

*Fall 2022*

# *THE ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST*

*The Official Newsletter of the Asian  
American Psychological Association*



*Art by Yasuo Kuniyoshi*

FALL 2022

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# Vice President's Message

by Christine Catipon, Psy.D.



Hello dear AAPA family! I write this newsletter column in the warm fuzzy glow of the inspirational wisdom shared in sessions and the energetic sound bath of Funkadesi's electric performance at this year's incredible AAPA Convention. I hope the weekend was as wonderful a time for connection and learning and healing for everyone who attended as it was for me.

October is both Filipino American History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month, so celebrating both these aspects of my identity this month-combined with the inspiration I experienced during this year's convention-got me reflecting on my own history in AAPA. I never saw myself as AAPA VP, and please believe that I still experience imposter syndrome weekly. However, I feel compelled to share my humble leadership origins with you all to encourage those of you who are considering leadership to lean in and give it a shot. Saying yes to AAPA leadership has contributed to some of the most challenging experiences in my career, but it has given me so much more in terms of opportunities for exponential growth, both personally and professionally. I am so grateful that I said yes, despite not knowing what was in store, because what was in store has been better than I ever could have imagined.

I first heard about AAPA during my third year of licensure after the Division on Filipinx Americans (DoFA) had formed and was seeking members for its inaugural EC board under co-chairs Dr. Kevin Nadal and Dr. E.J. David. Up to that point, I had felt very lonely in my career, with no Filipinos or close colleagues or mentors or any kind of support during graduate school. I joined just so I could meet two other Filipinx psychologists. That led me to being DoFA's first Mentorship Chair and eventually, Co-Chair for two terms, serving alongside co-chairs and members who have truly become family. I have also received much support with my LGBTQ+ identity from AAPA-so much so that when I came out during the pandemic, my AAPA family threw me the biggest virtual coming out party, complete with as many rainbows and unicorns as could fit on a Zoom computer screen. Every person on that screen was a current or former AAPA leader, but first and foremost, they were my supportive chosen family. Because of all these folx in my life, I can truly say I have never felt lonely since joining AAPA.

I wasn't sure what was next for me after my involvement in DoFA, but direction and encouragement came in the form of being "voluntold" to run for Vice-President by several AAPA leaders whom I admired greatly. I was unsure about whether I could do it, but I honestly figured that if these amazing people believed that I could do it, then they had the majority opinion compared to my minority opinion of one. And once I found out that Dr. Anjuli Amin was running for president, then my answer to running for VP was an emphatic yes, because I admire Anjuli so much. Since the beginning of our administration, Anjuli and I have collaborated, brainstormed, and shaken things up in the name of making AAPA's needs a priority. We also will be holding an open town hall in the coming months to hear from you all about ways that AAPA can continue to be an organization that supports their members' needs.

So many wonderful opportunities have occurred as a result of my increased visibility in this year alone. I was interviewed by the *Los Angeles Times* for several articles about Filipino American mental health, and that exposure led to a *Brief but Spectacular* segment on PBS NewsHour and numerous opportunities to speak about mental health among AAPI populations. My proudest accomplishment thus far was being a first-time attendee and panelist at the 2022 San Diego Comic-Con, where I spoke about integrating my extensive knowledge of nerd culture into my work with college students. Most recently, I have been in consultation talks with a non-profit focused on supporting Filipinx American creatives - I'm crossing fingers that our plans unfold and allow us to connect with and be in conversation with Filipinx creatives like H.E.R. and Saweetie about mental health! I don't believe any of this would have happened had I not said yes to leadership because I was also saying yes to growth, yes to change, yes to friendship, yes to creativity, yes to connection with my communities, and yes to the opportunity to serve and pay it forward.

My hope for all of you in AAPA is that you will come to see AAPA as an organization where you can find professional and personal connections who uplift and support you, sometimes even to professional heights like Vice-President of AAPA. And because of the support I have received from AAPA President Dr. Anjuli Amin, the incredible AAPA EC, the amazing AAPA Convention Committee, and the love and friendship from my AAPA and DoFA, DoLGBTQQ, and DoW families,

**I am excited to announce that I will be running for President of AAPA with Dr. Donna Demanarig as Vice-President, to possibly become the first Filipinx P/VP duo in the history of AAPA.** And we are both ready to get into "good trouble" for AAPA! If you are ready for this too, or if you want to share ideas of how we can start evolving as an organization, or if you are ready to say yes to AAPA leadership, please reach out to me at [vp@aapaonline.org](mailto:vp@aapaonline.org). Let's go and make AAPA history together!

***\*As of this published date, Dr. Catipon is our President-Elect, and Dr. Demanarig is our Vice Present-Elect. Congratulations to our new leadership team!***



Lauren Yang



Uyen Sophie Nguyen

## The Asian American Psychologist

### A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

As another year comes to a close, we are feeling reflective about what has been an absolutely rewarding experience together as Co-Editors-in-Chief. We are proud to have distributed three wonderful issues of the newsletter that reflect the diverse voices and incredible work of our AAPA community. The kind and positive responses from you all have been so encouraging, and we are very grateful to have such a talented and dedicated team. We are so fortunate to have the diligence of our prolific Columnists/Reporters: **J. Angel Diana, Nicole R. Benquechea, Dr. Sue H. Kim, and Samantha Jane Benavidez-Walsh**. We also have the absolute pleasure of working with our keenly attentive Copy Editors: **Bryce Nguyen, Dr. Darcy Ing, Linda Zheng, Linh-Nhu Hoang, Lydia Si-Ngaw Lui, and Sheela Kamath**. Finally, we have to credit our amazing Layout Team: **Aida Irving, Benjamin Conner, and Vera Karlotta Heffner** for their endless creativity.

We have learned much in the first year of our term about collaboration with our team and the broader AAPA community, as well as meaningful messages from the various narratives and perspectives shared by our members. We will continue to share important news and events of our organization while maintaining an open space for important dialogues and courageous conversations. We are eager to see even more member engagement and contributions to upcoming issues. Suggestions are always welcomed!

In this issue, we feature a wide range of perspectives on various issues that affect both our society at large and our lives at the individual level. Our reporter **Dr. Sue H. Kim** and guest contributor **Dr. Martha Merchant** shared personal reflections on their continuous efforts to challenge anti-Black racism rooted within family circles and communities.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF (CONT.)

Writing about mindfulness-based interventions, guest contributor **Naisargi (Ness) Mehta** took us on her journey to uncover Western appropriation of Eastern meditative practices, sharing her aspirations to restore its due acknowledgment and promote inclusive liberation in the mental health field. Guest writer **Emma H. Hong** also reflected on her relationship with her beloved grandmother and what it has taught her about connections with others. Moreover, we must recognize another successful AAPA Annual Convention and wanted to share highlights that captured the wisdom and rich dialogue with this year's speakers. Members can read more from favorite quotes that were compiled, and **Dr. Sue H. Kim** shared her own experience partaking in a workshop on using arts to heal intergenerational trauma.

Furthermore, we received many exciting updates from our Asian American Journal of Psychology and Division leaders. The AAJP editorial team extended congratulations to their journal award winners this year. Division on Practice was proud to announce their launch of a long-awaited project after overcoming challenges. Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans shared exciting news about their student representative. Division on Students recently ushered in a new EC team of leaders. Division on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning featured its newest student award winner. Last but not least, Division on South Asian Americans reviewed an eventful recent months and their own reflections in a featured interview by our reporter **J. Angel Dianna**. You can learn more about what our Divisions have to share in the following pages!

It was also shared with us that our members have enjoyed learning more about each other and their work in the community. To further showcase our membership, we are honored to feature two student members, **Marijo Villano** and **Lisa Cruz**, with support from the Membership Team: **Kavita Atwal**, **Amanda Waters**, **Oscar Lau**, and **Carla Cortez**. If you are interested in being featured in an upcoming newsletter issue, you may submit [this Google Form here](#).

We look forward to taking a rest and celebrating the holidays with loved ones, and we hope you all do as well. We will return with our team refreshed and renewed to bring the Spring 2023 issue to you. In the meantime, please feel free to share your comments or suggestions with us at [newsletter@aapaonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aapaonline.org). Warmest wishes to you all for a restorative and safe end of year.



*Artwork by Elisha-Rio P. Apilado, LPC, ATR-P*

## **THE ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST**

The Asian American Psychologist is the official newsletter of the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) and is published three times annually. The newsletter serves to share perspectives of members and inform the AAPA community of relevant news and events.

For submissions and questions, please email [newsletter@aapaonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aapaonline.org).

**Disclaimer:** The opinions expressed in this issue are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the AAPA or the newsletter editorial leadership team.

### **Editorial Team**

#### **Co-Editors-in-Chief:**

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Uyen Sophie Nguyen, MA

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Sue H. Kim, PhD  
Samantha Jane Benavidez-Walsh, MS

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Emma H. Hong  
Martha Merchant, PsyD  
Naisargi (Ness) Mehta

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Aida Irving  
Benjamin Conner  
Vera Karlotta Heffner

# AAPA

1972 - 2022



## ANNUAL REPORT

Remembering our elders,  
Restoring our souls,  
scholarship and collaboration  
for the next 50 years

Want to learn more about the AAPA 2021 Executive Committee Annual Report? [Click here!](#)





# Finance Officers' Report

AAPA's Co-Finance Officers (FOs) Cat Bitney, Amanda Breen, and Michelle Madore are happy to report that AAPA's bank accounts are in good condition. As of October 3, 2022, our total combined balance from E\*trade, Chase, and PayPal is \$549,570.46. Subtracting fiscal agent accounts and AAPA Division balances, AAPA's main account has \$421,022.49 in working capital.

The FOs are pleased to share the following updates with the AAPA membership:

**FO Onboarding Team Meeting** Are you a new division finance officer? Together with the Communications team, the FO team will host a virtual onboarding for new Division FOs and Communication officers on Friday, November 4, 2022 at 2pm-4pm PST (5pm-7pm EST).

**New Process for Reimbursements and Payments** In order to increase fiscal oversight and security, we have set up a new process for reimbursements and payments. Going forward, only AAPA leadership will have access to the new reimbursement/payment link. If you are in a leadership position and have not yet gotten the new link, please contact us at [finance@aapaonline.org](mailto:finance@aapaonline.org).

**2023 Budget** The FO team will be working closely with AAPA President, Anjuli Amin, to put together the 2023 budget. We will send out a call for budget requests by the end of October. We plan to finalize and seek approval from the EC at the EC retreat in January.

**E\*Trade Account Closing** The FO team has now unlinked the E\*trade account from PayPal and other accounts. We will be formally closing the account by the end of 2022.

**2021 Taxes** We have been granted an extension until November. Cat has submitted our 2021 taxes to our accountant and we are awaiting her response to finalize. Our taxes should be submitted by the end of the month.

**Chase Bank Ownership** Cat Bitney now has ownership of the Chase bank account. FO Amanda Breen also has online access to the account.

**Chase Bank Debit Card** Cat currently has a debit card and a credit card. If there are expenses that division representatives or others need paid with the credit card, please contact us at [finance@aapaonline.org](mailto:finance@aapaonline.org).



# Hello AAPA Members!

## *Updates from the Membership Team*



Thank you for being an AAPA member. Currently, AAPA has a total membership count of **1,420** members. Student members continue to comprise the majority of our membership.

As an AAPA member, you can edit your membership details by logging into your account on [aapaonline.org](http://aapaonline.org). If you cannot remember your password, there is an option to reset it. By logging in online, you can join our wonderful AAPA divisions and update your email address for the listservs.

Your AAPA membership lasts for a year from the date you signed up and will automatically be renewed after the year is complete. Please email us if you would like to opt out of having your membership automatically renewed.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding AAPA membership or the new website changes, please do not hesitate to contact our membership team at [membership@aapaonline.org](mailto:membership@aapaonline.org).

Thank you for your continuing support of AAPA! We are thankful for this community.

**Best wishes,**

AAPA Membership Team  
Oscar, Carla, Amanda, and Kavita



# ON THE COVER



*Landscape (1920)*

*Oil on canvas*

*Yasuo Kuniyoshi*

*Smithsonian American Art Museum*

*Museum purchase*

[Source](#)

# "UỐNG NƯỚC NHỚ NGUỒN":

REMEMBERING OUR ELDERS, RESTORING OUR SOULS, SCHOLARSHIP AND COLLABORATION FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2022 AAPA CONVENTION

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"WE NEED TO WORK TO ENSURE THAT MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS ARE CAPABLE OF SERVING ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES. WE NEED TO RECLAIM ANCESTRAL WISDOM THAT HAD BEEN COLONIZED."

- Dr. Gitika Talwar in the Opening Panel

"I CAN BE MY UNAPOLOGETIC SELF AT AAPA...[AND] SOAK IN THE WISDOM FROM ELDERS. THIS IS WHAT SUPPORT DOES - YOU DON'T FEEL IMPOSTER SYNDROME."

- Naisargi (Ness) Mehta in the Opening Panel

"JOHN LEWIS WAS ONE OF MY MENTORS [AND HE WOULD ASK ME], 'WHAT GOOD TROUBLE ARE YOU GETTING INTO?'"

- Dr. Anneliese Singh in the Opening Panel

"GIVING MYSELF PERMISSION TO NOT HAVE TO DO IT ALL FEELS LIKE SUCH A STRUGGLE AND ALSO SOMETIMES THE MOST HELPFUL ANSWER."

- Jan E. Estrellado, PhD with Lou S. Felipe, PhD and Jeannie E. Celestial, PhD, MSW in "Internalized Oppression and Asian American Psychology: Editors of Clinical Interventions for Internalized Oppression Discuss Intersectional Asian American Experiences"

"WE MAY CONTINUE TO EXIST WITHIN THESE SYSTEMS THAT BENEFIT FROM THE ERASURE OF OUR ETHNIC IDENTITY, BUT WE STILL HOLD THE POWER TO CHOOSE NOT TO ERASE OURSELVES."

- Jacqueline (Jacqy) Lopez, MA, MHA with Jane M. Tram, PhD, Cassandra E. Caceres-Licos, PsyD, and Janie M. Kiyokawa in "Desire to Learn Heritage Language"

# "UỐNG NƯỚC NHỚ NGUỒN":

REMEMBERING OUR ELDERS, RESTORING OUR SOULS, SCHOLARSHIP AND COLLABORATION FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS



APA 2022 Division on Filipinx Americans



APA 2022 Division on Practice



APA 2022 Division on Women



# ALL YOU NEED IS A PIECE OF PAPER:

## AN INTIMATE GROUP ART HEALING ENCOUNTER AT AAPA'S 2022 ANNUAL CONVENTION

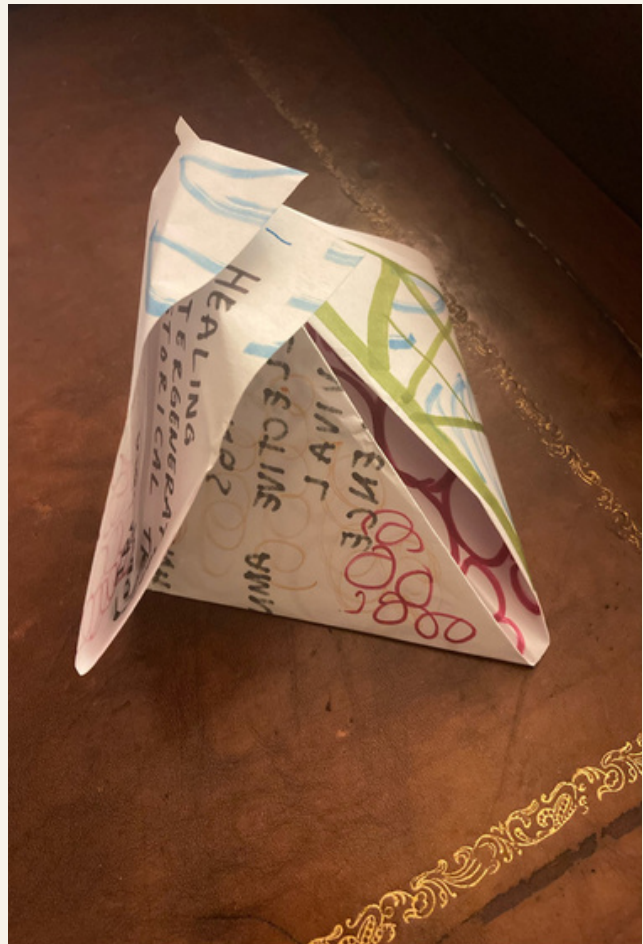
BY SUE H. KIM, PHD



*Sasha Mieko Vasilou*

"For each family member or ancestor who is important to you or who has impacted you ... make a fold in your piece of paper."

"There is no right or wrong, no goal, just fold."



From her tidy hotel room in Greensboro, NC, where she was attending another conference, Sasha Mieko Vasilou calmly and compassionately presented, "Finding A Way Home - Healing Intergenerational Trauma Through the Arts" on Friday, September 30 during the 2022 AAPA Annual Convention.

Over 30 attendees online listened as Sasha, a graduate student at Northwestern University, described how she (a fourth-generation Yonsei, Japanese American) and her mixed-race husband would hang out with a group of friends and "do art." And to her surprise, she later learned that "we were doing group art therapy without knowing it ... we [in Asian communities] already do this work!"

Sasha began the workshop by showing us certain words and asking us to put in the chat what these words meant to us, allowing us to quickly share our ideas with each other without having to speak.

In response to the prompt, **HEALING**, we wrote:

community  
integration  
reconnection  
being able to live authentically  
working through  
acceptance  
confrontation  
touch  
love  
heart mending

Sasha read the responses aloud but even better, wrote them down on a piece of paper that we could see, since it was projected onto its own Zoom box. This allowed all of us to stay in equal-sized Zoom boxes and felt more like hanging out as a group than watching a presentation.

When Sasha wrote **INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA**, we typed:

passed down  
internalized  
unspoken  
disconnected  
unacknowledged wounds  
ruptured  
untethered  
domination  
survival  
denial

Again, Sasha read our responses aloud, writing them down carefully. I could feel the silent and intense engagement of the attendees as we listened to each other and expanded our understanding of these words. Sasha also cited some literature that offered definitions for these terms.

**HISTORICAL TRAUMA. TRANSGENERATIONAL MEMORY. HAUNTINGS.  
COLLECTIVE AMNESIA. SURVIVAL. RESILIENCE.**

Next, Sasha created breakout rooms, one for each word, and we selected which word/room we felt called to enter. It was hard to choose one - I went for **COLLECTIVE AMNESIA**. It turned out to be the biggest group - who knew?

The ten of us there talked about how the word could be applied to the oppressor (a strategic way of maintaining the status quo) or the oppressed (if it's too painful to remember). Someone mentioned interviewing his grandmother, who had immigrated and ended up married to a white man in the Midwest, but his grandmother did not have any stories of being discriminated against. Amnesia? I shared that my Korean father had suffered from what he had seen during the Korean War, and he did not want to tell me his stories. Another attendee remarked how we might have "holes in our memories" if our relatives and parents did not tell us about some of what they experienced. But maybe we feel it in our bodies. One attendee remarked that her immigrant parents endured "so much suffering and trauma that racism [here in the U.S.] is not a big deal" to them.

Finally, we returned to the larger room where Sasha described the group art therapy that we were going to do together - all we needed was a piece of paper. It could be a used envelope, a scrap piece of paper, anything. She demonstrated how we could make a fold of any type, of any size, anywhere in the paper - as we thought of a family member. She showed us with her piece of paper, making a large fold for her mother, then another for her father, and so on.

I thought, wow, this is interesting - an art activity where we don't need "special art skills!" As we silently started folding (most people had their cameras off at that point), I realized how this thoughtful and mindful process of considering each family member (I was picturing them, hearing their voice, remembering a scene from the past), then choosing to make a certain size or type of fold...this process was bringing up lots of sadness in me. I was thinking of people who had been dead for years, decades, who were meaningful to me. We were allowed to make folds for ancestors we didn't know. I wondered, should I make a fold for my dad's father, who disappeared after the Korean War? I never met him. I decided to make a fold in his honor.

Then I started some folds for my mom's side. The white side of my family. I did those folds on the other side of my piece of paper - and when I was done folding, I noticed there was a big untouched gap in the middle - the folds for my two families were not going to touch? Interesting ...

At the end of the workshop, Sasha asked us about the process and about what other art or therapeutic processing methods exist in our communities. Answers poured out of us: music, comedy, garba (dancing), mandalas, drumming, rangoli (I had to Google that - it's an art form originating in the Indian subcontinent - a multi-colored floor decoration), and food. One participant shared that he facilitated a group where he asked someone, "What's the most challenging feeling you experience at work, then reflect that on the drums," and the energetic outpouring was immense. Can you imagine what you might channel into drumming, if you focused on what currently stresses you out the most?

Sasha inspired me to think broadly about what therapeutic art activities can be. Also, doing the art form in a group setting brought extra energy and curiosity to the process. I will carry this experience with me as I move through life; it will help me to tell myself, "There is no right or wrong, no goal, just fold."





# AAPA JOURNAL AWARD WINNERS

## Announcement

by June Kim, PhD  
Editor of AAJP

Please join me in congratulating **Dr. Joel Wong** and **Dr. Keiko McCullough** for winning the Best Paper Prize for their article, "The intersectional prototypicality model: Understanding the discriminatory experiences of Asian American women and men."

For the first time this year, we have instituted the Best Student Paper Prize. The inaugural winners are **Dr. Jayden Thai** and his co-authors **Dr. Stephanie Budge** and **Dr. Laurie McCubbin** for their article, "Qualitative examination of transgender Asian Americans navigating and negotiating cultural identities and values." The article was based on Dr. Thai's dissertation work. Congratulations!

The winners are chosen by Asian American Journal of Psychology's Editorial Board. The article with the most number of votes wins the Best Paper Prize. Similarly, the article with a student first author (at the time of writing) with the most number of votes wins the Best Student Paper Prize.

You may read more about the award winners below.

Joel Wong, Ph.D. is a Professor of Counseling Psychology and Chair of the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology at Indiana University Bloomington. His research interests include Asian American mental health, the psychology of men and masculinities, and positive psychology (the psychology of gratitude and the psychology of encouragement). Dr. Wong is a fellow of the Asian American Psychological Association and of the American Psychological Association (Divisions 17, 45, and 51)



Keiko M. McCullough, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Counseling Psychology at the University of Denver. Her research primarily investigates the intersections of race, gender, and media using both quantitative and qualitative methods. She has served as the student representative of the American Psychological Association's Division 35: Society for the Psychology of Women and the Asian American Psychological Association's Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans (DMAA).

Jayden Thai, Ph.D. (he/him) is a trained counseling psychologist and is currently a licensed staff psychologist at Brown University's Counseling and Psychological Services. His article was based on his doctoral dissertation, which was inspired by his own lived experiences as a queer Vietnamese American trans man born and raised in the South. During the time of his own transition a decade ago, there was little to no research (let alone representation in the media) on trans Asian Americans, and it left him questioning the validity of his own intersectional identities and experiences. It was clear to him the importance of this research, which aimed to center and give voice to the AAPI trans and gender diverse communities, as they are so often ignored, erased, and forgotten in our fields and even in our own AAPI communities.



Stephanie Budge, Ph.D. (she/her) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology and the director of the Advancing Health Equity and Diversity program in the School of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research focuses on improving medical and psychotherapy treatments (and access to care) for Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary (2STNB) clients. She provides LGBTQ-related clinical training nationally and internationally, focusing on practitioners' self-efficacy, knowledge, awareness, and skills. Dr. Budge is currently an Associate Editor of Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity. She is also on the editorial boards of the International Journal of Transgender Health and LGBTQ+ Family: An Interdisciplinary Journal. She founded the Trans CARE Collaborative in 2014: [www.trl.education.wisc.edu](http://www.trl.education.wisc.edu).



Dr. Laurie "Lali" McCubbin, Associate Professor and Assistant Chair in Counseling Psychology at the University of Louisville, is an indigenous/multiracial scholar (Native Hawaiian/Japanese/European American). Her research interests and expertise include resilience and well-being among indigenous peoples and people of color, cultural identity development, and stress and coping processes among multiracial families. She is currently the Executive Director of the Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project ([www.mccubbinresilience.org](http://www.mccubbinresilience.org)).



# ANNOUNCING the AAPA Provider Directory

Dear AAPA Members,

The Division on Practice (DoP) in collaboration with AAPA are excited to debut our new Provider Directory, which will help connect Asians and Asian-Americans to culturally-responsive providers. This Provider Directory is the culmination of several years of work from DoP and AAPA members who are passionate about creating a resource for AAPA members to highlight their clinical work, and to provide access to culturally-informed treatment for the AAPI community.

[YOU CAN FIND THE DIRECTORY HERE](#)

## AAPA PROVIDER DIRECTORY

A new directory created to help connect AAPI folx with culturally-aware providers. Sponsored by the Asian American Psychological Association, Division on Practice.

Go to: [directory.aapaonline.org](https://directory.aapaonline.org)

As we launch this new Provider Directory, we are offering a special deal! Get 75% off your first year of membership with coupon: **PROVIDERS75**

**Don't miss this discounted rate!**



### Open Invite

The AAPA Division on Practice Executive Committee is always looking for volunteers to help support and grow our Division. If you are interested in advocating for issues of interest to practitioners, please consider joining us! You can strengthen your leadership skills while being part of a fun and collaborative homebase within the greater AAPA familia.

Reach out to learn more at:  
[dop.communication@aapaonline.org](mailto:dop.communication@aapaonline.org).

## Sign Up

We are offering a special coupon for early adopters of the directory. Please use coupon code PROVIDERS75 for 75% off your first year. If you are a DoP member, you should have received an email with your DoP discount of 100% off your first year. If you are a DoP member who hasn't received that email, please reach out to us at:

[dop.communication@aapaonline.org](mailto:dop.communication@aapaonline.org).

## Send us Feedback

If you run into any issues, please send us feedback via this Google form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSepJlz76synMbNf7MQuGDuWKfGtJaBgxelYPBc814hawknEuw/viewform>

We are a volunteer team and cannot respond to individual form entries, but we appreciate your feedback and will be working hard at ironing out bugs. If you have a feature request, we will add that to our list for Version 2.0.

## Amplify the Provider Directory to your Networks and Social Media

Please circulate the Provider Directory announcement among your networks. In order to best promote comprehensive access to our community, we would like to encourage as many providers as possible to sign up. Thank you in advance for your assistance in promoting this brand new Provider Directory from DoP and AAPA!

The Provider Directory Team

Division on Practice (DoP) Executive Committee

Asian American Psychological Association



The graphic features the AAPA logo (an orange square with 'AAPA' and a dark square with a sunburst) and the text 'PROVIDER DIRECTORY' with a star. To the right, 'Thank You' is written in a large, elegant font. Below are three orange-bordered boxes listing team members and acknowledgments.

**Previous DoP EC Members**

- Frances Shen
- Ulash Thakore-Dunlap
- Thuy Truong
- Anjuli Amin
- Wonyoung Cho
- Meiyang Kadaba
- Joanna Maung
- Keziah Lyu
- Shiyu Zhang
- Sunny Ho
- Christina Lam

**Current DoP Provider Directory Team**

- Judy Huang
- Susan Han
- Max Tokarsky
- Jennifer Hsia

**Additional Thanks To:**

- Park Circle Technologies
- Patrick Lee
- AAPA EC

AAPA PROVIDER DIRECTORY  
[HTTPS://DIRECTORY.AAPAONLINE.ORG](https://directory.aapaonline.org)

# Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans Announcement

Co-Chairs Jason Reynolds and Jess Benson would like to share some exciting news about one of their DMAA student representatives from 2019-2022.



Yuki Yamazaki (above) graduated this past August 2022 with her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Fordham University. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at NYU's Student Health Center's Counseling and Wellness Services. Yuki has moved into the role of Secretary/Historian within DMAA's Executive Committee for a term of two years. We are excited for Yuki to continue her work with DMAA!

# DIVISION ON STUDENTS New EC Team



Oscar Lau  
olau@alliant.edu

## Chair

We are happy to introduce our new Chair, Oscar Lau! He is currently studying for his doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Alliant International University, and his interests include identity empowerment and mental wellness for LGBTQ+ and Asian American populations.

“Long-term, I seek to use my educational platform to improve mental health treatment for Asian Americans through destigmatization, research, and outreach. Furthermore, I hope my intersectional identities provide representation, reassurance, and hope to different communities I serve.”

## Assistant Chair

Welcome our new Assistant Chair, Cindy Huang! She is a third-year Counseling Psychology PhD student at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York. Her primary clinical and research interests center on the parent-child relationship in ethnic minority families, specifically Asian immigrant families, to improve family well-being and mental health. While her long-term goal is to pursue research in an academic position, she plans on continuing working with community-based organizations to promote mental health in the Asian immigrant population.

“AAPA DoS has been a warm and welcoming space for me to connect with others with similar passions and goals, and I’m excited to help contribute in some way to that warm atmosphere in my role as the Assistant Chair.”



Cindy J. Huang  
cjh2219@tc.columbia.edu

## Secretary-Historian

Next up is our Secretary-Historian, Jenna Nguyen! She is a second-year Clinical Psychology doctoral student at the University of La Verne, and her clinical/research interests revolve around how cultural factors (e.g., acculturation, perceived discrimination, gender roles, racial/ethnic identity) affects the mental health of Vietnamese Americans. She is also interested in the lived experiences of refugees and immigrants, internalized racial oppression, and intergenerational trauma.

**“As the child of Vietnamese refugees, I have first-hand experience witnessing the suppression of trauma, depression, and anxiety- which has fueled my passionate advocacy to provide culturally sensitive care and better serve the community where I was raised.”**



Jenna Nguyen  
jenna.nguyen@laverne.edu

## Treasurer

Here is our treasurer, Emily Kim! She is a third-year student in the Clinical Psychology (Health Emphasis) PhD Program. Her clinical and research interests are in neurocognitive functioning and substance use, as well as in forensic neuropsychology. She hopes to pursue neuropsychology as a clinician and to use her language skills in English, Korean, and Spanish to do neurocognitive assessments.

**“As a treasurer, I hope to use my organizational skills to keep everything in check. I also hope to get to know everyone to build connections as I feel that not many Asians and Asian Americans pursue psychology.”**



Emily H. Kim  
ekim10@mail.yu.edu

## Expansion Coordinator

We would like to welcome our expansion coordinator, Yangyilin Guo, who recently finished her undergraduate studies in Psychology at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. She is currently in her gap year, exploring the intersecting fields of cultural, clinical, and developmental psychology with a special interest in Chinese and Asian American populations.

**“My long-term goal is to pursue research in academia, to contribute to translating scientific knowledge to the general population, and to promote collaborations between experts of different fields of studies apart from research.”**



Yangyilin Guo  
yang.y.guo@mail.mcgill.ca)

## Membership Coordinator



Amal Soomro  
soom0849@pacificu.edu

Next up, we have our membership coordinator, Amal Soomro! She is a fourth-year Clinical Neuro-Psychology PsyD student at Pacific University in Portland, Oregon. Her primary clinical and research foci include older adult population with neurodegenerative diseases, cognitive and psychometric assessments, integrating person-centered neuropsychological evaluations, and improving norms to diverse populations for accurate diagnoses. She hopes to pursue further training to specialize in diagnostic evaluations of older adults and evaluate patients with a variety of neuromedical conditions.

**"I aspire to provide care in conjunction with primary care providers in a collaborative and personalized way, which I enjoy and value highly."**

## Publicity Coordinator

Finally, we introduce the DoS's new publicity coordinator, Emi Ichimura, who is a second-year Clinical Psychology PhD student at Seattle Pacific University. Her research interests include social isolation, shame, mental help-seeking attitudes, and suicidality. She looks forward to using her research to advance culturally adapted, evidence-based practices for socially isolated individuals in Japan.

**"Being a product of a Japanese American family, I have personally been impacted by the discrepancies between both cultures' approaches to mental health. However, by participating in research related to stigma, ethnic identity, culture, and resilience, I realigned my outlook and recognized the need to use my position to support minoritized communities."**



Emi Ichimura  
ichimurae@spu.edu





# DOLGTBQQ AWARD WINNER ANNOUNCEMENT

By Cat Bitney, PhD and Nic Rider, PhD

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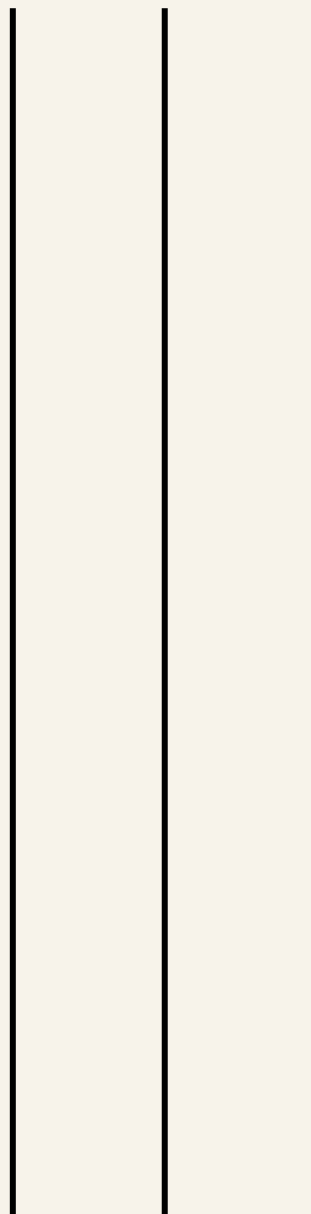
The Division on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (DoLGBTQQ) is pleased to announce this year's Student Award winner: Thomas Le!

Thomas is currently working on their doctorate in Counseling Psychology at the University of Maryland in College Park and has been quite busy during their graduate training. They have published 20 peer-reviewed articles that focus on how intersectional forms of discrimination influence marginalized populations' well-being.

Several of their most recent studies have examined the effect of discomfort due to race/ethnicity in the broader LGBTQ community on LGBTQ Asian Americans' psychological well-being (Le et al., 2022) as well as how internalized racism and resistance and empowerment against racism affect queer Asian American men's dating preferences (Le & Kler, in press).

Thomas also specializes in working with queer and trans people of color, including queer and trans Asian Americans, both in college counseling center environments and in community mental health settings. Throughout their doctoral program, they have provided mentorship to a number of undergraduate students who identify as queer and/or trans Asian Americans.

We appreciate all that Thomas has done thus far to support our community and we are proud to have them as a member of our division!



# *DOSAA*

# RECENT EVENTS

# *ANNOUNCEMENTS*

The Division on South Asian Americans (DoSAA) has been dedicated to fostering safe spaces and creating diverse opportunities for our membership.

This fall, we launched the **Chai & Chat series**, where we discuss topics affecting South Asian Americans. During the September event, members came together to talk about domestic violence/intimate partner violence in the South Asian community. Our upcoming chats on Nov. 2nd and Feb. 8th will be focused on how election season and the political climate impact South Asians and how to navigate the post-holiday blues, respectively.

Our popular **Advanced Clinical Consultation group** is back this year and led by co-Chair Dr. Nida Mirza and Sonia Bajwa, LCSW. We have had successful meetings in April, July, and September, and look forward to continuing to offer this resource to licensed mental health professionals in the DoSAA community.

**The 7th Annual Summer Fellowship Program** came to a conclusion with a project showcase at the AAPA Convention this year. Graduate student fellows were paired with early and mid-career mental health professionals to gain mentorship and create a project focused on South Asian mental health. Fellows created projects focused on various topics, including intergenerational trauma and complex PTSD, the impacts of the 1947 partition of Pakistan and India as depicted through art, acculturative stress among South Asian American adolescents, South Asian masculinity, substance use in South Asian American youth, self-image of firstborn daughters of South Asian descent, adolescent mental health, discussions of race among South Asian families, and South Asian mental health stigma.

DoSAA looks forward to working with our membership to continue creating inclusive spaces that are as diverse as our South Asian roots. We hope to see you at one of our next events! If you'd like to learn more about DoSAA or get involved, follow us on Instagram and Twitter (**@dosaaonline**) or email us at **[dosaa.communication@aapaonline.org](mailto:dosaa.communication@aapaonline.org)**.

# AS GOOD AS DOSAA

## FEATURING THE DIVISION ON SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS

By J. Angel Dianna

Dosaa is a fermented rice and lentil crepe that is commonly enjoyed in South India. DoSAA is also the name of the AAPA division focused on South Asian American mental health professionals and has the same pronunciation. An apt name! Food is such an integral part of community in South Asian cultures. In my interview with the executive leadership of DoSAA, I learned that fostering community is their primary goal. Drs. Nida Mirza and Sruthi Swami are co-chairs and Rose Dhaliwal is chair-elect. DoSAA was founded in 2006. The founders recognized that South Asian Americans have slightly different needs than the broader umbrella group of Asian Americans. There are very few South Asian mental health professionals, and DoSAA endeavors to foster community in our shared unique experiences.

A major goal of DoSAA is to highlight the unique mental health needs of South Asian Americans. South Asia comprises India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Nepal. DoSAA aims to bring awareness to the lived experiences of South Asian Americans. To help them in this, DoSAA holds annual town halls to assess the needs of the South Asian American mental health community. While few people participate in the town halls, there are more participants in ongoing needs assessment surveys that inform DoSAA's future directions.

To meet the needs of its approximately 200 members, DoSAA hosts Chai and Chaat every other month, wherein South Asian American mental health professionals gather in community with individuals who hold similar identities to discuss recent events or special topics, like interpersonal violence in South Asian families.

DoSAA also hosts a consultation group every other month, wherein South Asian American mental health professionals discuss their clients' or their own cultural needs. Since there are so few South Asian American mental health professionals, it is vital that these groups exist to foster connection and community across the country.

DoSAA also endeavors to work with other divisions in AAPA. In February 2021, DoSAA collaborated with the Division on Women (DoW) and the Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans (DMAA) to host a nonpartisan event reflecting on the election of Kamala Harris, the first South Asian American woman to hold the office of vice president. This community space was filled with hope and connection for the future.

DoSAA's chairs aim to embrace the marriage of mental health advocacy and progressive values in our communities.

They reiterated that this work starts with us as leaders in our communities. Mental health issues are still heavily stigmatized in our communities and our positions mean that we can work in dismantling the systems that prevent our loved ones from getting much needed care.





## CHAIR

**SRUTHI SWAMI,  
M.ED., PH.D., NCSP**

Sruthi Swami is an Assistant Professor in the School Psychology Master's program at California State University, Fresno. She received her M.Ed. and Ph.D. in Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology, School Psychology emphasis, from the University of California, Santa Barbara in June 2020. Sruthi recently completed her pre-doctoral clinical internship with the Dallas Independent School District, where she provided school-based mental health services to K-12 students and family and individual therapy at mental health clinics attached to the school district. Her clinical interests include school-based mental health services for students in K-12, specifically those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with anxiety, depression, autism, and ADHD. She also has experience providing assessments and implementing interventions for students who qualify for special education services. Sruthi's research interests include racism and ethnic disproportionality in school systems (education, discipline, juvenile justice), school climate, early literacy assessment and intervention, early literacy practices, motivation and engagement, mental health and special education in schools, and Asian American mental health. Feel free to contact her at [sswami@csufresno.edu](mailto:sswami@csufresno.edu).

Dr. Nida Mirza (she/her) is a licensed clinical psychologist who works in private practice in the San Francisco Bay Area, providing psychotherapy services to adults from diverse backgrounds and co-leading the DEI at the practice. She serves as an Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor at Stanford University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Outside of this, Nida works on content development and testing for the mobile mental health team at the VA's National Center for PTSD. She also advises mental health tech startups in Silicon Valley by providing consultation about behavioral health, outreach strategy, and cultural humility.

Nida is serving her fourth year as a board member on the DoSAA Executive Committee and is an ad hoc reviewer for AAPA's peer-reviewed academic journal, the Asian American Journal of Psychology.



## CO-CHAIR

**NIDA MIRZA, PSY.D.**



## CHAIR-ELECT

**ROSE DHALIWAL, M.S.**

Rose Dhaliwal (she/her) is a 5th-year Clinical Psychology doctoral candidate (Psy.D.) at the University of La Verne, located in the greater Los Angeles area. She grew up in San Jose, CA, and received her B.S. in Psychology, with a minor in Philosophy, from Santa Clara University. After graduation, she worked in the public sector in San Jose, where her work focused on community engagement, public relations, and policy advising on education, youth, neighborhood services, and the environment. In her doctorate program, Rose's research has focused on LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and the experiences of transgender and gender-expansive youth of color involved in legal systems. Her clinical training and interests are focused on transition-age youth and young adults in correctional and child welfare settings who have significant exposure to adverse childhood experiences. Currently, she is completing her pre-doctoral internship at the California Department of State Hospitals-Metropolitan in Norwalk.

As a child of immigrants from Punjab, Rose believes in the importance of understanding how bicultural identity and intersecting identities impact the lived experiences of communities of color. As Chair-Elect, she aims to highlight these important topics to facilitate dialogue among DoSAA members and foster connections with organizations focusing on similar topics. In her spare time, Rose enjoys spending time with her loved ones, going on hikes with her dog, dancing, and exploring new places.

# AAPA MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



**Marijo Villano, MA**

***What is your cultural background?***

Filipina Asian American

***Please share a memory of your experience in AAPA.***

During the 2021 #StopAAPIHate movement, I remember the desperate need for connection I craved despite the physical distance from other Asian Americans. I remember sitting in a Zoom call with psychologists, clinicians, students, and professors who looked like me. It was one of the first mass meetings I attended. While I held so much admiration (and definitely geeked out over the fact that I had read so many of their names on research articles I've used for papers in the past), I was so happy to share that space as a fellow human. I didn't realize how much I needed to see others like me to validate my own feelings of chaos and feel seen. That sense of community kept me going through so much.

***What advice do you have for someone new in the field?***

As a first-generation graduate student and child of immigrants, I lived for the grind culture. It was not until the COVID-19 pandemic's quarantine forced me to sit back and learn about the things that make me feel recharged and whole outside of being a student and therapist. While developing your professional identity is important, remember who you are outside of that. Who are you as a child, a friend, a pet parent, a crafter, or anything else that brings you joy and a feeling of purpose.

### ***What do you cherish from your culture and why?***

As a Filipina American, I've learned to value my spiritual connection that I feel towards my community. While our history is painted with colors of intergenerational trauma colonialism, I think it's beautiful to see how traditions and values survived despite the hundreds of years and attempts to erase us. Growing spiritually as a Filipina American has helped me cherish the resilience my family, ancestors, and community have. It's held me in reverent appreciation that we are evidence of our ancestors' strength, and what a beautiful legacy we have to give.

### ***What are some of your hopes for the future?***

I hope to give back to the Filipino and Asian American community. My motivation for entering the field of Counseling Psychology was the lack of representation there was for those who looked like me and understood my lived experiences. I want to contribute to increased awareness of mental health services, its normalization, and its healing of generational trauma in the community. I hope to create safe spaces that help foster clients' abilities to search and feel empowered all while doing the work I've grown to deeply love.

## **SPOTLIGHT**

**Lisa Cruz**

**Twitter: @lisaninacruz**



### ***What is your cultural background?***

Filipina American

### ***What or who brought you to AAPA?***

Several years ago when I was early on in my PhD program, I felt the need for more support from individuals of Asian background who were also in the psychology field.

I had never heard of the AAPA, and found the organization from a Google search. In what now feels fortuitous, I also found the posting for the Graduate Leadership Institute (GLI) and applied. Months later, I received the happy news that I had been selected as a participant.

***Please share a memory of your experience in AAPA.***

I met many wonderful AAPA members through the GLI, and also through volunteering with the convention, newsletter, and as current Assistant Chair for the AAPA Division on Students. Unfortunately due to COVID-19, most of my "memories" with AAPA members have been through Zoom meetings, but I'll always feel fondly about my first in-person 2019 AAPA convention in San Diego. It was a great start to my time with AAPA.

***What advice do you have for someone new in the field?***

Try to get involved in different organizations, committees, etc. — but not at the expense of your well-being and mental health. It can be hard to find the right balance (there are endless service work opportunities, often unpaid), but try to be in tune with your needs, and be honest about what you can manage.

***How have you changed from the beginning of your career to now?***

I have learned to be very flexible, realizing that with each practicum/project experience, I am finding out what works for me. For instance, I originally thought I would focus on pediatric neuropsychology. While I'm still in neuropsychology, my interests have shifted and I've developed more of a focus on adults and older adults.

***What do you cherish from your culture and why?***

I appreciate that Filipino culture is somewhat of an amalgamation of many cultures. I love the diversity of people, history, and food even within Filipino culture.

***What are some of your hopes for the future?***

Regarding AAPA, I hope to be a mentor and model for AAPA students, and generously and helpfully guide in the same way that my AAPA mentors have done for me. Other hopes include successfully obtaining my PhD next year and eventually becoming a neuropsychologist.

# WORDS UNSPOKEN

By Emma H. Hong

The black mold in the ceiling was more alive than our conversation; dancing their way through the ceiling as I picked at my lip (out of habit) and watched food videos, while my grandma read her Korean newspaper. The spirited conversation of two chefs made up for our non-existent one.

Halmoni\* put her newspaper down and dramatically lowered her glasses, making direct eye contact, and giggled, “*Yah* fingers *doo-ruh-wuh*. Eliza, you want my lips” as she puckered hers into duck lips.

“Halmoni! I’m Emma, not Eliza.” I laughed, slightly crestfallen because for the fourth time this month I owed my brother candy from his bet that she would mix my sister’s name and mine before dinner.

“Sorry my beautiful Emma” I smiled; even though I’m sweating waterfalls, I know she’s serious. Whether she’s informing me that my new jeans are too scandalous because the rips reveal my shins, or that my newest recipe for my cookbook is too sweet (prior to adding any sweetener) she has never failed to speak her mind.

“It’s okay, Halmoni.” I reassured her.

Grasping at something to alleviate the silence, I asked, “*Behg-go-pah-yo?*”

“*Ani.*” She shook her head.

From her house, I can hear drivers’ honks bicker in Hollywood. “Did you win competition? Swim, bike, run?” Her three-inch-thick glasses make her eager eyes look like chestnuts.

“Ahn-ee-yo, I was injured. Blood-euh.” Exasperated, I attempt to communicate in my first grade vocabulary, struggling to decide which part of my body to point to.

“Mmm. Bland-euh,” My grandma nods her head slowly—I hear the gears in her head turning—pretending to understand my cryptic code.

\*(a way to address one’s grandmother in Korean)



It was the fifth time she had asked me about the Triathlon Nationals, unintentionally reopening a tender wound. Each week, I struggled to explain why I had to drop out because I was anemic. How could I explain the physiological impact of my iron deficiency? How could I describe the anguish I felt when I saw my teammates compete?

Our surface-level conversations prevent us from truly understanding the other's experiences, so we ask the same questions with little variation. Things were always "good," and we never dive deeper on the topics of my health, classes, and friends.

"It's okay, Emma. Next time." She patted my back as tears formed in my eyes. She started combing my hair with her fingers; her glasses fogging slightly. The chattering chef video is quiet and the cars' argument is resolved: together, for the first time, we sat in comfortable silence embracing each other's presence. For the first time, I showed her how I was feeling, and she finally understood. For the first time, our differences weren't barriers, but opportunities to learn more about each other. We may never fully understand the language that the other speaks, but that's okay because we've learned new ways to communicate through the thoughtful gestures we make. The next week I visited Halmoni, I brought her a new dessert without any sweetener. When we sat on the couch, my ankles were greeted by a tiny fan, doing its best to make the room 1 degree cooler. Halmoni handed me a newspaper wrapped present with red ribbon. It's a 4 pack of Aquaphor. On cue, we bursted into laughter, our heads both swinging back as we held each other steady.

While Halmoni didn't understand my injury nor my direct experience, she understood my pain because it's universal. Whether she's teaching me how to read the newspaper or we're cooking a new recipe, we learn what makes us unique versus what makes us the same. For it's not the action itself that brings us together, but the actions we make to explore each others' interests.

Neither of us will ever fully understand the other's life experiences, but we've bonded over our willingness to make new ones.

When I'm trying to bridge two starkly different groups together or meet new people, I remind myself that building connection is through understanding someone else's point of view. Our differences shouldn't be viewed as a barrier or misfortune, but rather, a strength because we have the opportunity to acquire new perspectives of the world and venture out of our own bubbles and into someone else's.

# INCLUSIVE LIBERATION

## Reclaiming Mindfulness with the Wisdom from Our Scriptures

By Naisargi (Ness) Mehta

“The idea of integrative mindfulness had started brewing in my mind when I learned about Mindfulness-Based Therapy in one of my courses. Our assignment for that particular lecture was to go on a mindful walk, and then write a reflection on it. I didn’t need to go for such a walk, I found that I’d already gone on a mindful walk earlier that week. Exercises of mindfulness came naturally to me. However, I was also aware of the sheer complexity that practices of mindfulness carried with them. I’ve seen many people around me have intense experiences at Vipassana throughout my life. The description of ACT in my textbook did not feel a lot like mindfulness. Hell, the definition of mindfulness did not feel like mindfulness.”

-Naisargi (Ness) Mehta, doctoral international student from India



*Photo by Aron Visuals*

This quote is the beginning of a theoretical article my co-author Dr. Gitika Talwar and I submitted during the AAPI Heritage Month. This topic has ended up becoming surprisingly personal to me, so I am writing this piece to reflect on my thoughts and pen down the things that I cannot in an academic manuscript. In addition to that, this is also a token of gratitude for the AAPA community that has significantly empowered me as I continue to fight for AAPI heritage, inclusion, and liberation.

Meditation, or Dhyana (thee-aa-nuh) as we call it in India, has always been a part of my life. And when I say “always,” I mean it literally. My mother and father have taught me to sit in dhyana for as long as I can remember. I still have pictures of the baby-me sitting cross-legged in dhyana mudra (hand gesture usually embodied during meditation), eyes closed with a look of pure concentration I only wish I could portray as an adult.

*Naisargi (Ness) Mehta*  
Indian International Graduate Student  
Counseling Psychology, Purdue University

Be it through Amar Chitra Katha (an Indian publisher) kids' comics or through lessons of mythology taught in school, the importance of dhyana was deep-rooted into my knowledge base. Fast forward to the fall of 2021, I started hearing the words "meditation" and "mindfulness" much more often. I found myself quite confused by what I was reading. On one hand, the definition of mindfulness—"a way of directing attention that originates in Buddhist meditation practices" (Baer & Huss, 2008, p.123)—felt accurate, but then the immediate next line would explain how mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are designed in a secular manner by stripping mindfulness off of its spiritual roots. What my textbooks said made sense on the surface, but I also remembered listening to my parents have very complex conversations on mindfulness. In simple words, I could not feel the depth I was taught I would.

It turned out that I was not alone! I put out a couple of questions on our AAPA listserv back in November 2021 to learn from folks that may be on a similar path; and the discussion that followed was one of the most heartfelt conversations I've had after moving to the US.



The sense of community and belonging that folks at AAPA provided me with was just the push I needed to begin my journey of understanding mindfulness in its truest sense. This is when my father put a Thich Nhat Hanh book in my hands. Who was previously, for me, just an author with a difficult-to-pronounce name, had now become my primary guide in understanding mindfulness in a more holistic manner. I realized why the Western idea of mindfulness felt incomplete to me—because it is. When MBIs were being developed, therapists and clients alike were hesitant towards integrating spirituality in mental health practice. As quoted by Dr. Richard Davidson of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds,

"There is a swath of our culture who is not going to listen to someone in monks' robes, but they are paying attention to the scientific evidence" (Weaver, 2015). Just to fill a hole in cognitive-behavior therapy—a purely Euro-American centric theory—the Western mental health field took an Eastern concept (meditation), alienated one single aspect of it (mindfulness), and used it as a tool devoid of its actual purpose. What is this if not cultural appropriation?

In an attempt to seem rational and appeal to the Euro-American population, MBIs have ended up ignoring the wisdom imparted by Eastern spiritual teachers.

The premise of mindfulness, as opposed to that of the Western mental health field, urges meditators to find liberation from suffering by transcending reason (Suzuki & Barrett, 2006). For example, the most famous portrayal of the highest state of existence in the Euro-American context is Maslow's definition of self-actualization. While the characteristics of the Western depiction of a self-actualized person are similar to those of an enlightened person—such as a clear perception of reality, spontaneity, detachment, independence from flattery or criticism, and compassion—the goal of self-actualization is to use these characteristics as a tool towards achieving full potential as a being (Mehta & Talwar, 2022). While mindfulness, inherently, is anything but achievement oriented. Mindfulness, as per Buddhist philosophy, is a way of life with a larger goal of liberation of all beings (Mehta & Talwar, 2022). From not citing Eastern scriptures in mindfulness-based literature to discarding spiritual practices as evidence-less, Asian and Asian American cultural roots have yet again been systematically eliminated. This only reinforces the feeling of otherness we feel on a daily basis.



*Photo by Suraphat Nuea-on*

I knew that steps had to be taken and fortunately enough, I knew exactly where to turn for wisdom as well. Today, I feel honored to be able to learn from some very inspiring members of AAPA such as Drs. Tien Liang, Debra Kawahara, and Gitika Talwar; and join the fight for inclusive liberation by working as a community to present this issue along with the ways to reclaim mindfulness at the APA convention this year. I leave you today with these powerful words:

“Let self-care not be how you adapt to your oppression. Let self-care be something that helps you value your liberation, and mindfulness can be monumental for that.”

-G. Talwar, personal communication, November 12, 2021



*Image shows me, Martha, on the left, and my mother on the right. I'm clearly taking a selfie, with a big grin on my face. It looks a little strained. My mother is sitting in her easy chair, not looking at me at all, with a neutral expression on her face. I'm in a black shirt with a green design on it, my mother is in a white tank top with circles and squares in blue and green.*

# CONFRONTING ANTI-BLACK RACISM

By Martha Merchant, PsyD & Sue H. Kim, PhD

## Martha's Story:

My mother and father met and married in South Korea in the 60s. She was there after having escaped North Korea as a child, and he was there as a white American soldier. We didn't really talk about race in my family, except that my mom let my sister and I know that people would be looking at her if we misbehaved. She let us know that we would need to work harder than other children whose moms were not Korean. She wanted us to know that we needed to be, essentially, perfect.

My mother always worked in retail on the Army base so when we moved to a small town in Georgia, I thought it was very cool that my mother's best friend, B (also Korean), owned a store there that catered to Black hair. I loved walking around the store while they talked together. Those conversations happened in Korean but eventually I heard a conversation in English where I heard B talking badly about her clients. I was confused. I didn't understand why she would say such mean things (using racial slurs and stereotypes). Most of my friends were Black and also many of my parents' friends were Black and Korean couples. We were around Black people all the time, and I didn't understand how her clients were different from my friends.

Years later, I drove my mother to Atlanta to go to a Korean store (something like H-Mart), and we met up with a big group of other Korean women for lunch. Turned out that many of them owned stores that carried products for Black hair. Much to my dismay, they ALL talked negatively about their clients. My mother, to her credit, also got very upset by this talk and scolded the whole table. Not that my mother is a social justice warrior – she was telling them that good Christians don't talk badly about others – but I appreciated her speaking up, nonetheless.

My mother has lived in Georgia now for more than 30 years. She has definitely taken in the racist beliefs all around her. I don't know for sure if she would defend B's clients the same way she did then. As a Korean, new to this country, she was very aware of how she and her children would be treated. I don't remember her ever saying that it was unfair, but I know that she was pushing against it.

Talking with my mother about racism is difficult and sometimes confusing.

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*Mom: Those people do not know how to take care of their yard.*

*Me: Which people, mom?*

*Mom: You know which one I mean.*

*Me: I really don't mom, what people are you talking about?*

*Mom: Those people are not like us!*

*Me: Mom ... like who?*

*Mom: Like US! They only care about their big house but not about yard.*

*Me: I think you are using some stereotype, mom. You know you don't like that when people do that to you.*

*Mom: No one does that to me! You know why? Because I take good care of my yard!*

---

That was pretty much the end of that particular conversation.

When I finally started to understand better about racism and the ways that it works, I thought that it would be easy to talk with her about it because she had clearly experienced discrimination. But it wasn't. The truth is, my mother is not really interested in talking to me about the biases and stereotypes she expresses. I don't think my mother (or her friends) ever had the opportunity to look at these biases, to interrogate themselves and their beliefs. She does not know the way that white America has set Asian Americans against Black people. She does not know the ways that she herself buys into those stories.

Speaking up to our elders isn't easy, but I believe it's worth doing. When I hear people say, "Well, she/he is from another generation" to excuse them when they make racist/sexist/ableist remarks, I think about all the young people listening in. As long as it's ok for halmoeni and harabeoji and/or aunts uncles to say those kinds of things, children learn that it's all right to say them, too. Anti-Black racism is another way to keep our peoples apart, to stop marginalized folk from coming together and enacting change.

I don't know for sure what will work for you and yours, but I can tell you some of the things I have learned. I find that with my elders, I try for a light touch. I ask, "How do you know that?" or "What

evidence do you have about that?" I stay curious and try to keep in mind that if I don't understand, I probably haven't listened long enough. This works for me (helps me not to get too ragey), and I've found it works with many elders. If they can hear that I really want to understand, it's easier for them to stay in the conversation with me.

### **Sue's Story:**

It's hard for me to picture my elderly parents as rulebreakers, but when they eloped in 1962, their marriage was illegal in several states because of anti-miscegenation laws. My parents met in Pittsburgh, PA in the 1960s. My mom, who is white, was an undergraduate nursing major, and my dad, who is Korean, was getting his doctorate in electrical engineering. He had immigrated to the U.S. at age 17 to attend a small Christian college in Kentucky where he was the only "Oriental boy."

Having to lose his stable family home in North Korea and flee south, my dad suffered a lot of horrors as a child and teenager during the end of WWII and the entire Korean War (1950-53). He still tells me how grateful he is to have had the opportunity to come to the U.S. for college and eventually become a citizen, a successful corporate executive, and now a comfortable retiree.

I'm not sure if my dad learned about anti-Blackness here in the U.S., but when I started my journey of uncovering my unconscious biases several years ago, I began to remember some stories he told me and my sister. Stories where he praised the hardworking white executive secretaries and contrasted their diligence with others who were Black.

Looking back, I realized that we always lived in predominantly white neighborhoods, attended predominantly white schools, and went to predominantly white churches. He didn't have to say it out loud, but the message I got was that being around lots of white people was good.

My challenge now is to continue unearthing my unconscious bias so I can confront it for what it is: anti-Black racism. And that racism has hurt me and continues to hurt me by alienating me from others with whom I have much in common, luring me into a system of white supremacy that frankly views me as "other," and damaging my soul by having me participate in a toxic system.

A brilliant and compassionate friend, Dr. Tracy Robinson-Wood, challenged me and some of my colleagues to keep a running log of the racism that we noticed during the week. At first, I thought I would be keeping a good eye out for what I saw others doing around me. However, the biggest takeaway for me was what I noticed about myself.



*Wedding photo from 1962 of my dad wearing a black tuxedo and my mom in a white wedding gown with a white hat and veil and holding white flowers, both smiling.*

The negative assumptions I caught myself making. The intense discomfort I felt when I asked others what they meant (when they said or emailed things to me, assuming I'd agree when they complained about people "crossing the border" or people "taking advantage of the system").

I decided to keep going with that "running log of racism I notice" – it's going to be a daily practice. Knowing that I will be logging what I see and how I respond to it helps me to be more aware and more clear on how I am doing with my battle to disrupt the anti-Black racism I've internalized. My parents broke some barriers when they got together in the 1960s, and now it's my turn to break some more things.



# A DEI SPEAKER'S RESPONSE TO THE STOP W.O.K.E. ACT

by Dr. Abby Hamilton



Very soon after my TEDx talk was released on YouTube in February 2022, I took on a number of speaking engagements related to diversity. One of my favorite events was a talk that I presented on the topic of unconscious bias. Raising awareness on this topic helped people realize that a person that we see is just that person, not all the things we know about other people who look like that person.

## Florida Governor Signs the Stop W.O.K.E. Act

This past April, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed the Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (W.O.K.E.) Act, which prohibits training that compels people to believe:

- That people of a certain race, color, sex, or national origin are superior to others;
- That racism, either conscious or unconscious, is inherent to certain people;
- That people should be treated adversely because of their race, color, sex, or national origin; and
- That people of a certain group should feel guilty for actions committed by others from the same group.

Florida would be the first state to enact legislation like this. When I read more, I was shocked to hear that such content had been acceptable. I asked myself, "Why would it be okay to make someone feel guilty for the actions committed by other people in their group?" But then I remembered a feeling I experienced a few years ago.

## A Personal Woke Experience

While working on my dissertation, I spent hours reading the stories about early Filipino Americans. I read about the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, which limited the number of Filipino immigrants to only 50 per year, and the Filipino Repatriation Act in 1935, when the 45,000 Filipinos in the United States were offered free tickets to return to the Philippines, but only 2,190 accepted the offer. As I read the way Filipinos were treated, my forehead began to crinkle with rage and my heart began to pound. Then I began to hear my ancestors say, "And you married one of them!" I went to my bed and stared at my sleeping husband and felt strange to be married to "one of them!" I woke him up (at 4 am) and told him what I was feeling, to which he answered, "You're one of us, too." He was right. I realized that I was just as American as he was. I was born and raised here, and the actions of the people in 1935 were definitely not my actions, and not the actions of my husband. My point is that in that moment, I felt what some people would call "woke."

## What Does Woke Mean?

What does woke even mean? I did some research and found that Merriam-Webster's definition of woke is to be "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." Other definitions are "being more aware of your own culture," "recognizing the racial bias in media and laws," and "the protection of LGBTQ freedoms". It is more important to understand the purpose and intention of the Stop W.O.K.E. Act.

## Examples of Woke Teaching

The Stop W.O.K.E. Act was written to keep people from forcing their own beliefs on children and employees in organized training. Some examples presented in Governor DeSantis' speeches are his claims that the Arizona Department of Education teaches schoolchildren that "babies are racist at 3 months old" and that the Santa Clara County's Office of Education's guidance for teachers teaches that the United States has a "parasitic system" because of the white male settlers' invasion. Governor DeSantis also speaks against the teaching of critical race theory, which is related to the premise that discrimination is a big part of American history. It seems that Governor DeSantis' intention with the Stop W.O.K.E. Act was to protect people from being told what they should believe, especially in an environment where they are required to attend and listen: school and work.

## Interpretations of the Stop W.O.K.E. Act

Critics of the Stop W.O.K.E. Act claim that topics such as racism will not be permitted in any kind of training, and they claim that the bill is focused on making sure people "don't feel uncomfortable." However, according to the bill summary:

"A person should not be instructed that he or she must feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress for actions, in which he or she played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex." The key word here is "must." I am sure the critics of this bill would not feel comfortable allowing their children to go to school and be told that they must feel guilty about something they didn't do. Another part of the bill says that concepts may be discussed as long as it is done in "an objective manner without endorsement."

## Each Person is Unique

I believe that each person is unique and should be known for who they are as an individual: the intelligence they bring to the project, the work ethic they exhibit in the workplace, etc.

According to unconscious bias theory, people will automatically form opinions based on someone's height, name, or tattoos, based on what they associate with those characteristics. These ideas are formed from parents, family, and contacts throughout their lives. They are also influenced by their environment and experiences, such as a bully in school or a kind teacher. The best way to counteract unconscious bias is to learn the facts about the person to identify whether they are the best fit for a job or promotion or relationship. In light of all that is happening right now, it is important to be aware of your own thinking and gather the most accurate information about each unique person before making your own decisions about that person.

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