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## Statement from the AAS Chair

*Dear Students, Friends, Community Members, Alumni, and Allies of CSUN's Asian American Studies,*

As chair of the AAS Department, I am writing to you to remind us all that *we are all in this together*.

We are going through unprecedented times with COVID-19 ravaging the globe. While the good news is that 80% of those who will contract the virus will experience mild symptoms or remain asymptomatic. The bad news is that even those with mild or no symptoms can transmit the virus, contributing to the illness and death of others. This is a stubborn and voracious virus. And we are yet to see the worst of the damage this pandemic is about to unleash upon our fellow human beings.

And if the impact of the virus on our physical, mental, emotional, and economic well-being is not enough, Asians in the U.S. and around the world are being targeted for hate crimes because of the virus' origination in Wuhan, China. Even among our own faculty and students, we have reports that they have either witnessed and/or experienced such COVID-19-related harassment. The president of the United States making references to COVID-19 as "the Chinese flu," "Kung flu," and "the foreign virus," all fan the flame of racialized hatred and xenophobia which have plagued Asians/Asian Americans since our first arrival here in the Americas & the United States. This is all the more reason why Asian American Studies *\*must\** be part of the educational lexicon here in the United States from K-12 through the university.

Asian American studies faculty and students have had to make a rapid transition from face-to-face classes to online modules with short notice (less than a week's notice). We are fully aware that not all students have access to the same resources. Many students have lost their jobs, or their parents have lost jobs. International students may not be able to return home. Both faculty and students must be experiencing stress, anxiety and discomfort. Let's all be loving and patient to one another as we go through this together. Let's openly communicate with one another our frustrations and our gratitude. If ever there was a time to show understanding, compassion and mercy, this is it! Our dedicated faculty are committed to our students' well-being first and foremost. We are trying to figure out ways to offer practical support for our

students who are experiencing hardships. We will keep you posted on that!

Ethnic Studies is a field that grew out of \*struggle and protest\* to contest dominant paradigms and systems. We created a field literally out of nothing but the desire, passion, and commitment of students and faculty alike who wanted to tell our stories in the face of great opposition. Students went on strike and protested at SFSU, at Berkeley, at UCLA and yes here at CSUN! We, here in Asian American Studies, are therefore positioned to meet the challenges of this moment by being at the forefront of transgressive and innovative teaching and learning.

Ethnic studies celebrated its 50 years last year (1969-2019). CSUN's AAS Department is commemorating our 30th year as an autonomous academic unit this year (1990-2020). Unfortunately, we are *postponing (not cancelling)* many of our celebrations (30th Anniversary Celebration, Student Awards Ceremony, Distinguished Lecture, Commencement, Graduation, etc.). Once we get through this, we will be back -- better and stronger than ever! For now, please be kind and gentle to yourselves and to each other.

On behalf of the Asian American Studies Department here at CSUN, I extend our love, our compassion, and our concern for you and your loved ones.

***We are planning to set up a donation for AAS students in need. If you can give a little, it will help our students who are most in need.***

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. We are here for you!

Dr. Eunai Shrake, Chair  
AAS Department

*CSUN Asian American Studies*  
**Statement of Solidarity with the  
Movement for Black Lives and  
Condemnation of Mr. George  
Floyd's Murder**

by Dr. Teresa Williams-Leon

We here at CSUN's Asian American Studies Department unequivocally condemn the heartless and cruel murders of Mr. George Floyd, Mr. Ahmaud Arbery, Ms. Breonna Taylor, Ms. Dominique Clayton and countless others. We stand firmly in solidarity with African American, Native American, Pacific Islander and Latina/o/x communities who bear the brunt of police brutality in our society. Those of us in Asian American Studies/ethnic studies know all too well the fractured relationship between law enforcement and communities of color. Asian American Studies/ethnic studies was born out of struggle and protest 51 years ago. Students, faculty and community supporters were beaten and bashed with billy clubs at gunpoint by police in riot gear, simply for wanting our histories and experiences reflected in university curricula. Black students took the lead at San Francisco State College, San Fernando Valley College, UCLA, UC Berkeley, etc. so we could all have ethnic studies on our college campuses.

After telling the officer who had his knee on Mr. Floyd's neck and chest that he couldn't breathe and that he was in pain, Mr. Floyd's last words were to call out for his mother who had passed away two years prior. We feel disheartened that, at least one of the officers who stood by and observed Mr. Floyd being murdered in broad daylight on May 25, 2020, is Asian American. We as Asian Americans who know all too well how systemic racism and colonialism impact our lives -- especially amidst the current Covid-19 pandemic-- must say, "Enough is enough!" And when the perpetrators of or accomplices to racialized hate violence, police harassment and murder are one of our own --whether in uniform or not, we must be the first to say, "We won't stand for this!" We condemn both state violence and its agents and stand firmly against anti-Black racism within the Asian American community. We hurt for and with the family of Mr. Floyd and for all people affected by his death.

28 years ago on April 29, 1992, we watched in shock and horror when the officers who brutally beat Mr. Rodney King were acquitted, sparking the Los Angeles Civil Unrest of 1992. We hope in this case, justice is swift for the family of Mr. George Floyd.

The Asian American Studies Department at CSUN stands in solidarity with Black communities here in Los Angeles and across the nation to say that the lives and voices of Black people matter, period! We call for systemic change and accountability to end these senseless murders of our Black brothers and sisters and all people of color.

\* \* \*

The poem, written by CSUN alum, **Mr. Tony Osumi**, is about 25 years old and was updated for a poetry reading for Mr. Ahmaud Arbery. In the wake of Mr. George Floyd's death, Osumi's words prove especially poignant.

**Asian America--We Were There**

By Tony Osumi

Asian America we were there  
we were there  
jumping off Spanish galleons in the 1500s  
we were there  
burning up Hawaiian sugar cane profits  
we were there  
pushing back on 19th Century White supremacy  
we were there  
uniting in Oxnard with Mexican American sugar  
beet workers.  
we were there  
dying for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain  
we were there  
doing political time at Leavenworth for taking a  
stand against the draft  
we were there  
giving birth to Local 770 Grocery Workers  
we were there  
fighting for the "Rights of the Foreign Born"±  
we were there  
singing America in West Side Story  
we were there  
down South for Freedom Summer  
we were there  
as Malcolm X took his last breath  
we were there  
crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge  
we were there  
sitting down in the orchards of Delano

we were there  
out at the earliest gay rights  
demonstrations  
we were there  
shutting down Berkeley and S.F.  
State  
we were there  
”Blowing-out ”of Eastside  
schools  
we were there  
marching the Chicano Moratorium  
August 29, 1970  
we were there  
T.B. testing with the Young Lords  
we were there  
singing center stage at Panther  
rallies  
we were there  
leafleting grape-selling Safeways  
we were there  
counseling G.I.s and resisting the  
Vietnam draft  
we were there  
clutching Red Books in China with  
long lost cousins  
we were there  
authoring Title IX and the  
Women’s Educational Equity  
Act  
we were there  
running support at Wounded Knee  
we were there  
defending the I Hotel 9-years  
strong  
we were there  
in court for Vincent Chin  
we were there  
campaigning for Jesse and the  
Rainbow Coalition  
we were there  
winning Redress and Reparations  
we were there  
boycotting Apartheid in South  
Africa  
we were there  
ACTing Up and providing a  
Critical Path during the  
HIV/AIDS struggle  
we were there  
strategizing to keep the General  
Motors plants open

we were there  
rising up against California’s  
Proposition 187  
we were there  
forcing dressmaker Jessica  
McClintock to the bargaining  
table  
we were there  
fighting to end police brutality  
we were there  
phone banking for Affirmative  
Action  
we were there  
mobilizing for mother tongue  
language classes on college  
campuses  
we were there  
working to unionize the New Otani  
Hotel in Little Tokyo  
we were there  
resisting roadside mugshot books  
in Orange County  
we were there  
in solidarity with “Comfort  
Women” around the world  
we were there  
standing by the Rafu Shimpo  
newspaper workers  
we were there  
freeing the land in Okinawa  
we were there  
continuing the redress fight for  
Japanese Latin Americans  
we were there  
marching against another Iraq war  
we were there  
breaking the fast for Ramadan with  
our Muslim friends  
we were there  
supporting Lt. Ehren Watada’s  
stand against war crimes  
we were there  
occupying Main Street with the  
99%  
we were there  
raising a fist for Michael Brown in  
Ferguson  
we were there  
chanting at LAX to end Trump’s  
travel ban  
we were there

a million strong at Women’s  
Marches across the nation  
we were there  
we were there  
we were there  
And Asian America  
we are here  
walking the line for public  
education  
we are here  
picketing for \$15 an hour  
we are here  
holding hands with our queer and  
trans brothers and sisters  
we are here  
door knocking to get out the  
November vote  
we are here  
folding origami cranes to close  
camps because Never Again Is  
Now!  
we are here  
sewing face masks for frontline  
workers and the Navajo Nation  
we are here  
documenting our lives for PBS  
we are here  
raising thousands and donating  
backpacks to asylum seekers  
we are here  
running 2.23 miles for Ahmaud  
Arbery  
we are here  
putting pen to paper in the name of  
justice  
we are here  
we are here  
we are here  
together  
tonight  
we are here

\*\*\*\*\*

*As this poem by our alum, Tony  
Osumi says, CSUN Asian  
American Studies, WE ARE HERE.  
We take a knee and raise a fist for  
George Floyd and the countless  
others who have been killed.*

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## Virtual Commencement and Celebration: May 30, 2020

On May 30, 2020, the Asian American Studies Department held a Virtual Commencement & Celebration via Zoom for Asian American Studies 2020 graduates, honored Professor Emeritus Laura Uba one of the department's founders who retired at the end of spring, 2020, recognized long-time faculty, Professor Allan Aquino, Professor Glenn Omatsu and Professor Maria Turnmeyer, and paid tribute to Department founders and donors, Dr. Bob Suzuki, Dr. Kenyon Chan, Dr. Shirley Hune, Dr. George Uba, Dr. Laura Uba, Dr. Gordon Nakagawa, Mr. Gary Mayeda, Mr. Tony Osumi, Dr. Enrique Delacruz, Dr. Prosy Delacruz.

### AAS Chair's Graduation Message

#### *Congratulatory Message from Dr. Eunai Shrake to our 2020 Graduates and Awardees*

On behalf of the Department that loves and cares about you so much, I extend my deepest congratulations and best wishes to each and every one of you and to your families. I am extremely proud of all of you! I wish we could be together in-person to honor your accomplishments and to give you the send-off you deserve. However, this virtual graduation is a sign of our times. And we hope you know that the faculty and students on the graduation committee worked so hard to let you know how proud we are of you and how much you mean to our department! You are the graduating class of 2020 on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our department – a department born out of struggle, of love, of strategy and of dedication by students, faculty, administrators, and community supporters! 2020 graduates, you are part of that important legacy of struggle, of love, of strategy and of commitment!

2020 Graduates, you have all made an indelible mark on your professors, your peers, and the CSUN community at large. We can't wait to see how you will go and help make the world a better place --to be there for our APA communities so in need of \

your expertise and your skills! We hope that having majored, double-majored and minored in Asian American Studies, you have nurtured the consciousness and gained the tools necessary to impact change and uplift our communities. The world needs your great minds, your passion, and your dedication to social justice!

Please remember, CSUN's AAS Department is your \*forever home\*. You can come back anytime. Maybe, some of you will return as professors, staff members, research assistants, distinguished lectures, donors, etc. OR you will come back just to say "hello!" We will welcome you with open arms and hearts, always!

Grace Lee Boggs has written,

*"History is not the past. It is the stories we tell about the past. How we tell these stories - triumphantly or self-critically, metaphysically or dialectically - has a lot to do with whether we cut short or advance our evolution as human beings."*

We know each of you take your hard-earned BA diploma and your passion and take this troubled world we live in and shine your bright light on it! Keep telling our stories, 2020 AAS graduates, in all of your endeavors!

## THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020

### Majors and Double Majors

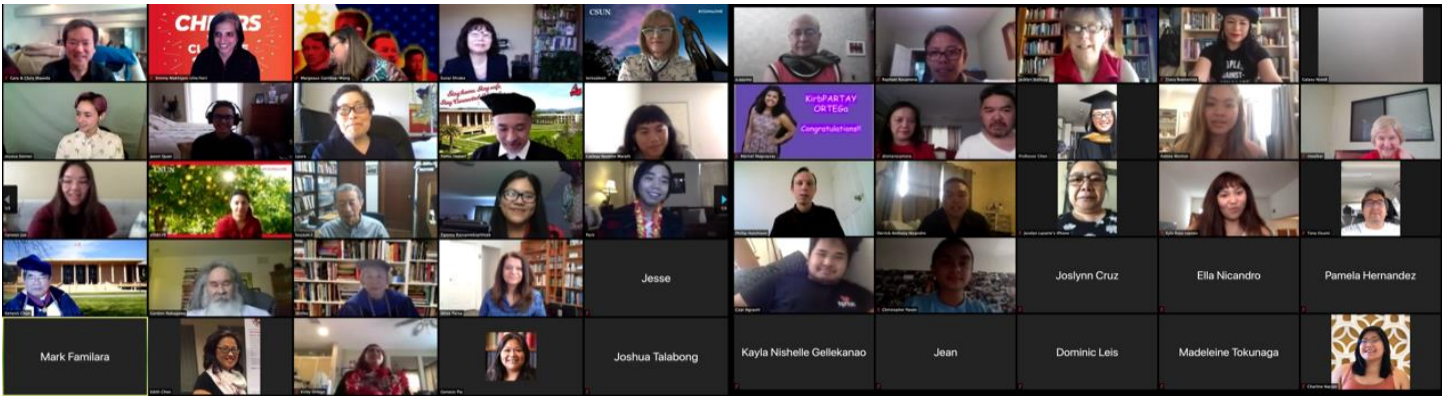
Maiya Yang  
Emmanrowen Vergara  
Madeleine Tokunaga  
Jumel Sulabo  
Kimberley Rosas De Almeida  
Tammy Rassamekiarttisak  
Megan Phung  
Kirby Ortego  
Derrick Anthony Nicandro  
Angelo Mutia  
Alana Mirikitani  
Emily Minoda  
Catleya Novette Maralit  
Kyla Rose Leynes

Christina Lee  
Angelo Junio  
Raven Ipapo-San Juan  
Jeremy Eustice  
Denise De Sequera  
Josynn Cruz  
AL Cruz  
Shelly Barroa

### Minors

Brianna Pham  
Ashlee Monton  
Parit Kasemsri  
Genean Jue





## 2020 Virtual Student Awards Ceremony

The department's beloved graduates were not the only ones honored during the May 30<sup>th</sup> virtual commencement ceremony. Unable to hold the annual Distinguished Lecturer and Student Awards Ceremony, this year's student awardees were celebrated and recognized during the Virtual Commencement Ceremony held via Zoom. In many ways, this year's unique format made things a little special because not only did Zoom give us an opportunity to still celebrate and commemorate our graduates and student awardees, but their celebration was done in conjunction with the department's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and attended by the originators and founders of the department, special folks who would not have been able to attend if it were not for the online format. Congratulations to our 2020 Student Awardees!

## 2020 STUDENT AWARDEES

### Promising Freshman:

**Brianna Armenta, Guadalupe Hernandez, Armando Leon, Anahi Ortiz, Brianna Perez, Ashley Sanchez, Boris Torres**

**Community Builder Award** (recognized for playing a crucial role in building the Asian American and/or Pacific Islander communities on and off campus):  
**Holly Xiao Qian Lin**

**Asuncion Abarquez & Rose Abarquez-Alcantara Essay Contest Winner: Tammy Rassamekiarttisak**

### Eunai Shrake Promising Educator

**Award** (recognizes a student who has made a commitment to a career in education): **Ashlee Monton**

### Laura Uba Academic Achievement

**Award** (recognizes a student who has demonstrated a strong academic performance and critical understanding of AAS and/or Ethnic Studies): **Jason Quan**

### Donna Kawamoto Special Achievement

**Award** (recognizes a student who has demonstrated resilience and a strong ability to overcome unusual hardships and life circumstances while pursuing higher education): **Czar Agcaoili**

### Donna Kawamoto Special Achievement Honorable

**Mention Award** (recognizes a student who has demonstrated resilience and a strong ability to overcome unusual hardships and life circumstances while pursuing higher education): **Laura Perez**

### Enrique De La Cruz Social Justice

**Award** (recognizes a student who has demonstrated a commitment to ending social oppression, impacting Asian and Pacific Islander American communities on or off-campus, and showing impact in social justice organizations or projects): **Tammy Rassamekiarttisak**

### Kenyon Chan Outstanding Leadership

**Award** (recognizes a student who has demonstrated the goals and values of the department and campus leadership and who has been engaged in practices that bridge the university and AAPI communities, advancing AAS and Ethnic Studies through research and activism.):  
**Jessica Steiner**

*Special thank you to the generosity of our donors and supporters: Kenyon Chan, Shirley Hune, Prosy Abarquez-Delacruz, Glenn Omatsu, Bob Suzuki, Enrique Dela Cruz, and Eunai Shrake.*

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# The Asuncion Abarquez & Rose Abarquez-Alcantara Award Winning Essay

## Not Just Black and White

by Tammy Rassamerkiarttisak

Since double majoring in Public Health and Asian American Studies, I have seen the lack of resources specifically addressing Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students' needs, which stems from the Model Minority Myth (MMM). The MMM stemmed during the Civil Rights Era, where the government used this myth to show that Asian Americans are "doing well" despite the adversities they have faced. However, with the MMM used as a wedge against other communities of color and for Asian American communities to be lumped into "one" uniform, interchangeable person, is problematic. It's problematic because when an Asian American fails to "meet the standard", they are individually blamed for it, rather than looking at the laws, policies, and/or institutional racism that might be the root of the cause instead. Through my Asian American Studies 311: Research Methods course, my group and I are in the process of conducting a mixed methods study on academic expectations and racial experiences for AAPI students at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). We seek to explore how discrimination and racism affect AAPI students' academic experiences, how they navigate them, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has played a role in their experiences. This research is significant because of the pandemic and how the AAPI community is currently affected by racism and acts of violence. In order to turn this research from deficit/damage-centered research to desire-based research, we used Ethnic Studies as Praxis by utilizing the Critical Race Theory (CRT).

In *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*, Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) argue that scientific research on communities of color has been plagued by White ideological methodology that binds communities of color to inequality in society. The authors contextualize White ideological methodology through the terms White logic and White methods. To understand

what these terms mean, they present problems to researchers and pose their research on communities of color. First, the authors state that Whites in society are the dominant group materially and ideologically, they have an incentive to maintain their position of power by legitimizing and accepting racial differences. Since social science research is dominated by White, cisgender males who regularly do not acknowledge work by scholars of color, it makes sense that the logic of analysis and methods used to examine communities of color reflect the lens of their White, heteronormative, cisgender male hegemony. Thus, Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva define white logic as the context in which White supremacy has defined the techniques and process of reasoning about social facts (2008). White logic assumes that White views are neutral and objective, rendering communities of color perspective as subjective. This act is harmful to communities of color because it allows Whites to be the center of building "legitimate" knowledge of history and culture and grants them the authority to label communities of color as the "Other" without such contexts. Consequently, this justifies White superiority and urges them to educate or to "civilize" communities of color. Aiding White logic is White methods, which are practices and tools used to manufacture empirical data and analysis to support the racial stratification and racial knowledge in society (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Employed together, White logic and White methods standardize the knowledge and experiences of white people to produce racial knowledge that dehumanizes communities of color by constricting communities of color as uncivil, prone for exclusion, and primitive under White domination. Nishida offers institutional change as a solution to stop the continuation of White ideological methodology (2001). This means that knowledge-making through research must undergo a shift in theoretical perspective to place communities of color as active participants. Ethnic studies provides a voice to communities of color by conducting community-based research through the lens of CRT.

Asian migration to the United States has been drenched in stories of horrific nightmares revolving around unimaginable pain and gamble to anticipative, hopeful new beginnings promising a better economic and social stability that was

otherwise unattainable in their home countries. Regardless of their reason for migrating, Asian migrants have become the largest group of immigrants in the United States and have steadily and successfully assimilated to American culture and lifestyles all the while maintaining their own culture and proudful origins. Existing research and literature on migration from Southeast Asia discusses the fraughtful journeys to the United States, accompanied by struggle, sacrifice, and the social and historical contexts that surround each.

In the article, *Introduction: Refugee in the Hyperghetto* by Tang, follows the life of Ra Pronh after her life in Cambodia. Although her immigration process began in Cambodia, it wasn't just a straight destination to the United States. There were many stops along the way and even after the immigration process, there were still ways that the immigration process affects Ra Pronh and her family. Despite the many stops and finally getting to the United States, the family living situation becomes unstable and there are many movements in her living environment. Hyperghettos could be compared to the times that Ra Pronh was in Cambodia during war time, where she had to develop survival skills. When considering the immigration process, it doesn't end with just the journey of traveling, but it also includes the process and the immigrants' lives after migrating.

When thinking about refugees in hyperghetto, they are living in places that bring trauma and continue to potentially haunt their lives. Looking at the article, *White Entitlement and Other People's Crimes* by Cacho, the author discusses White entitlement and how that affects the people's lives. According to the perpetrators, they believed that they were doing a service to the state by impersonating and acting how they believed the states would have handled the situation. Despite the victims being citizens and have lived in America for most of their lives, they were racially profiled as the other. There is an argument of, "We conventionally separate identity into realms of status and conduct, and have presumed that status (for example, one's race) as opposed to conduct (in the form of how one behaves) has constituted the primary barrier to citizenship. But what we remember as status-based exclusions in fact were premised on assumptions about appropriate conduct. Thus, history shows the impossibility of separating the realm of status from

that of conduct" (Cacho, 2012). Therefore, citizenship and a sense of belonging is often linked to race and the stereotypes of who is considered a part of the state. Looking closely at the relationship between laws, policies, and race, one can see the connection to citizenship and who is allowed into the state.

The author, Vargas, discussed and expresses his feelings of living his life as an undocumented immigrant in the article, *My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant*. Although his mother had sent him as a child to immigrate to the States, Vargas' papers were forged and fake. When examining his hesitancy to tell people for fear of being judged, ridiculed, and persecuted, Vargas is forced to hide his status and live in constant fear. With this status, Vargas was unable to get the help nor the resources because of laws and regulation that prevented him from getting financial aid, a job, and even living in fear. Although the migration process ended, his life was still affected, and he dealt with trauma that continues to follow him due to his undocumented status. Vargas had trouble trusting people and felt he was unable to communicate with others about his status. Like most immigrants living in the United States, Vargas didn't feel comfortable telling people and oftentimes, there were negative stereotypes despite who they were as a person. Laws and policies, like Prop 187, were discussed and came up due to racially, negative stereotypes, and perception of people. They would have had real impacts on immigrants' life, making them relive trauma and constant fear of not having papers.

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are faced with racism and acts of violence. History repeats itself during times of crises, pitting blame onto one another, similar to times like the Yellow Peril and discriminatory immigration laws and regulations. Despite claiming to be "colorblind", society needs to reflect on how institutional racism has come back to remind us of the changes we need. These essential workers fighting for us, not just the healthcare workers, but also sanitation workers, fast food employees, and many others society deemed "non-essential" before. People need to see beyond the black and white narratives that society has painted for so long.



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## FACULTY NEWS

### Dr. Laura Uba Receives Emeritus Status After Retiring on June 2020



Dr. Uba, upon her retirement in June 2020, will be Emeritus Faculty in the Asian American Studies Department. Dr. Uba started teaching at CSUN in 1986 and helped establish the Asian American Studies Department at CSUN. She has been teaching in the AAS department for the past 30 years since 1990 when the department was established.

Laura Uba received her PhD in Psychology from the University of Colorado (then a top-10 psychology department) in 1979. She had a National Institutes of Mental Health postdoctoral fellowship at the Vanderbilt (University) Institute for Public Policy Studies and a field placement (at the office of the

head of) with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. She produced a policy analysis on the options for delivering mental health services to Asian Americans for Los Angeles County. Subsequently, she had an Institute of American Cultures postdoctoral fellowship at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center where she conducted a study of the types of elder care aging Asian Americans wanted and needed.

She started working at CSUN in 1986, teaching the only class on Asian Americans available then, an anthropology class. She also taught introductory psychology classes at CSUN when she joined a committee establishing the Asian American Studies (AAS) Department. In that role, she contributed to the discussions of whether we should establish a program or a department, who might be a good chair for AAS, and which classes should be offered. She also did the research showing that there were sufficient bodies of scholarly work to justify proposed classes and created syllabi for several AAS classes.

Dr. Uba has written three books. Her first, "Asian American [personality, identity, and mental health]," came in second for the social science book of the year. (Suggesting our department was among the most influential then, the book that won was by Tim Fong, a full-time professor in our department.) Dr. Uba's second book was an introductory psychology textbook. Her third book, "A postmodern Asian

American Psychology,” was a scholarly work from a university press. Based largely on this work, ranging from empirical studies to policy analyses and theoretical analyses, Dr. Uba was the only part-time lecturer at CSUN to win the 2006 Preeminent Scholarly Publications Award.

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## **AAS New Faculty: Dr. Simmy Makhijani**

We extend our warm welcome to **Dr. Simmy Makhijani** to CSUN's Asian American Studies Department starting the 2021-2022 academic year!



Dr. Makhijani earned her B.A. from Pennsylvania, State University majoring in Journalism and minoring in Quantitative Analysis and Computer Applications in the Liberal Arts. She has an M.A. and Ph.D. from the California Institute of Integral Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Her 2015 dissertation is titled, “Which Side Are You On?: Black and South Asian American Youth, Solidarity Activism, and New Generation Politics.” Currently, she is teaching at SFSU's Asian American Studies and Race and Resistance Studies Departments. Dr. Makhijani believes in the power of activism, sharing her experience, knowledge and energy with different community, activist, and education projects. She is the co-founder and Co-Executive Director of United Roots, a green youth arts and media community center in Oakland. She has also been involved in Asians 4 Black Lives, Third World Resistance Coalition, Bay Area Solidarity Summer, Alliance of South Asians Taking Action, Narika, Asian Women's Shelter, South Asian Women's Creative Collective – SF, and Art in Action. We are excited to have Dr. Makhijani in our department!

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## **Dr. Edith Chen Receives NIH Grant for her Research on Asian American Health and Diabetes: Is Assimilation Costing Asian Americans their Health?**

Over 1 out of 5 Asian Americans have diabetes, almost twice the rate of their White counterparts. Furthermore, Asian immigrants have higher diabetes rates than their peers in their countries of origin. Dr. Edith Chen, Professor of Asian American Studies, has been leading a study to uncover the risk factors associated with diabetes in Asian American populations. Preliminary findings of the study suggest that the second generation, those that were raised in the U.S., could be at higher risk for diabetes and chronic disease than their immigrant parents, despite being more integrated in American society. Chen wonders, “Is there something about becoming American that puts Asian Americans at higher risk for diabetes and obesity?”

Chen along with faculty from Health Sciences, Drs. Larry Chu and Patty Kwan, are the recipients of the National Institutes of Health award. Their study, “Is Assimilation Costing Asian Americans Their Health: Type 2 diabetes in California’s Asian American populations,” examines how economic and cultural integration into American society could put Asian Americans at risk for diabetes. The research team analyzed ten-year data from the California Health Interview Survey from years 2007-2016. Chen and her research team sought to identify the unique risk factors for diabetes for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese and South Asian Americans. While all groups had higher rates than Whites, Filipino, Korean, and South Asian Americans had alarmingly high rates. They also looked at how overweight and obesity—a risk factor for diabetes—varied by generation. Asian Americans are generally perceived to be thin and healthy. However, they have higher rates of diabetes at lower BMI (Body Mass Index) than Whites. Second generation Asian Americans who were born in the U.S. to immigrant parents, are more likely to be overweight and obese than their immigrant counterparts. Overweight and obesity

could set this younger generation up for other health problems such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer in their later years. Their research is especially important given the pandemic, as diabetes is one of the risk factors for complications arising from Covid-19.

This research study is among the first federally-funded research projects at CSUN to focus on health disparities in the Asian American community. Additionally, it has provided students with hands-on research opportunities to gain experience working on Asian Americans health-related issues. This project is an important addition to the university's growing efforts to address health disparities in a wide range of at-risk, underrepresented, and immigrant communities. Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the United States, with almost a third of the nation's Asian Americans living in California and the greatest number in Los Angeles and its surrounding areas. Yet there are few research opportunities for CSUN students to learn more about this growing and diverse population. Chen's research study has helped students gain foundational knowledge on research methodologies related to Asian Americans and health. While Asian Americans are well represented in the health professions, few have training on health issues that directly impact their communities. This NIH-funded research project helps to address that gap, while also understanding diabetes in the fastest growing racial/ethnic population in California.

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### **Asian American Studies Involvement in CDSC 2019-2020: Congratulations to Dr. Clem Lai, one of the co-directors of Civil Discourse and Social Change (CDSC) and lead PI for the California Civil Liberties Public Education fund grant**

Dr. Lai and his co-director, Dr. Jinah Kim were quite aggressive in applying for external funding, which really paid off! They were successfully awarded a CSU Entertainment Alliance Award for \$2,900 for

2020-2021 and a California Civil Liberties Public Education Fund award for \$100,000 for 2020-2022. Civil Discourse and Social Change is a CSUN social justice initiative founded in the aftermath of CSUN student mobilizations for undocumented students and against fee hikes and the increasing neoliberalization of the public university during the Great Recession. Since 2010 CDSC has hosted a course taught by Reverend James Lawson on non-violence and the Civil Rights Movement and organized social justice events across the CSUN campus, including in the last three years a social justice student research conference. To further these social justice initiatives, CDSC co-directors, Professors Jinah Kim (Communication Studies) and Clem Lai (Asian American Studies) worked with grant writer, Manija Said, and three student interns, Hannah Adams, Jason Quan, and Vivian Le to submit a grant proposal, entitled "World Remaking: Intergenerational Activism and Transformative Justice," to the California State Library for its Civil Liberties Public Education Fund grant in Spring 2020.

The California Civil Liberties Public Education Fund ([www.library.ca.gov/grants/civil-liberties/](http://www.library.ca.gov/grants/civil-liberties/)) was funded to increase public awareness about the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II, but more broadly, the grant focuses now on projects that examine the causes of civil rights violations and civil liberties injustices based on national origin, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. CDSC's "World Remaking" project examines 1) the contemporary intergenerational activism and art of Japanese Americans that uses the incarceration experience to mobilize across racial and ethnic lines against family separation and immigrant detention at the US-Mexico border and in solidarity with Black Lives Matter; and 2) contemporary social justice and civil liberties issues in the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities e.g. around detention and deportation, gentrification, vulnerability to the pandemic, and Black Lives. Given the COVID pandemic, our program will be organized online via Zoom, and our planned events will focus on storytelling, performance, and public dialogue between different generations of Asian American and Pacific Islander and other racialized communities that focus on political mobilization, collective healing, and transformative justice.



## Dr. Gina Masequesmay Collaborates with CSUN ARCS and NASA



Using her extensive experience in sociology, Dr. Gina Masequesmay is currently a faculty collaborator and co-investigator for CSUN ARCS (Autonomy Research Centers for STEAHM). In collaboration with NASA, Dr. Masequesmay and her fellow researchers are working on a project entitled "Towards a Moral Compass Model: Ethics and Automation," investigating the "ethical and societal impacts" of technology in order to "provide a moral compass model for these increasingly prevalent technologies." Read more about Dr. Masequesmay's project and the other ARCS projects at <https://arcs.center/research/>.

*(Quotes taken from project description on the ARCS Center Research website)*

campus! ([www.ucdavis.edu/news/champions-social-justice-recognized-uc-davis-equity-summit/](http://www.ucdavis.edu/news/champions-social-justice-recognized-uc-davis-equity-summit/))

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### *Hot Off the Press: Faculty Publications*

**Professor Allan Aquino's** "Racism and the Pandemic" was published in July of 2020 in *Voices from the Valley* edited by Erik Christensen (GHHC Press, July 2020).

**Professor Kelly N. Fong's** chapter, "Toward Engaged and Critical Archaeologies of the Chinese Diaspora" was published in *Chinese Diaspora: Archaeology in North America* (edited by Chelsea Rose and J. Ryan Kennedy) by University Press of Florida, 2020)

Congratulations to co-editors, **Professors Eunai Shrake, Teresa Williams León & Edith Chen**, for the publication of their anthology, *Asian Pacific American Experiences: Past, Present and Future* (second edition with Kendall-Hunt Publishers, September 2020). Included in this new edition are selections from Paul Spickard, Haunani-Kay Trask, Mike Murase, Khanum Shaikh, Philip A. Hutchison, Jean-Paul R. de Guzman, Allan Aquino, Simmy Makhijani, Tim Fong, Allan Aquino, Kent Wong, Kim Geron, Eric Wat, Lily Anne Welty Tamai, Ed Curammeng, Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, Song Mi Kim, Nazli Kibria, Anthony C. Ocampo, Kevin L. Nadal, Amy Uyematsu, and more.

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### **Our Award Winning Faculty**

Congratulations to **Dr. Tracy Lachica Buenavista**, Professor of AAS, Core faculty of the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership, and an invaluable faculty mentor at the DREAM Center, for receiving the 2020 CSUN University Student Union, Aida C. Salazar Award and the 2020 UC Davis Equity Summit, Community Engagement and Scholars Activism Award for all of her hard work and dedication to social justice issues on and off

## STUDENT NEWS AND PERSPECTIVES



### Querencia Effect 2018: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

By Liane Bundalian

The word “Querencia” is a metaphysical concept derived from Spanish, the concept of this word is “ a place where one feels safe, from which one's strength of character is drawn; where one feels at home.” To give you an example of this word, we will use bullfighting. When a bull is in the ring there might be a specific spot where they will find their querencia. A place where they feel safe.

The Querencia Effect was first introduced during the Spring semester in 2017 by an Asian American Studies 325B course. The Asian American Pathways Studies Project was then introduced to the concept and began hosting them at the Glenn Omatsu House located on Halsted St. on the campus of California State Northridge. The first one I attended was during the year 2018, I remember the bass of the stereos blasting and the laughter leaking through the door. The Querencia Effect was the first event that I have attended during my first years as a college undergraduate student. I walked in through the doors and was immediately intrigued by the purple colored lights that lit up the room. The MC welcomed the crowd with a charismatic voice, “Hello everyone! My name is Sheilina and I am going to be your host tonight!” and the night began.

There was another room that was full of savory and sweet foods; there was even a complimentary photo booth. The atmosphere was welcoming, and I felt like I belonged even though I have never met these people in my life. As the performances went on the energy kept growing, by the end of the night the final group,

SAF closed the night with a bang! The event was over, and I stayed a few minutes after to help out clean. I began to talk with the students who were part of AASPP and started to become close friends with them after. After that event, I immediately knew I had to transfer to CSUN and join this program. The Querencia Effect event will always hold a special place in my heart, as an event that not only introduced me to the Asian American Studies department but gave me a sense of belonging.

### Querencia Effect 2019: Sp00ky Mic

by Liane Bundalian

A cold fall evening fell upon the students of California State University, Northridge. This was my first semester as a student attending the Querencia Effect. I walked in an hour earlier to be welcomed by the student interns of the Asian American Studies Pathways Project, and most importantly, my lifelong friends. The Querencia Effect is an event that is hosted by the student interns of the Asian American Studies Pathways Project at the Glenn Omatsu House. This was not just every other Querencia that was filled with music and food, it was the first Querencia Effect where







they implemented the community to dress up in costumes and compete in a costume contest. This was the first time the student interns have ever done an open mic like this one. Just like the first one I attended I automatically felt like I belonged and began chatting with people I have never met but felt like we were picking up a conversation we started months ago. What was also different about the event is that there were art displays all over the room where the food was. This attracted not only more people to attend but also added more energy into the room. The event quickly filled up with many participants in their costumes and laughs began to fill the atmosphere. The student interns announced that the event was starting and every filed in a single line to enter the shared space. While the musical performances were taking place in the space, the other room was constantly filled with people grabbing food and checking out the resources that were

tabling at the event. At the end of the night, the MC who goes by the name Parit, announced the winner of the costume contest. The winner received a goodie bag that contained school supplies and a Passion Planner! There were various musical performances, some old but majority new. There were even a few poetry acts that were positively received well by the crowd. Comparing the first Querencia Effect that I attended I definitely saw an improvement in the AASPP interns hospitality. More people came this year, and the atmosphere was so welcoming and enjoyable that everyone stayed the entire night. For this year's event, the closing act was a Chicax DJ who goes by the name DJ MedinaChicax. The music filled the air and everyone in the shared space got up and began to dance. During this moment, I could not help but feel like I was safe in a space where I can be myself. The night ended and everyone was exhausted, but happy about the outcome of the night. I stayed an hour later after it ended to help the interns clean up and ended the night with a boba celebration.

**Querencia Effect (Spring 2020): A Lively Night at the Omatsu House**

*By Napat Maneerit*

On February 27, 2020, the interns at Pathways organized our annual Querencia Effect at the Omatsu House. Querencia Effect is an open mic event where students of all backgrounds can come together and celebrate their individuality. The Omatsu house was decorated with yellow streamers stretched across the ceiling, arts from students were featured all around the walls, and colorful balloons made up the floor. It was our third annual open mic and our most successful yet with nearly a hundred attendees. Students had the opportunity to enjoy free delicious food, dessert, and drinks along with the chance to listen to performances from local artists. This event would not have been possible without the volunteers and performers that offered their time.



## Zoom University Graduation

By Napat Maneerit



Across the country, as universities began to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, CSUN moved quickly to transition from in-person classes to virtual instruction. At the time, students, faculty, and staff were all unsure of whether a June graduation would be possible. Unfortunately, for graduates across the country, it was not. President Dianne Harrison later announced that the event would be postponed until COVID-19 subside and that a virtual celebration would be happening in its place. The celebration consisted of statements from Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Watkins, Associated Students President Diana Vicente, President Dianne Harrison, and many more. The event ended on a high note with Xotchitl Hernandez singing CSUN's alma mater Hail to the Matadors and President Dianne Harrison giving a toast to all of CSUN graduates.

## AAS 30th Year Anniversary & Student Awards Through the Screen - Spring 2020

By Jessica Steiner

When the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were placed in mid-March, it was like the semester came to a screeching halt, though gears (and computer motherboards) still turned. Suddenly, we were in a seemingly never-ending spring break. I'm not exactly sure what the last things I said to my professors and friends were, and if I could go back to those moments, I'm sure there would be a lot more handshakes and hugging. The online transition reminded us that events aren't just to sit and clap, they're a space for connection and introductions and the sharing of stories, ideas, and polite smiles that turn to real ones as we wonder why our paths haven't crossed before. There was so much planned for 2020 that we didn't know we

would end up mourning until the weeks started to fly by. Most notably, a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Asian American Studies Department.

Like the rest of us, most faculty were occupied with years of traditional teaching suddenly being imported onto Canvas and other online modalities. But some in the AAS Department took to the inboxes, and Dr. Edith Chen was determined to establish a committee driven to not let this momentous anniversary pass quietly. Professor Margeaux Gamboa-Wong and Dr. Teresa Williams-Leon joined the planning committee, and Jason Quan, Ashlee Monton, and I were invited to help where we could.

This celebration, put together in record time, was surely one for the books. Students were to receive awards from the AAS Department and connect with their faculty one last time through the screen. This event was extra special, as it was also to showcase Dr. Laura Uba as she receives Emeritus status after teaching in the department since its conception in 1990. I assisted Professor Gamboa-Wong in 'spotlighting' guests of honor such as Dr. Bob Suzuki, Dr. Kenyon Chan, Dr. Gordon Nakagawa, Dr. George Uba, Prosy Abarquez-Delacruz, Enrique De La Cruz, Tony Osumi, Shirley Hune, Shiva Parsa, and Provost Mary Beth Walker. Attendees were pioneers and founders in AAS, special guests, faculty, students, and their family, and friends. Faculty and guests donned their cap and gown attire to make the event all the more real.

After opening remarks presented by Dr. Chen and acknowledgement of attendees, we viewed a special program featuring an interview with Dr. Uba. Dr. Uba described the challenges of co-founding CSUN's AAS Department, her endeavors in trailblazing the field of Asian American mental health, and how she'll miss chatting with students during her infamous 7AM office hours. Graduating students majoring in AAS were featured, announced by Dr. Uba, and graduating students minoring in AAS were announced by Professor Gamboa-Wong. Next, Dr. Tomo Hattori presented students receiving awards from the AAS Department. While I wish the circumstances were different, I still felt so humbled and grateful to be 'spotlit' when my name was called to receive the Kenyon Chan Outstanding Leadership Award. I still feel that way, as I now finish my senior year at CSUN and reflect on how being in AAS 115 my freshman

year changed my college career, and probably life, forever (for the best, I swear).

Faculty achievements were listed by Dr. Phil Hutchison in gratitude for all the labors of love put into the department over the years. Then, we viewed a touching and heartfelt video of faculty expressing their deepest congratulations for the graduating class. Jason Quan truly excelled in the editing process. I wasn't even graduating, and I was moved to tears! Much-earned recognition was given to Jason, who said a few words about how proud he was to have been involved in this department and this celebration. Dr. Chen next introduced Ashlee Monton, thanking her for her help in event planning and describing the important research she has been doing as she prepares for a graduate program. I was then introduced, and Dr. Chen listed my involvement on campus. She mentioned that I was an intern in the Asian American Studies Pathways Project and went on to talk about my fellowship in the first cohort of CSUN's Autonomous Research Center for STEAHM as funded by NASA. I expressed my thanks and talked briefly about how bittersweet it was to see the people I have gotten so close with over a few semesters leave CSUN. On the one hand, I want to hold them back, so I never have to say goodbye, but on the other hand, I know that they have prepared themselves to be let go and soar. Either way, I will cherish those memories with an open heart, and one day, I hope to cherish those friends with open arms again. Before closing remarks, Jason played a compilation of student videos showing appreciation for the profound impact Dr. Laura Uba and the AAS Department has had on their lives.

It was definitely a unique experience having to enable an option for attendees to unmute themselves for applause, but it was nothing short of a celebration. I am immensely grateful to have crossed paths with all of the outstanding students, faculty, leaders, and innovators in the AAS Department. While these days will be looked back upon with a multitude of emotions, I know that those who spend some of those days around the department will look back with proud admiration until, as Professor Allan Aquino says, we meet again.

## **If Students Can't Find the House, How Can We Support Them in Finding Themselves?**

*By Holly Lin*

Since the inception of the Asian American Studies Pathways Project at the Glenn Omatsu House, one of the biggest assessments made was that students could not locate the house. This was a significant issue hindering AASPP's success in executing our programming. Since the House is used frequently for office hours and for community building events, it is crucial that students understand the many different ways to arrive at the house. Thus, our solution was to film interactive videos where we would show three different routes. These routes were chosen after understanding where most of our students came from and what landmarks defined CSUN. It was then decided we would film routes from the CSUN dorms, the Oviatt Library and from Dunkin Donuts on Reseda. This project led by Tammy and Holly began when they arrived at the house on a Saturday. We gathered books from Asian American Studies classes and our flyers of events that have been put on in the past. We then walked to each different location, where we talked about different services AASPP provided. For the Oviatt Library, we offered our free printing and all the different kinds of technology we have. For the CSUN dorms, we offered the different types of school supplies we have to provide for students and the many events we put together for students to enjoy outside of their dorm life. Lastly, for Dunkin Donuts, we offered the Omatsu House space for students to study without disturbance. This whole process took around 6 hours to film and even more dedicated hours of editing. However, at the end, we produced 4 short videos that are posted on the AASPP Instagram (@aaspathways) where it is enjoyed yearly by AAPI students at CSUN. Though AASPP were faced with the challenge of physical invisibility of the Glenn Omatsu House, we came up with creative ways to make our brand well known and popular so all AAPI students are able to feel a sense of community at CSUN.

## **Keeping the Faculty Line: The Search For AAS Faculty Candidates**

*By Jessica Steiner*

In spring, the Asian American Studies Pathways Project interns were invited to be involved in a faculty candidate search for the Asian American Studies



department. This was also an opportunity for students to meet with Asian American Studies scholars from all walks of life. The prospective candidates were featured as guest speakers for select AAS classes, providing lectures on topics from their fields, such as social justice movements in solidarity with South Asian workers and physical movements to acknowledge the native lands we reside on.

After each class presentation, we reconvened at the Glenn Omatsu House for deeper discussions between existing AAS faculty, the interns, interested students, and the faculty candidate. We were able to talk about the tight-knit, compassionate, and motivated culture within the AAS Department. We asked the faculty candidates questions about what brought them to this opportunity at CSUN, what their background research has been about, and how they can help enrich our communities. It was truly an honor to be granted the opportunity to contribute to our department in this way, showing us that our inputs really are valued as students and AASPP interns.

When the pandemic situation arose, the CSU system had cancelled ongoing faculty searches. The halt had frustrated us all, since the faculty candidate process had gotten us inspired for the future of the AAS Department. With faculty and student advocacy, we were able to keep the faculty line. The following is a letter crafted to urge the continuation of the new faculty process for the AAS Department:

*On behalf of the Asian American Studies Pathways Project,*

*There is so much to be said about the ways COVID-19 has disrupted our social, political, and educational climates, that it's hard to know where to start. To share the sense of the urgency we feel for the continuation of our faculty candidate search in the Asian American Studies (AAS) department despite these disruptions, we would like to bring attention to the following:*

*Since 2015, the enrollment and retention of CSUN's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student populations have been steadily declining. And surely, enrollment numbers will take another hit now that we face a global pandemic. As a federally-designated Asian American and Native*

*American/Pacific Islander serving institution, the renewal of CSUN's AANAPISI status and funding relies on an upward shift in student enrollment than what's currently trending.*

*Existing literature shows the impact of minority representation in higher education and the effectiveness of ethnic studies courses for facilitating student success. Further, our mission statement, as the Asian American Studies Pathways Project (AASPP), is to increase student success and foster a strong ethnic studies culture at CSUN. Over the years, AASPP has broadened our scope to encourage engagement of all AAPI students as the only AAPI-serving resource on campus.*

*In a mass survey to assess the needs of CSUN's AAPI student population this semester so far, AASPP found that 72% of students surveyed felt that their AAS courses made them feel more connected to their various ethnic identities. One student wrote, "These are the professors who truly care about their students." Numerous students shared similar experiences about the AAS Department regardless of major. This is the impact of AAS, and we were overjoyed when we were originally told that a faculty candidate search was underway to continue this legacy on the department's 30th anniversary. Now, it feels as if the search has been paused when we need it most.*

*With only 7 full-time faculty members, it's disheartening that there are currently more AASPP student interns than tenured professors in the AAS department. There are also no Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander faculty in the department, and this was an opportunity to possibly fill the gap. How can we inspire and retain these especially vulnerable student populations in an AANAPISI if we have no professors who can lead them with shared experiences? How can we expect continued excellence from our current faculty when they are already stretched so thin?*

*As AASPP interns and proud AAPI students, we see how our faculty have stepped up to become beacons of strength amidst the xenophobia brought on by the "Chinese Virus." To vulnerably reach out to*



students in a time of such deep fear and uncertainty while converting years of curricula into alternate modalities of teaching is no easy feat. As our federal administration normalizes covert racism on a national scale through such insensitive nicknames, it has enabled increases of anti-Asian violence, and the need for cultural awareness should be plain to see. The implications of continuing the Asian American Studies faculty hire will strongly affirm the values of this university at a time when the vitality of its affiliates are at stake.

We understand that the sudden shift into remote work has brought on unprecedented challenges alongside the responsibilities that we also take on as family members and caregivers. But now, more than ever, is a time when CSUN can lead with a courageous example of solidarity with AAPI faculty, students, and the greater San Fernando Valley that will uplift our communities for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
The Asian American Studies Pathways Project

## The Asian American Studies Pathways Project Goes Online

By Bellamy Perez

Creating a website for the Asian American Studies Pathways Project has long been a goal of the interns. I joined the team in the Spring 2020 semester and was struggling to figure out what project I wanted to take on. Ideas and suggestions were passed around, but when I heard about the desire for our very own website, I knew it was the job for me. I started planning and designing the website in March, but my work was temporarily halted due to CSUN going virtual and having to move 1,000 miles back home. With the support of the other interns, I published the website near the end of the semester. Aaspathways.com now serves as a home to find out about all our events, find on-campus resources, and learn more about AASPP. With the uncertainty surrounding graduation plans and celebrations, we decided to highlight Asian American and Pacific Islander graduating seniors. AA and PI CSUN graduates were invited to submit their name, picture, and a message to be placed on our website to recognize this momentous occasion and all their hard work. Going into the Fall 2020 semester, we have plans to expand our website to ensure that every Asian American and Pacific Islander student has everything

they need to succeed during a virtual semester. You can find our website here: <https://www.aaspathways.com/>

## The Fight for Ethnic Studies

By Napat Maneerit

For the past three years at CSUN, students have been in a battle to save their ethnic studies department on campus. I still remember my freshmen year marching to protest against Executive Order 1100 to keep ethnic studies classes as a general education requirement. It was one of my first introductions to what ethnic studies is all about, and everyone was so passionate around me. They explained to me why it mattered to them, how it made them better, and how I too can also be a part of change. During my sophomore year, the fight continued. People found out that the Executive Order was revised and was about to be passed. Everyone met up and protested once again. The voices of the students were loud and clear; they wanted to save ethnic studies. My junior year, students were still passionate. They organized, got together, and mobilized. That year was the first year I heard about the Assembly Bill 1460; the





bill that would require all CSU campuses to make ethnic studies a requirement to graduate. On August 3rd, 2020, it was signed into law by Governor Newsom. The road to making ethnic studies a requirement has been a long one, much longer than the years I've been at CSUN. It's important to recognize the work of students, faculty, and staff that made this happen. Without all of them, we would not be where we are now.



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