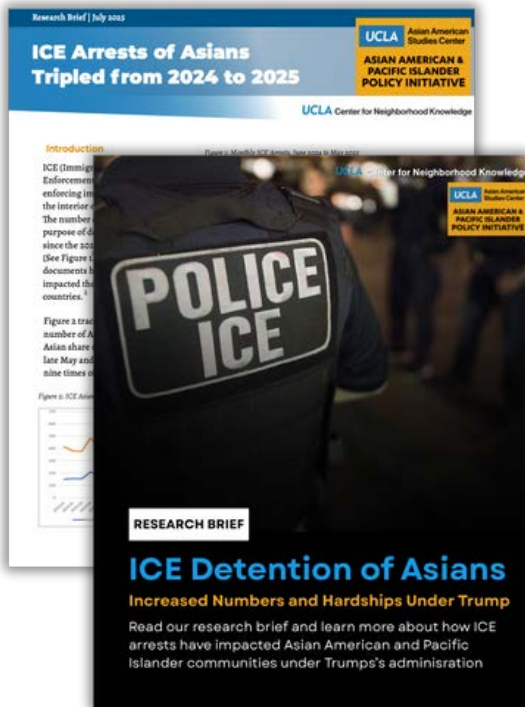
The January 2025 wildfires in Los Angeles County rank among the most devastating disasters in American history with estimated economic losses exceeding \$250 billion, significant displacement of residents, extensive structural damage, and tragic loss of life. The fires have affected all segments of the population — rich and poor, residents and workers, and people from every racial group. This includes Asian Americans, who face unique challenges, particularly those with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Language barriers can hinder access to critical emergency notifications, which are essential for timely evacuations and ensuring safety during wildfires. Effective communication is also crucial during the recovery and rebuilding process. Reaching LEP Asian communities is especially challenging because they speak dozens of different languages. The report was cited in mainstream media outlets, such as KNX radio and LA Times. Read the full report here: <https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/resources/aalanguagelawildfires.aspx>.

## Immigration and Customs Enforcement Research Briefs

As a response to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests increasing under the Trump administration, the AASC partnered with the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge to develop research briefs to examine how Asian and Pacific Islander communities have been affected by detentions and arrests.

Professor Paul Ong and Jonathan Ong have found that ICE arrests of Asian people have tripled from 2024 to 2025. Data shows that nearly a third of arrests were immigrants from China and over a quarter from India. Under the Trump administration, detainees have faced more hardships through relocation to out-of-state facilities in states with stricter immigration policies and courts.



**READ** | To access full research briefs, please visit:  
<https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/resources/policyreports.aspx>

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Various members of the Center's staff participated in policy-related events to share research produced by UCLA AASC and/or support community partners' advocacy efforts. These activities included:**

- Professor Natalie Masuoka participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Asian Pacific American Public Affairs (APAPA) AANHPI Advocacy Day in Sacramento. APAPA organized a coalition with over 100+ organizations in coordination with diversity caucuses. The day brought together community leaders and advocates across California to amplify AANHPI voices and work in teams to meet with legislative offices to share our stories and experiences.
- Deputy Director Melany De La Cruz-Viesca represented AASC in Sacramento for the Stop the Hate Day of Action organized by AAPI Equity Alliance, the CA Commission on Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs and non-profit leaders from all over California.
- Press Editor Arnold Pan attended Orange County Congressman Dave Min's AAPI Empowerment Summit in Irvine.
- Both Natalie and Melany attended Los Angeles County Congresswoman Kamlager-Dove's Uplifting AAPI Voices Roundtable.
- Melany is serving on the advisory board for the UCLA Center for Health Policy and Research's Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, "Improving Asian Classification Typologies" data disaggregation project. The project is in collaboration with several national advocacy organizations (API Health Forum, AAP Community Health Organizations, Asian Health Services, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center) and scholars from across the nation (UCLA, UCB, NYU).
- Melany served as a policy research mentor for the UCLA CHPR Health Equity Challenge Initiative. She worked with Wendy Tran, public health masters student, that developed a mental health and financial literacy platform with Asian Americans Advancing Justice SoCal: "Breaking the Silence: Vulnerabilities of Mental Health in Asian Immigrants."
- Director Karen Umemoto was appointed to the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs, Higher Education Committee Advisory Board.

## Bruins Rising Initiative

The mission of the **UCLA Native American and Pacific Islander Bruins Rising Initiative (NA/PI BRI)** is to foster stronger ties with UCLA students, faculty, staff, campus departments, and community organizations. Serving as a beacon of hope, the initiative continues to develop a supportive ecosystem for Native American and Pacific Islander communities at UCLA. The Bruins Rising Implementation Committee consists of students, staff, and faculty with expertise in Native American and Pacific Islander studies and student affairs. Key achievements this year include the recruitment of **3 new faculty members, 3 graduate student researchers, and 1 post-doctoral fellow**. This will strengthen UCLA's academic programs, bring valuable perspectives and expertise on Pacific Islander experiences, and further our mission of inclusivity and community engagement.

These efforts have contributed to strengthening academic programs by bringing valuable expertise and perspectives to UCLA that enhance Pacific Islander Studies.

## 2025 BRI EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



**Research Methodologies Workshop** facilitated by Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Professor in Indigenous and International Development and Head of Programme for the Institute of Development Studies at Massey University in New Zealand.



**"Women Voyagers and Ancestral Guides of Taumako, Solomon Islands"** Discussion with Delsie Betty Bosi, Mimi Kaveia George, and Kyle McDonald. The event was organized by Professor Vicente Diaz.



**Faculty, Staff, and Students gathered to meet Climate Activist Suluafi Brianna Fruean**

Left to Right (top row): Phil Timoteo, Melody Satele, Tina DeLisle, Keith Camacho, Vicente Diaz, Suluafi Brianna Fruean, Jiorden King, Thomas Umu, LaVon Nightingale Smith, Kiara Elizabeth Santos, Faasami Tialino, Malia Perry, Kamakana Kupau, & Jordan Fuentes (bottom row): Juliann Anesi, Marina Aina, Gabrielle Patawaran, Alana Langi, & Jessica Piamonte.

# **BRUINS RISING INITIATIVE**

## **NEW SCHOLARS AND STAFF**

**Mahonri “Mo” Sapiga**



**Practicum Education Faculty**  
UCLA Department of Social Welfare

**Paige Yuen**



**Graduate Student Researcher**  
UCLA Asian American Studies

**Dr. Kekoa Taparra**



**Assistant Professor**  
UCLA Geffen School of Medicine &  
Fielding School of Public Health

**Marina Aina**



**Graduate Student Researcher**  
UCLA Asian American Studies

**Dr. Greg Pōmaika’i Gushiken**



**Chancellor’s Post-Doctoral Fellow**  
UCLA Asian American Studies Center

**Alika Masei**



**Graduate Student Researcher**  
UCLA School of Education



## GREG SEIICHI PŌMAIKA'I HANAKAHI GUSHIKEN, PHD

**Dr. Greg Seiichi (G.S.) Pōmaika'i Hanakahi Gushiken** (he/they) is a Kanaka 'Ōiwi and Uchinaanchu educator and writer from Nānākuli, Hawai'i. Currently, he is a UC Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow at UCLA and holds a PhD in Ethnic Studies from UC San Diego. His research focuses on Indigenous education, queer Indigenous futurity, and the intersections of pedagogy, refusal, and ea in Hawai'i. He is at work on his first manuscript, *Queer Indigenous Sovereignities: Māhū Pedagogies and Hawaiian Decolonial Futures*. He is also a former middle school teacher.

### **A message from the Bruins Rising Post Doctoral Fellow:**

Aloha kākou! 'O Gregory Seiichi Pōmaika'i Hanakahi Gushiken ko'u inoa piha, akā, kapa 'ia wau 'o Pōmaika'i a i'ole 'o Greg. No Nānākuli mai au. He Kanaka 'Ōiwi au. My full name is Gregory Seiichi Pōmaika'i Hanakahi Gushiken, but I go by Pōmaika'i or Greg. I am Kanaka 'Ōiwi and from Nānākuli, O'ahu.

### **What were you doing before your Postdoc, and what was your project you were working on?**

Prior to starting the Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship at UCLA, I taught middle and high school back home in Hawai'i. More specifically, I was teaching 8th grade and 11th grade social studies at the Kamehameha Schools, a Hawaiian-culture-based independent school system established by the will and trust of Bernice Pauahi Pākī Bishop, the great-granddaughter of Kamehameha I. I am also an alumnus of the school, class of 2013, so it was a great experience to leverage both my social science doctoral training and the pedagogical skills I developed in gaining my secondary school teaching certification. The curriculum projects I focused on in my professional career were focused on "indigenizing" world history and global studies curriculum, centering Hawaiian history, politics, and civics as the core of my teaching.

Academically, I completed and defended my dissertation in October 2023. I actually took partial paid time off that day to defend my dissertation and went back to teach my afternoon classes after I completed my Zoom defense, which I still find hilarious and,

honestly, a perfect reflection of my PhD journey, where I became really good at balancing my non-academic career and my dissertation. My dissertation weaves together my own experiences of community organizing, art and cultural production by queer Kanaka 'Ōiwi, and critical reflections on curriculum and institutions in Hawai'i to argue that, by learning from and listening to the work of queer, transgender, and māhū Kanaka 'Ōiwi, our entire lāhui (nation, this term often implies Hawaiian community) can move closer to decolonization.

### **What have you been working on as UCLA's BRI postdoc? What has your experience been like?**

Arriving in Los Angeles has been a smooth process, and, although UCLA has been mostly empty due to it being summer session, I have found so much support in mentors and colleagues from my PhD days and beyond. I also had a chance to go and volunteer at Kuruvungna Springs, a Tongva sacred site that is stewarded by Tongva people. In all, UCLA has such a great and supportive community, and I am glad to be here. In terms of "work," I am working on revising two of my chapters—one on queer Indigenous art as a pedagogical response to extractive LGBT tourism in Hawai'i and one on queer Indigenous art and organizing on Mauna Kea—into articles that I plan to submit for publication. In terms of research, as opposed to writing, I am starting the ideation process about my next project, which is currently an amorphous study of Hawaiian critical pedagogy in and beyond universities outside of Hawai'i. I am also collaborating with colleagues at other universities, including at home in Hawai'i, on a curricular project to support the 2026 AAAS conference in Hawai'i.

## SOPHIA ARMEN, PHD



**Sophia Armen** is an **ORCA-IAC Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow** based at the **Asian American Studies Center**. She received her PhD in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, San Diego. Her research focuses on the racialization of Middle Eastern communities in the United States, from the perspectives of organizers and refugees, uniting ethnic studies, critical refugee studies and gender studies. Her research has been generously supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Foundation, and many others, and her work has appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Vice News*, *NPR* and *The Middle East Eye*. She has founded dozens of organizations and community initiatives dedicated to building in feminist, SWANA, and survivor justice movements in the United States for over 15 years.

"Being a postdoctoral fellow at UCLA with IAC and the Asian American Studies Center has been a dream come true. My experience as a postdoc, especially the opportunity to work alongside and learn from researchers dedicated to their communities, has been transformative. It feels like I am part of institutions that care about research not only being community-focused but community-empowered." - Sophia Armen

## UPDATES FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN CULTURES



On May 14, 2025, **Professor William Gow** (CSU Sacramento) had a discussion with filmmaker and professor **Renee Tajima-Peña** from UCLA's Asian American Studies Department about his new book, ***Performing Chinatown: Hollywood, Tourism, and the Making of a Chinese American Community*** (Stanford University Press, 2024). The event was held at the Charles E. Young Research Library and generously supported by the Stanley Kwok Lau and Dora Wong Lau Endowment in Chinese American Studies at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center.



On October 7, 2025, author and UCLA alumna **Ann Chau** discussed her book, ***My Ông Ngoại's Garden***, with Professor **Thuy Vo Dang** (Information Studies) in Moore Hall. Ann Chau was inspired by her son's interaction with her father as he introduced him to the unique fruits he grows and harvests, offering insights into Vietnamese culture and how food can help bring people together. This event was supported by IAC, the School of Education & Information Studies, Asian American Studies Center, Asian American Studies Department, and Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

## 2025 Event Highlights

David Nishida and Tina Yamano Nishida Distinguished Lecture and Panel

### An Asian American Writer's Notebook: Past, Present, and Future Tense



Left to right: Amber Phung, Helen Zia, and Julie Ha

On May 29, 2025, the Center had the honor of hosting activist, author, and journalist Helen Zia as the keynote speaker for our annual Nishida Lecture. Zia was joined by Julie Ha and Amber Phung to discuss their experiences as professional and student journalists. The Center was also thrilled to celebrate the release of *Intersections: A Journalistic History of Asian Pacific America* at the lecture with a book signing with Arnold Pan and Yi-Sheen Loo. *Intersections* includes a profile on Helen Zia and a chapter written by Julie Ha. A special shout out to the Center director, Karen Umemoto, for moderating the panel, and our deputy director, Melany De La Cruz-Viesca for emceeding.

### 2025 Activist-in-Residence Closing Reception



Left to right: Kari Okubo, Romarilyn Ralston, Kaya Dantzler, James Suazo, and Lupita Limón Corrales

On June 3, 2025, we congratulated the 2025 Activists-in-Residence cohort: **Kari Okubo, Romarilyn Ralston, Kaya Dantzler, James Suazo, and Lupita Limón Corrales**. The UCLA Activist-in-Residence program seeks to strengthen the infrastructure of social transformation by supporting local movement leaders, community organizers, and artists with a home at UCLA. The residency allows for time and space to reflect upon complex challenges, envision new campaigns and projects, and connect with university faculty, students, and staff. With a shared commitment to “turn the university inside out,” this year’s cohort has powerfully reimagined what scholarship and pedagogy can be. In partnership with the **UCLA Luskin’s Institute on Inequality and Democracy, UCLA City LAB, and the UCLA Center for the Study of Women**, these artists, organizers, and movement leaders have brought community-rooted knowledge into campus spaces.

### UCLA Class of 2024 Asian American Studies Department Commencement



Class of 2025 Undergraduate Students of the Asian American Studies Department



Class of 2025 Graduate Students of the Asian American Studies Department

In June 2025, the UCLA Asian American Studies Department welcomed family, friends, and loved ones to campus to celebrate the graduating class of 2025. This year’s graduates included **8 Master of Art graduates, 2 graduate student concentrators, 10 Bachelor of Art graduates, 29 Asian American Studies minor graduates, and 4 Pilipino Studies minor graduates**. The program included **Harry Embuido** as the undergraduate student speaker and **Maya Sinha** as the graduate student speaker. On behalf of the graduating Masters degree cohort, **Professor Anou Vang** was awarded the Asian American Studies Graduate Student Association’s Annual Award for Excellence in Graduate Mentoring and Teaching.

## A Conversation on Bruce Lee & Cultures of Solidarity: Lessons for Today



On November 6, 2025, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center, UCLA Hip Hop Initiative, and UCLA EthnoCommunications presented a book talk with award-winning author, **Jeff Chang**, to discuss his new publication: *Water Mirror Echo: Bruce Lee and the Making of Asian America*. Chang read an excerpt of his book to start a panel discussion with professor **Gaye Theresa Johnson** and **Martha Gonzalez** and moderated by professor **H. Samy Alim**. The discussion brought together artists, scholars, activists, and cultural workers for a wide-ranging and probing conversation on how they think about building solidarities and fostering a new imagination towards the hope for a better world. Following the discussion was a book signing and author meet-and-greet.



## AASC EVENTS IN 2025



**Bahala si Bathala sa mga Banal na Bata Film Screening**, **Letters to Home: Art & Writing by LGBTQ+ Nikkei and Allies Book Talk**, **Meeting and Greet: Brianna Friedan**, **Remembering Saigon: Journeys through and from Guam, Saig, Dirt, Sheed: Queer Poetics and Palestinian Resistance**, **The Cleaving: Vietnamese Writers in the Diapsora Book Talk**, **Braiding a Constellation of Care: Ka'ākaukukui Reef and the Native Hawaiian Anti-Eviction Movement in Early Twentieth-Century Honolulu**, **New Wave: Rebellion and Reinvention in the Vietnamese Diaspora Film Screening**, **Surface Relations: Queer Forms of Asian American Inscrutability Book Talk**, **All of Us or None: Migrant Organizing in an Era of Deportation and Dispossession Book Talk**, **Performing Chinatown: Hollywood, Tourism, and the Making of a Chinese American Community Book Talk**, **50 Years after the War: A Journey toward Peace Poetry Reading**, **Educating Children, Educating All Book Talk**, and more!



**STAY CONNECTED** | Sign up for our newsletter to hear about future programming!

### NEW AASC FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**Summer Kim Lee**  
Department of English



**Ju Hui Judy Han**  
Department of Gender  
Studies



**Angela Robinson**  
School of Theater, Film &  
Television



**Kekoa Tapparra**  
Department of Health  
Policy and Management



**Rebecca Delafield**  
Department of Community  
Health Sciences



**Koji Lau-Ozawa**  
Department of  
Anthropology



**Sicong "Summer" Sun**  
Social Welfare, Luskin  
School of Public Affairs



**Kyle Yoshida**  
Samueli School of  
Engineering

## FACULTY UPDATES

- **Professor Keith Camacho** received the Mercator Fellowship at the University of Potsdam in Germany, and he specifically worked with faculty coordinators from the Research Training Group Minor Cosmopolitanisms, a multi-year research grant supported by the German Research Foundation. While in Germany, he also delivered research talks, co-facilitated workshops, and interacted with the faculty and PhD fellows of the University of Potsdam more generally. Over the summer, Professor Camacho collaborated with academics and activists from AFROTAK TV CyberNomads, the University of Hamburg, and the University of Melbourne, among others.
- **Professors Purnima Mankekar** and **Akhil Gupta** published *The Future of Futurity: Affective Capitalism and Potentiality in a Global City* with Duke University Press in April 2025
- **Professor Summer Kim Lee** published her debut book, *Spoiled: Asian American Hostility and the Damage of Repair* in October of 2025 with Duke University Press
- **Professor Ju Hui Judy Han** and **Professor Jennifer Jihye Chun** published *Against Abandonment: Repertoires of Solidarity in South Korean Protest* in June 2025 with Stanford University Press
- **Professor Matsumoto** co-authored an essay, "From Community Cookbooks to Online Blogs/Websites: Generational Shifts in Japanese American Foodways," with **Lily Anne Welty Tamai**, that appeared in *Eating More Asian America: A Food Studies Reader*
- **Professor Paul Ong** and Jonathan Ong have been co-producing research briefs focused on ICE arrests of Asian communities in the United States
- **Professor Jennifer Chun** has been newly appointed the Interim Department Chair for UCLA Department of Labor Studies

## Lecturer Spotlight: Lily Anne Welty Tamai



We are pleased to announce that Continuing Lecturer **Lily Anne Welty Tamai** is the **2024-2025 recipient of the C. Doris and Toshio Hoshide Distinguished Teaching Prize in Asian American Studies**.

Dr. Welty Tamai is being recognized for her innovative teaching and generous mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students, especially in fostering their intellectual and personal growth. Her students spoke about the profound and transformational impact she had on them through her engaging teaching, support for students beyond the classroom, guidance with career paths, and much more.

“Her mentorship has truly transformed my academic journey at UCLA and helped me find a path I did not know existed. She is the mentor I didn’t know I needed,” shared one student. Another student expressed, “Her ability to imbue her students with the same passion she has for activism, community, and the subject of Asian American Studies deserves to be recognized.”

Welty Tamai has been an instructor for the UCLA Asian American Studies Department for almost a decade. At UCLA she teaches Asian American Studies 20, 20W, 30W, 115, 131A, 140XL, 170, and 187C (Multiracial and Multiethnic Asian Americans). Some of her notable and popular courses include ASIA AM 20 and ASIA AM 30, both of which consistently recruit students to the Asian American Studies major and minor because many students feel the course is transformative. ASIA AM 187C on Multiracial and Multiethnic Asian Americans, a course that Lily is uniquely positioned to teach with her research expertise has met the needs of an increasingly multiethnic and multiracial Asian American community. ASIA AM 140XL is particularly meaningful for students who have expressed that service-learning allowed them to apply the founding principles of ethnic studies that bridges the university with the community through work that serves the people.

Welty Tamai received her doctorate in History from the University of California Santa Barbara. She conducted research in Japan and in Okinawa as a Fulbright Graduate Research Fellow and was also a Ford Foundation Fellow. Her forthcoming book titled, *Military Industrial Intimacy: Mixed-race American Japanese, Eugenics and Transnational Identities*, documents the history of mixed-race American Japanese and American Okinawans born after World War II and raised during the post-war period. Dr. Tamai was formerly the Curator of History at the Japanese American National Museum and served on the U.S. Census Bureau National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations.

“It is an honor to receive recognition for my teaching from the Asian American Studies Center for the Hoshide Distinguished Teaching Award. I am grateful to the hardworking staff in the Asian American Studies Department, my esteemed colleagues and my brilliant students for building community to develop and discuss ideas together in our shared teaching spaces. My goal is to open doors for students to introduce them to connect with Asian American Studies. Let’s remember to lift others as we climb, as solidarity is necessary for our collective futures,” said Welty Tamai.

We are honored to award this well-deserved recognition to continuing lecturer Lily Anne Welty Tamai for her invaluable contributions to Asian American Studies, transformative impact as a teacher, mentor, and excellence in scholarship. The late C. Doris Hoshide, Class of 1934, of Rockville, MD established the teaching prize to annually recognize an outstanding professor in Asian American Studies. She and her late husband were longtime supporters of Asian American Studies at UCLA.

## UCLA Asian American Studies Graduate Students

UCLA's Master of Arts in Asian American Studies provides students with an interdisciplinary analytical lens to explore the historical and cultural experiences of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States. This year, we welcomed 7 new graduate students to the Asian American Studies M.A. cohort: **Eve Chen, Karen Y. Wang, Katelyn Do, Priscilla Soun, Ryan Horio, Sean Sugai, and Sophia Vertido.**

The graduate program aims to train students in the following ways: (1) equip them with theoretical and conceptual tools for critical thinking and critical analysis; (2) guide them in research that utilizes written texts, electronic media, visual objects, or performative modalities as the medium; (3) make them aware of the mutually complementary relationship between academic and community work; and (4) prepare them for careers in both private and public domains.



Left to right: (top) Karen Y. Wang, Ryan Horio, Eve Chen, Priscilla Soun (bottom) Sean Sugai, Sophia Vertido, and Katelyn Do.

## UCLA AAPI ALUMNI NEWS

**Kristina Wong ('00)** co-wrote a children's book titled *Autntie Kristina's Guide to Asian American Activism*.

**Tadashi Nakamura ('03)** released his newest film *Third Act*, which explores the life of his father, Robert A. Nakamura.

**Jeff Chang ('95)** published *Water Mirror Echo: Bruce Lee and the Making of Asian America* and began his book tour.

**Daniel Mayeda ('79 & '84)** honored as APA UCLA Alumnus of the Year at the 2025 Asian Pacific Alumni of UCLA Gala.

**Eric C. Wat ('92)** published *Daddy Issues*, a collection of stories about queer Asian American experiences in Los Angeles, the book also won the Barbara DiBernard Prize in Fiction.

**Ali Wong ('00)** earned her first Grammy nomination for "Best Comedy Album" for her Netflix special *Single Lady*.

**Prahas Rudraraju ('24)** was appointed as the first professor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies at Mt. San Antonio College.

**Angel Trazo ('20)** began her position as an Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies at Sacramento City College in August of 2025.

**Scott Tadao Kurashige ('96)** announced his new book, *American Peril: The Violent History of Anti-Asian Racism*, coming out April 2026.

**Lynn Itagaki** joins the Intercollegiate Department of Asian American Studies as an Associate Professor of Literature and Gender Studies at Claremont McKenna College.

# COLIN WATANABE



**Colin Watanabe set up a charitable gift annuity of \$5,000,000 towards an endowment for the general operations and activities for the UCLA Asian American Studies Center.** Colin was born in the Topaz concentration camp during WWII and grew up in the Crenshaw district of Los Angeles. In 1961, he started at UCLA as an undergraduate student in Engineering and later entered the PhD program. He joined the Nisei Bruin Club and Oriental Concern on campus. He became an active voice in the Asian American Movement as a co-founder of *Gidra*, the main Asian American movement vernacular newspaper of that period. He also supported the development of a Japanese American volleyball league as a student.

He later was part of establishing Asian American Studies at UC Berkeley. At the age of 38, he joined Genentech, where he spent 37 years of his career at the nexus of computer science and biological innovation. **We extend our deepest gratitude to Colin Watanabe for his extraordinary generosity and unwavering dedication to advancing Asian American studies and lifting community voices. His legacy will inspire generations of students, scholars, and leaders to come.**

## NEW ENDOWMENTS



**The Cantonese Arts and Culture Endowment** has been established at UCLA with a generous gift from **May Chong '79**, a longtime supporter of UCLA. She established this fund to preserve and promote Cantonese traditions, arts, and language and to foster education, cultural exchange, and community engagement for future generations. May Chong selected UCLA as the home for her endowment because of the university's history of cultural exchange, excellence in research, and engagement in Asia-Pacific and Asian American studies and its diverse student body. The UCLA Asian American Studies Center will administer the endowment and invite ongoing partnership with students, scholars, and the broader community to keep Cantonese culture vibrant and relevant.



**The Bijal Vakil Scholarship for South Asian Studies** has been established at UCLA through a generous gift from **Bijal Vakil '92**, a proud Bruin who graduated with a B.A. in Economics and a specialization in Asian American Studies. The new scholarship endowment will support undergraduate students who are dedicated to South Asian and South Asian Diasporic Studies and/or working with organizations relevant to this academic discipline. The UCLA Asian American Studies Center will administer the scholarship endowment and cultivate partnerships with students, scholars, and the broader community to strengthen and expand South Asian Studies for future generations.



Kari Okubo is a digital strategist, cultural worker, and organizer who is a fifth-generation Uchinānchu and Japanese settler from 'Aiea, Hawai'i. She recently transitioned from her role as Social Media Strategist for 18 Million Rising, an organization mobilizing Asian Americans through digital organizing. Kari brings over nine years of leading social media campaigns across various industries to power Asian American grassroots campaigns and creative projects. Kari focuses on building narrative power in digital spaces and utilizing storytelling as an organizing tool to shift culture and engage communities in the fight for collective liberation.

### What was your experience like as our Activist-in-Residence?

In this time of increased repression and threats to our rights, I believe that communication workers are our movement's first line of defense. When our communities experience harm, we are the ones that receive the initial alerts, have around two hours to process everything, and somehow find the words that meet the moment to move our people towards action. I believe that social media can be a powerful organizing tool and sought to create a space to sharpen communications skills towards digital platforms. My main project as Activist-in-Residence was to develop curriculum and facilitate a four week, in-person "Social Media for Organizers" training series hosted at UCLA for organizers and communications workers. Participants learned to develop social media and content strategy, as well as sharpened technical content creation skills designed to amplify their social justice campaigns and projects. This was also an opportunity for me to pour out my brain and experience in leading social media campaigns across various industries, into something structured and easy to understand.

Aside from skills building, an outcome I had for these trainings was for participants to connect and build with one another. Many of us already knew about each other's organization, received each other's newsletter emails and were often in overlapping coalition zoom calls

but rarely got a chance to engage IRL. Setting the trainings in an in-person space allowed for honest conversations about the challenges that we face, as well as working through how to build better systems of support for ourselves and our teams.



### What are your next steps?

Now that I have piloted this program, the next step is for these training sessions to be used as a community offering to serve various organizing spaces. Additionally I will be returning to UCLA in January to tailor my training into a service learning course for students where we will teach them how to create a social media advocacy campaign in partnership with a community based organization.

Over this past year I have grown so much not just through my project, but from interacting with faculty, staff, and students. I enjoyed late night working sessions and chats about organizing with the center's librarian & archivist Marji Lee who I later learned edited the book "Passing It On" that changed my life. Additionally, Yuji Ichioka is someone who has shaped my political identity as an Asian American and I was assigned to his office for the duration of my residency. I wonder what he would think about me using his desk to make kpop themed "Know Your Rights" cards and freebies to pass out at protests! I am closing my residency with clarity on my role in movement spaces and new ways to engage with my community. I am so grateful to everyone at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center for this incredibly transformative experience.





### MAYA SINHA

Maya Sinha (she/her) is a current doctoral student in the Anthropology program at UCLA. Maya grew up the daughter of two Singaporean engineers in San Diego (situated on Kumeyaay land). She recently received her M.A. in Asian American Studies from UCLA, studying the entangled relationship between caste, elitism, and entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley. Prior to this, she received B.A. degrees in both Data Science and Statistics and Asian American Studies from UCSB. Committed to social, environmental, and food justice, Maya volunteers at various urban farms and mutual aid groups in the LA area.

As I reflect on my time in UCLA's Asian American Studies program, I am filled with gratitude for the profound sense of community and care that has shaped my experience. This program has been more than just an academic pursuit; it has been a nurturing environment where rigorous theory and knowledge coexist with compassion and encouragement. Here, I found the freedom to uncover the intricate connections between personal experiences and the broader societal structures that influence them. Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies became a vital avenue for me to explore my mixed Indian-Chinese heritage, prompting me to consider aspects of my ethnic identity such as how my last name might signal my caste status.

My journey began in my undergraduate studies at UC Santa Barbara with a class on mixed-race Asian Americans, igniting a passion for critically engaging with identity beyond belonging. Pursuing my master's in Asian American Studies allowed me to weave together personal reflections on identity and larger themes of militarism and imperialism. I am immensely thankful for the unwavering support of my advisor, Professor Purnima Mankekar, and my committee members, Professors Grace Hong and Valerie Matsumoto, whose insightful feedback has been invaluable.

I also want to express my appreciation to Janet Chen and Jeff Tang for their assistance during my work on the Foundations and Futures textbook. A heartfelt thanks goes to my cohort-mates, especially Yee Thao, Josh Luo, Anou Vang, and honorary member Jasmine Till, who listened to my thoughts without judgment. Additionally, I want to acknowledge Wyatt Wu for his constant positivity and Nidhi Satyagal for being an amazing discussion partner. Lastly, I extend my gratitude to Justin Dela Cruz, Xuan-Mai Vo, and Wendy Fujinami for their constant reassuring and grounding presence in the office.



**"THE ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM HAS EQUIPPED ME WITH THE TOOLS TO APPROACH MY FUTURE WITH KINDNESS AND THOUGHTFULNESS. AS I EMBARK ON THE NEXT CHAPTER OF MY ACADEMIC JOURNEY, I AM EXCITED TO BEGIN A PHD IN ANTHROPOLOGY AT UCLA. JUST A FEW BUILDINGS AWAY IN HAINES HALL. READY TO CONTINUE EXPLORING THE RICH TAPESTRY OF IDENTITY AND CULTURE AND READY TO MEET OTHERS WITH THE SAME COMPASSION THAT AAPI STUDIES HAS SHOWED ME."**

**- MAYA SINHA**



## CHLOE SERRANO

Chloe Serrano (she/ her) is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Asian American Studies with a minor in Public Affairs at UCLA. She is an unapologetic and proud Korean Filipina from Buena Park (occupied Gabrieleño and Tongva land). Chloe has served as President of Associated Students and Student Trustee of Fullerton College. Throughout her leadership, she has created policy on supporting students of marginalized identities, stipulated the need for a prayer room, ensured safety to all students on campus, and co-wrote a resolution on supporting trans, non-binary, and gender nonconforming students that was passed on a state level. She is also the co-founder of Melanated Youth, where she has led advocacy efforts on issues from reproductive healthcare to combating racial injustice. She is an aspiring public interest lawyer and is interested in working in public policy.

In my first semester at community college, I took an Ethnic Studies course on contemporary social movements in America. It was the first time in my academic career that I felt represented in the curriculum. Instinctively, I changed to Ethnic Studies because it spoke to my identity and beliefs. Ethnic Studies became an invisible thread connecting me to my ancestors and gave me the agency to map my educational and professional path, continually reshaping how I see the world.

When I transferred to UCLA, I came to appreciate the breadth and interdisciplinarity of Asian American & Pacific Islander Studies. The variety of courses allowed me to explore my interests, refine my passions, and understand AAPI histories, politics, and lived experiences with depth and clarity. I have learned deeply about the Asian American diaspora while also developing as a researcher and creative writer. Some of my most formative courses were with Professor Lee Ann S. Wang, where I studied the intersections of law, policing, gender-based violence, citizenship, and immigration.

I am currently completing my capstone project on the Model Minority Myth and the "perfect victim" narrative, examining how these ideologies impact the visibility, categorization, and institutional response to Anti-Asian harm. I chose this topic after taking Gender Violence and Policing, where the concept of the proper/perfect victim first captured my attention. I began to see how Asian Americans are read through a distinct legal/ carceral narrative shaped by both the Model Minority frame and victim legibility.

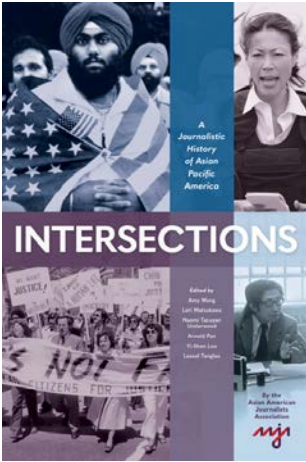
I am also deeply grateful for the support of Counselor Justin Dela Cruz, whose mentorship has helped me navigate the Asian American Studies department and plan my academic trajectory. In addition to my capstone, I am also pursuing Departmental Honors. I am conducting this project under the advice of Professor Lucy Burns.

In addition to being a full-time student, I am also a Communications and Social Media Assistant at the Asian American Studies Center. I have had the pleasure of working with Cindy Quach on CrossCurrents, designing posters for ReGenerations, and maintaining activity on social media channels.

After my time at UCLA, I hope to participate in the Capital Fellows Program for a year to gain direct experience in legislative work and public service. I also plan to support progressive 2026 midterm campaigns and complete a paralegal certification to deepen my exposure to legal practice before applying to law school. I intend to apply by 2029, with interests in immigration and labor law, Critical Race Studies, and intellectual property. Yet, it was at UCLA's Asian American Studies that I found my passion and interest in using research, storytelling, and policy as a tool for public service and institutional change.



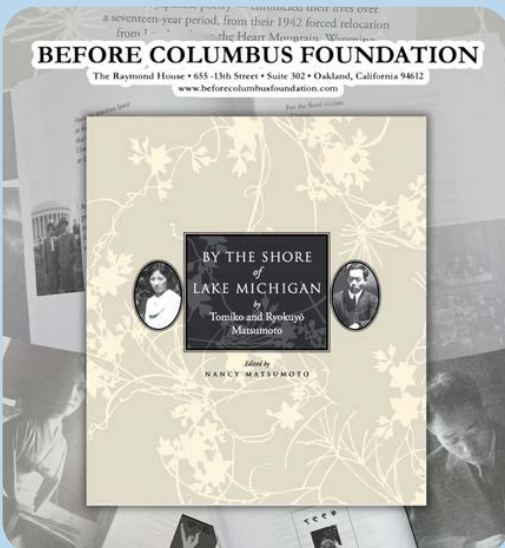
## PUBLICATIONS



This past year, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press co-published a new book, ***Intersections: A Journalistic History of Asian Pacific American***, with the **Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA)**. The book collaboration hits especially close to home because AAJA was founded in 1981 on the heels of Los Angeles Asian American social movements and the establishment of Asian American Studies in the late 1960s. We have come full circle with this book project. AAJA co-founders **Dwight Chuman** and **Tritia Toyota** were among the many students and community members who were part of activities at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center that helped shape Asian American media in the 1970s. Today, "Intersections" continues this legacy by demonstrating how AAJA's mission and programs further authentic storytelling that makes a difference.



The book chronicles pivotal events where AAPI journalists and AAJA members played crucial roles, often being the first to speak out in newsrooms and public forums. UCLA AASC Press and AAJA have been sharing this new publication with the community through book talks, panel discussions, tabling at conferences, and author signings!



We are thrilled to announce that ***By The Shore of Lake Michigan*** edited by **Nancy Matsumoto** has been awarded the **American Book Award by the Before Columbus Foundation**. This prestigious honor celebrates the book's outstanding literary achievement and its contribution to the rich diversity of American literature. The AASC Press would like to congratulate **Nancy Matsumoto, Mariko Aratani, Kyoko Miyabe, and Eri Yasuhara** for this well-deserved recognition.



**READ | Support UCLA AASC Press!**  
<https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/aascpress>

## UPDATES FROM AMERASIA JOURNAL

In 2025, *Amerasia Journal* celebrated the publication of its fiftieth volume. To mark the occasion, the journal's staff and Editorial Board members composed a series of retrospective commentaries across two issues highlighting some of the most thought-provoking essays to appear in our pages since our founding in 1971. Helping to commemorate this milestone, longtime former Editor **Russell Leong** offered his wisdom and critical insights on the role that *Amerasia Journal* has played in championing Asian American history. At a time when history is at risk of being rewritten and even erased, Leong suggests that it is incumbent upon publications like *Amerasia Journal* to keep a true record of what has happened in our communities.



*Amerasia Journal* is also in the process of publishing two important special issues, slated for the end of 2025. The first is a new project on **Asian Settler Colonialism** that revisits and updates the groundbreaking 2000 issue “**Whose Vision? Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai‘i.**” In the 25 years since “Whose Vision?” was published, the framework of Asian Settler Colonialism has had an indelible influence on Asian American studies, as the expanded intellectual and geopolitical trajectories of the new special issue only underscore. The second special issue offers a critical look on anti-Asian violence, examining a frequently used term in greater depth and detail.



Carrying on our tradition of supporting innovative and imaginative work in Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, *Amerasia Journal* published the screenplay of the short film, ***So To Speak***, written, directed, and produced by **Celine Parreñas Shimizu**, the newly appointed Dean of Theater, Film and Television at UCLA. *So To Speak* is a coming-of-age fiction film, which follows Morena’s desire to express and enjoy her freedom. Yet, others try to control her. Through artmaking, she digs into her sexual herstory, including her pivotal relationships with lovers, friends, and family. She recognizes sexuality as both traumatic and joyful, and most importantly a site of passion, power and pleasure. Her struggle forges diverse sexual futures for herself and other Asian American women.

## EthnoCommunications

The **UCLA Center for EthnoCommunications** under the Asian American Studies Center was founded in 1996 by the late Professor Emeritus and filmmaker **Robert Nakamura** to promote the documentation, preservation, and creative expression of diverse ethnic experiences through the use of emerging media and communications technologies. EthnoCommunications programs are innovative collaborations among media artists, students, scholars and communities that advance new approaches to analysis, engagement, and representation of marginalized cultures, peoples and histories. The Center for EthnoCommunications is comprised of three main components: the academic program, film and digital media production, and campus to community engagement.



The late EthnoCommunications founder and long-time UCLA professor, **Robert Nakamura**, was profiled in the new feature documentary, “**Third Act**,” directed by his son and a former EthnoCommunications alumnus and instructor, **Tadashi Nakamura**. The film traces his legendary career as an activist filmmaker who was first trained at the original EthnoCommunications affirmative action program in the UCLA film school. Nakamura was a pioneering documentary filmmaker whose body of work includes the classic “**Manzanar**,” which was inducted into the Library of Congress National Film Registry, and the dramatic feature “**Hito Hata: Raise the Banner**” (with Duane Kubo). In 1970, Nakamura and fellow students **Duane Kubo**, **Alan Ohashi** and **Eddie Wong**, co-founded the Los Angeles-based media arts center, **Visual Communications** and in 1997, Nakamura and **Karen Ishizuka** (UCLA Anthropology PhD) co-founded the **Watase Media Arts Center at the Japanese American National Museum**. “Third Act” premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January of 2025 and has screened at festivals around the country.

The May 19<sup>th</sup> Project, co-founded by AASD M.A. alumnus Jeff Chang and Center director Renee Tajima-Peña, partnered with filmmaker Tani Ikeda and a collective of artists, filmmakers and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center to launch a national social media civic impact campaign, **We Belong Together**, which provided immigrant rights information in nineteen languages.

Follow the May 19<sup>th</sup>  
Project on Instagram  
@may19thproject

MAY 19  
PROJECT

Solidarity is...



### Social documentaries produced in EthnoCommunications Creating Community Media classes during the past year covered themes such as:

- A Burmese immigrant daughter explores her family's life of music and an unspoken past
- A profile and history of the legendary Toyo Miyatake Studios in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo
- After escaping the 2011 civil war, a Syrian family loses everything and find refuge in the U.S. to try to rebuild their lives from scratch
- A behind-the-scenes look at UCLA's Asian American theater club, LCC, through the creative journey of bringing to life the original musical “A Perfect Day.”
- An adoptee from China's impressionistic exploration of family, place and memory
- In an experimental visual and soundscape constructed from verité and archival footage, a South Asian student reflects upon the personal and cultural encounters in his first year in the U.S.
- Three siblings navigate their creative dreams and an uncertain future as their paths converge in Los Angeles—the city of dreams
- An analysis of women-led community empowerment through a profile of the Sacramento-based organization Hmong Innovating Politics

## IN MEMORIAM

## KEITH TERASAKI (1956 - 2024)



The UCLA Asian American Studies Center is deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Keith Terasaki, a dedicated community leader, health advocate, and generous humanitarian. Keith passed away peacefully on December 22, 2024. His philanthropic generosity and spirit extended to the UCLA Asian American Studies Center where he established the Dr. Paul and Hisako Terasaki Research Fellowship for graduate students exploring Japanese American studies. We honor Keith's contributions and legacy that will endure through the countless lives he touched, inspiring future generations to lead with kindness and integrity.

## K.W. LEE (1928 - 2025)



K.W. Lee, an award-winning investigative reporter, editor, and civil rights advocate who inspired and mentored generations of journalists and community leaders, died March 8, in Sacramento at age 96. Known as the “godfather of Asian American journalism,” Lee's over half-century career embodied the journalistic ideal of “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable” and earned him more than four dozen journalism awards. Members of his former staff at the *Korea Times English Edition* paid tribute to Lee's brand of community journalism in the book, *Saigu: Korean and Asian American Journalists Writing Truth to Power*, published by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center.

## ROBERT NAKAMURA (1936 - 2025)



The UCLA Asian American Studies Center is profoundly saddened by the passing of Robert (Bob) Nakamura, a pioneering filmmaker, educator, and beloved mentor whose contributions not only shaped the landscape of Asian American media, but enriched Asian American collective understanding of community, heritage, and justice. In 1970, Bob and fellow students Eddie Wong, Duane Kubo and Alan Ohashi, founded Visual Communications, which still stands strong as the oldest Asian American media arts non-profit in the country. Bob passed away on June 10, 2025 at home, “the way he wanted to,” according to his family. Bob became a UCLA professor of film in 1987 and Asian American Studies in 1994, where in 1996 he reprised EthnoCommunications as a teaching program and creative research center.

## KENT WONG (1956 - 2025)



The UCLA Asian American Studies Center is heartbroken by the passing of Kent Wong, a distinguished community leader, educator, and advocate for social justice. Kent passed away on October 8, 2025. Kent was the Director of the UCLA Labor Center for 32 years. His leadership through the Labor Center and the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance were instrumental in building a movement for workers' rights and supporting the struggles of immigrant communities. A professor for more than two decades, he taught thousands of students critical lessons about the labor and immigrant rights movements in Asian American Studies and Labor Studies courses. Through his guidance and mentorship, Kent inspired countless individuals in the fight for justice and equality.

# 2024-2025 UCLA ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER AWARDS,

## FACULTY & POSTDOCTORAL AWARDEES

### Institute of American Cultures (IAC) Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow GREG PŌMAIKA'I GUSHIKEN

PROJECT TITLE: Queer Indigenous Sovereignties: Māhū Pedagogies and Hawaiian Decolonial Futures

### Institute of American Cultures (IAC) Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow SOPHIA ARMEN

PROJECT TITLE: Refugee/Citizen/Migrant: Making Middle Eastern-American Race Amidst Mass Displacement, Violence, and Resistance

### IAC/AASC FACULTY & POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS RESEARCH GRANTS

#### DANQUIAO CHENG

Postdoctoral Fellow Anderson School of Management

PROJECT TITLE: Silent Struggles: Asian Employees Experience More Exploitation at Work

#### KING-KOK CHEUNG

Professor Department of English

PROJECT TITLE: Impact of Participatory Cantonese Opera Lessons on Mental Health for Senior Cantonese Immigrants in Los Angeles

#### PATRICIA GREENFIELD

Professor Psychology

PROJECT TITLE: Residential Communities at College: Differing Needs in First-Generation and Continuing-Generation Students

#### KOJI LAU-OZAWA

Professor Department of Anthropology

PROJECT TITLE: The Butte Camp Collection: A Material Analysis of Artifacts from the Gila River Incarceration Camp

#### DAVID SHORTER

Professor World Arts and Culture

PROJECT TITLE: Impact of Participatory Cantonese Opera Lessons on Mental Health for Senior Cantonese Immigrants in Los Angeles

#### LEE ANN WANG

Professor Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Hotlines as Border Technology: Asian Migration, Anti-Trafficking Campaigns, and the Affective Production of "Concern"

## ARATANI COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT RESEARCH ENDOWMENT (C.A.R.E.) AWARDS

### EAST WEST PLAYERS

PROJECT: Theatre for Youth: PATSY

### GARDENA VALLEY JAPANESE CULTURAL INSTITUTE

PROJECT: Day of Remembrance Film Program

### GREATER LOS ANGELES JACL

PROJECT: Nikkei Professionals Program

### HISTORIC WINTERSBURG CONSERVANCY

PROJECT: Wintersburge Historic District Study

### TRACY ISHIMARU

PROJECT: Archiving Saburo "Stone" Ishimaru Collection

### JAPANESE AMERICAN CULTURAL & COMMUNITY CENTER

PROJECT: DŌ (THE WAY): Traditional Japanese Arts for Families

### JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF OREGON

PROJECT: Through Our Eyes: Youth Perspectives on History and Healing

### JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF SAN JOSE

PROJECT: A Movement from the Ground Up – Archiving the Japanese American Redress Movement in San Jose

### JISHIN TAIKO, CSU NORTHRIDGE

PROJECT: 30th Anniversary Taiko Concert

### YAYOI KAMBARA

PROJECT: NI DO TO: an XR pilgrimage

### LITTLE TOKYO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PROJECT: Silent Film History in Little Tokyo: The Fujikan Theater and Sessue Hayakawa

### LITTLE TOKYO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PROJECT: Shimibun: Narrative Short & Feature Film Development

### LITTLE TOKYO SERVICE CENTER

PROJECT: Engaging Communities, Empowering Futures: A South Bay Stakeholder Conference for the Nikkei and AANHPI Community

### MANZANAR COMMITTEE

PROJECT: Katari: Keeping Japanese American Stories Alive

### NICHI BEI FOUNDATION

PROJECT: Book of Remembrance Program

### NIKKEI HERITAGE ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON

PROJECT: KINTSUKUROI: The Story of the Ito Family from the 1940s to Post-War San Francisco

### OKINAWA ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

PROJECT: Decolonial Community Writing Project

### SAWTELLE JAPANTOWN ASSOCIATION

PROJECT: Sawtelle Stories Interactive Project

### SOUTHEAST JAPANESE SCHOOL

PROJECT: 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Southeast Japanese School and Community Center Play

### SAWTELLE JAPANTOWN ASSOCIATION

PROJECT: Sawtelle Stories Interactive Project

### UCLA KYODO TAIKO

PROJECT: 26th annual Spring Concert

### VENICE JAPANESE COMMUNITY CENTER

PROJECT: Venice Japanese Community Center's Cultural Expo Exhibition

### VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA LLC

PROJECT: Temporary Detention: A Guide to the 'Assembly Centers' Program

## GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDEES

### Martha Ogata Grant to Study Domestic Violence & Abuse in APA Communities

#### LINDA ZHANG

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Navigating Safety, Care, Surveillance: Asian American Women Domestic Violence Survivors under the Eyes of the State

### Patrick & Lily Okura Research Grant on APA Mental Health

#### HARMEET KAUR KALSI

PhD Student Higher Education and Organizational Change

PROJECT TITLE: Shernis - Punjabi Sikh Women's Intergenerational Resilience across Time

### Professor Harry H.L. Kitano Fellowship

#### LAUREN CASEY RIBANCOS

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Kapé for Who? Analyzing the "Ethics" of Filipino/a American Coffee Trade and Diaspora Giving

### Rose Eng Chin and Helen Wong Eng Fellowship

#### ALYSSA HEMLER

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Systemic Adoptee Domestic Violence

### Tritia Toyota Fellowship

#### NIDHI SATYAGAL

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Privilege and Violence: The Indian Diaspora's Complicity in Hindutva within Community Organizations

### Dr. Paul and Hisako Terasaki Research Fellowship

#### AIKO MATSUMURA DZIKOWSKI

PhD Student Anthropology

PROJECT TITLE: Japanese American Princess: A Linguistic Anthropological Approach to Identity, Incarceration, and Pageantry within the Nikkei Community

### Dr. Paul and Hisako Terasaki Research Fellowship

#### JANINE SUN ROGERS

PhD Student Theater and Performance Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Contained Materialisms: Canned Goods and the Matter of Transpacific Militarization in Performance

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Internship with Asian American Studies Center

#### ALYSSA HEMLER

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Contained Materialisms: Canned Goods and the Matter of Transpacific Militarization in Performance

### Professor Harry H.L. Kitano Best Paper Scholarship

#### SIYUE LENA WANG

PhD Student Education

PROJECT TITLE: Recollecting Resistance: A Retrospection on UPLIFT's UndocuAsian Community Organizing during the DACA Era and Trump Administration

# GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND INTERNSHIPS

**Rose Eng Chin and Helen Wong Eng Best Paper Scholarship**

**MADS K. LE**

PhD Student Information Studies

PROJECT TITLE: A Utopian Hope: Listening and Locating Vietnamese Archival Sensibilities

**Ben and Alice Hirano Best Paper Scholarship**

**OTHELIA JUMAPAO**

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Filipina Caregivers: A Story of Migration and Social Reproductive Labor

**Tsugio and Miyoko Nakanishi Best Paper Scholarship in Asian American Literature & Culture**

**HARMEET KAUR KALSI**

PhD Student Higher Education and Organizational Change

PROJECT TITLE: A Reflection of the Sikh Art Exhibit: "I Will Meet You Yet Again" through an Intergenerational Resilience Lens

**IAC/AASC GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH GRANTS**

**ALYSSA HEMLER**

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Home Is Where the Hurt Is: An Analysis of Domestic Violence as a Proliferation of Legal Violence in Adoptee Lives

**OTHELIA JUMAPAO**

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: The Rise of Anti-Critical Race Theory and Rhetoric and Neoconservatism in Florida: Its Effects in Education

**HARMEET KALSI**

PhD Student Education

PROJECT TITLE: Shernis: Punjabi Women's Intergenerational Resilience Throughout History

**YASMIN MEZA LAZARO**

PhD Student Psychology

PROJECT TITLE: Neighborhood Strength and Possibilities and their Impact on Well-Being: A Photovoice Study with High Achieving, High School Students of Color

**COURTNEY NELSON**

PhD Student Anthropology

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring Hauntological Embodiments: A Case Study of a Palestinian American

**LAUREN RIBANCOS**

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Kapé for Who? Analyzing the "Ethics" of Filipino/a American Coffee Trade and Diaspora Giving

**JANINE ROGERS**

PhD Student Theater and Performance Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Contained Materialisms: Canned Goods and the Matter of Transpacific Militarization in Performance

**NIDHI SATYAGAL**

MA Student Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Privilege and Violence: The Indian Diaspora's Complicity in Hindutva within Community Organizations

## IAC PRE-DOCTORAL AWARDEES

**ANGELINA KARNSOUVONG**

MA Student Asian American Studies & Community Health Sciences

PROJECT TITLE: Indigenous Healing and Decolonial Health: Approaches to Khmu Wellbeing in Laotian Refugee Diaspora

**JOYCE NGUY**

PhD Student Political Science

PROJECT TITLE: Examining the Boundaries of Racial Rhetoric in American Campaigns

**QIANYUN WANG**

PhD Student Social Welfare

PROJECT TITLE: Visions of Healing: Documenting Grief and Bereavement among Older Chinese Immigrants through Photovoice

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARDEES

**Jane Lin Memorial Scholarship**

**KATELYN LEE**

MAJOR: Political Science & English

PROJECT TITLE: With Gratitude and Growth

**Angie Kwon Memorial Scholarship**

**FIONA LU**

MAJOR: Public Affairs, Labor Studies, Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Curating the Curriculum to Think Critically about Race, Policy and Law

**Reiko Uyeshima and Family Scholarship**

**JASMINE GAYNIER**

MAJOR: Film, Television and Digital Media MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Curating the Curriculum to Think Critically about Race, Policy and Law

**Reiko Uyeshima and Family Scholarship**

**KRISTI IKEMOTO**

MAJOR: Psychology MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: The Spirit of Gaman

**Chidori Aiso Memorial Scholarship**

**MATTHEW INUI**

MAJOR: Political Science & Economics

PROJECT TITLE: "I just never thought of it that way": The Unique Experience of Japanese American Children with Racism through Incarceration

**Toshio and Chiyoko Hoshide Scholarship**

**LULU SIGUOIN**

MAJOR: Political Science MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Biographical Sketch: The Life of Lillian Nakano

**John Kubota Scholarship in Japanese American Studies**

**EMILY OTOSHI**

MAJOR: Cognitive Science

PROJECT TITLE: North American Taiko History: A New Generation

**Amy Uyematsu Internship Award**

**JADE FAIRCLOTH**

MAJOR: Global Studies & Public Affairs MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Beyond Borders: Advocating for Immigrant Rights

**George and Lily Kagawa Award for Asian American & Pacific Islander Health Research Internship**

**ANDREW TSAI**

MAJOR: Human Biology and Society

PROJECT TITLE: Bridging the Divide: Culture and Care in Medicine

**George & Sakaye Aratani Community Internship**

**NATALIE TOKITA**

MAJOR: Human Biology and Society MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Telling Stories from the Past to Pave the Way for a Better Future of Equity and Justice

**Stanley Kwok Lau and Dora Wong Lau Memorial Internship in Chinese American Studies**

**SAMANTHA CHAN**

MAJOR: Asian American Studies & Design Media Arts

PROJECT TITLE: Visual storyteller: AAPI Studies, Art, Design, Digital Media, and Film

**Gold Shield Alumni - California Freedom Summer Participatory-Action Research Project**

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MAJOR: Psychology

INTERNSHIP: Hmong Innovating Politics

**Hiram Wheeler Edwards Best Paper Scholarship for the Study of World War II Internment Camps and Japanese Americans**

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MAJOR: Psychology MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Over a Centennial in the States: An Active Fight against Forgetting, Defined by Racetrack Dust a Repudiation of Democracy, and the Loss of a Beloved Tea House

**Professor Harry H.L. Kitano Best Paper Scholarship**

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PROJECT TITLE: Where does the pain go when we die?

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MAJOR: Psychology MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Underdiagnoses of ADHD in Asian American Women during Adolescence: How do we Improve Early Identification and Intervention?

**Ben and Alice Hirano Best Paper Scholarship**

**CAITLYN HYEJOONG KIM**

MAJOR: English & Sociology MINOR: Asian Languages

PROJECT TITLE: Frogs Leaving the Bottom of the Well

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MAJOR: Human Biology and Society MINOR: Asian American Studies

PROJECT TITLE: Swirling Sand

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