

"Fire" by Yayoi Kusama
courtesy of Smithsonian American Art Museum

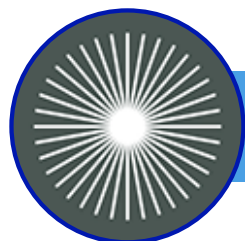


***THE ASIAN
AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGIST***

The Official Newsletter of the Asian American Psychological Association

FALL 2023

IN THIS ISSUE



4 AAPA STATEMENT ON ISRAEL/
PALESTINE



6 PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE



26 DIGITAL HERSTORY: DR. KAREN
SUYEMOTO & DR. MICHU FU
BY SUE H. KIM, PHD



38 "I REALIZED THAT I BROUGHT IT
ON MYSELF"
BY EMI ICHIMURA, MS & KOJI TOHMON, BS



41 INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE
MELENDRES, LCSW
BY JEANNIE E. CELESTIAL, PHD, MSW

NEWS REPORTS

3 TEAM ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
AND DISCLAIMER

8 MESSAGE FROM CO-
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

10 FINANCE OFFICERS'
REPORT

11 MEMBERSHIP OFFICERS'
REPORT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

12 DOP AAPA PROVIDER
DIRECTORY

13 DOS MENTORSHIP OFFICE
HOURS RESULTS

14 DMAA RETREAT

15 BOOK RELEASE: ASIAN
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY &
PSYCHOTHERAPY BY SHIN
SHIN TANG, PHD

16 DEBRA KAWAHARA IS APA
PRESIDENT-ELECT

OTHER FEATURES

17 DOSEAA FEATURE & EC PLUS
MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:
TRI NGUYEN

22 MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHTS:
RICH CHANG & TATUM
LECLAIR

29 AAPA POSTDOCTORAL
LEADERSHIP FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAM FEATURE

32 2021-2023 AAPA
POSTDOCTORAL LEADERSHIP
FELLOWS PROJECTS

34 MAKING MENTAL
HEALTHCARE AFFORDABLE
BY NICOLE R. BENQUECHEA, MA

Fall 2023

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.

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

Guest Contributors

Jeannie E. Celestial, PhD, MSW
Emi Ichimura, MS
Koji Tohmon, BS

Co-Editors-in-Chief

Lauren Yang, PsyD
Uyen Sophie Nguyen, MA

Copy Editors

Darcy S. F. Ing, PsyD
Linda Zheng, MA
Linh-Nhu Hoang, MA
Lydia Si-Ngaw Lui, JD
Sheela Kamath, AMFT, APCC



Editorial Intern

Lydia Si-Ngaw Lui, JD

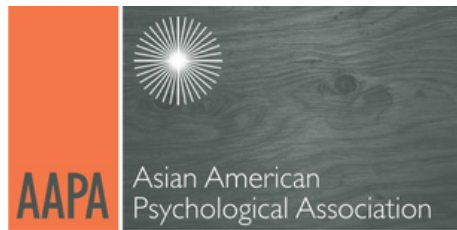
Layout Editors

Aida Irving
Benjamin Conner
Vera Karlotta Heffner

Columnists/Reporters

Nicole R. Benquechea, MA
Sue H. Kim, PhD





AAPA Statement on Israel/Palestine October 23, 2023

We, at the Asian American Psychological Association, are deeply concerned about the ongoing war in the Middle East that has resulted in human suffering, displacement, and the killing of civilians. We offer this statement in response to the recent violence in Gaza and Israel. As other associations and mental health communities have struggled to engage in conversation about these atrocities, the AAPA Executive Committee has also had these same difficult dialogues.

AAPA's mission is to advance the mental health and well-being of Asian American communities through research, professional practice, education, and policy. For our AAPA community to thrive, we acknowledge our need to be in solidarity with our sibling ethnic psychological associations. We stand with them, especially AMENA-Psy, and affirm our commitment to human life, difficult dialogue, education, decolonization, and liberation of all oppressed communities.

As we are all well aware, histories can be difficult to fully capture and comprehend, and the history of conflict in the Middle East is no exception. What we are sure of is that it has and continues to cause and bring up much trauma, distress, and heartbreak for our community. There are many voices that can attest to the history of colonization, oppression, and violence that has been perpetuated against the civilian population – both Palestinians and Israelis. As an Asian and Pacific Diaspora, we are no strangers to war, genocide, and its complexities. To that, we are deeply saddened that history continually repeats itself. We are reminded of the Vietnam-U.S. War, the Khmer Rouge, Korea-U.S. War, Partition of India and Pakistan, the overthrow of Hawaii's monarchy, and colonization in the Philippines, Indonesia, Micronesia, and countless other countries.

Regardless of where injustice is occurring, we remain committed to engaging in and calling for meaningful action towards ending oppression:

- We advocate for an inclusive cross-racial/ethnic solidarity approach to healing and remain committed to raising awareness for peaceful solutions as allies/accomplices for all communities.
- We condemn the killing of civilians and encourage our members to support humanitarian aid in the region in any way that you are able to.

- We encourage you to educate yourself on the history of the region and its parallels to other Asian and Pacific Islander countries.
- We call upon scholars and teachers to share information that may inform our members about recent and historical events so as to foster understanding and mutual respect.
- We remind everyone to reach out to your elected representatives to vote for a ceasefire and donate to the humanitarian efforts in the area.
- We invite you to make intentional space for conversations to support your students, advisees, and colleagues.
- We encourage everyone to hold one another's hearts as well as each other's pain, and strive to be in honest and respectful dialogue with each other despite the discomfort, fear, and difficulty of this work.

Finally, we recognize that AAPA is an organization that is a community first and foremost. It is this quality that makes AAPA not just a professional home for many of us, but one in which we trust that our bonds and care for one another will move us through difficult moments. In that spirit, we ask that all of us come together to support each other during this time.

In solidarity, The AAPA Executive Committee

Resources:

- [Find and Contact Your Elected Congressional Officials](#)
- [Resources to Navigate Trauma - APA](#)
- [NCAPA Statement on the Murder of Wadea Al-Fayoume](#)
- [Resources for Palestine - AMENA Psy.](#)
- [Mental Health + Somatic Resources for Palestinians in Diaspora / SWANA Folks](#)

President & Vice President's Message

by Anjuli Amin, PhD & Christine Catipon, PsyD



Greetings Members!

Welcome to our Fall newsletter. This column finds us with a mix of emotions, particularly as we reflect on the close of our presidency. As Christine and I work to transition into the new year, we have experienced feelings of not only sadness and frustration, but also joy and hope. We have seen through our discussions as an executive committee that it is possible to come together in solidarity when we are reminded of what connects us (our commitment and dedication to our AAPA members) rather than the differences that divide us. What we are most thankful for those of you who continue to hold us accountable as an organization and who always find a way to come together in community and in the name of social justice.

While our organization continues to go through many growing pains, we want to acknowledge the work of those who participated in and supported our administration. Together we were able to maintain a sense of connection throughout the pandemic and beyond, while striving to make a positive impact within many of our spaces. I am so proud of those who have served in leadership and have created healing spaces, held fundraisers, and found ways to approach difficult moments with action. We have also deepened our relationships with organizations within the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) and have appreciated their collaboration and advocacy for our community. Our relationship with our fellow EPAs in the Coalition has also been strengthened, as we have found ways to come together and support one another in the domestic and global events that continue to impact our daily lives.

As we continue forward into the next year, we acknowledge the ongoing challenges of recruiting individuals into leadership roles. This has had a profound impact on the organization, most notably with our annual Convention, but also with regards to the efficiency of the organization. While many factors have contributed to this concern, it has led to careful consideration of the ways in which AAPA is structured, which is an area that Christine and Donna, our new President and Vice President, will be sure to explore further during their term. We acknowledge that changes in professional responsibilities and priorities post-COVID have also had a significant impact on the capacity and availability for individuals who might have otherwise considered leadership within AAPA, but we hope that a renewed focus on community, connection, and sustainability in the demands of leadership will encourage many of you to give a little part of yourself back to the organization that has given so much to you, both professionally and personally. Speaking of connection and community, we are happy to announce that plans are underway for an in-person AAPA Convention in 2024, so please stay tuned for further details and let us know if you would like to be a committee member for this long-awaited event!

We hope that the concern we have felt continues to be translated into positive action and forward movement. We envision a strong future for AAPA and continue to be amazed by those who have fought alongside us to sustain and prepare for what comes next. We thank you all for the support and trust you have shown us and the Executive Committee over the last two years, and we look forward to an AAPA organization that continues to thrive, evolve, and support one another as the family that we are.

In solidarity,
Anjuli and Christine

FALL 2023

The Asian American Psychologist

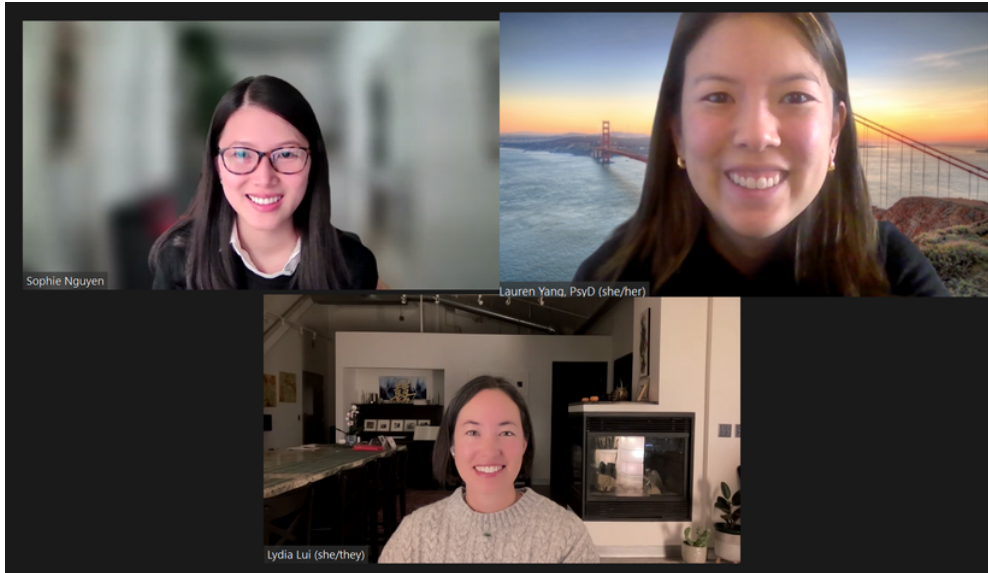
A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF



Co-Editors in Chief Lauren Yang, PsyD (left), and Uyen (Sophie) Nguyen, MA (right) in NYC

We proudly present to you the Fall 2023 issue of our official newsletter, The Asian American Psychologist! To start us off, it was invigorating and inspiring to read the powerful message from President [Dr. Anjali Amin](#) and Vice President [Dr. Christine Catipon](#). We are thrilled to feature the Division on Southeast Asian Americans and share the exciting announcements and updates from our Divisions, including Division on Practice, Division on Students, and Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans. Additionally, our reporter [Dr. Sue H. Kim](#) covered a recent interview of [Dr. Karen Suyemoto](#) by [Dr. Michi Fu](#) as part of the Division on Women's Digital HerStory Project, which highlighted Dr. Suyemoto's journey of finding community and support within the Asian American psychological community. We are also pleased to continue spotlighting our membership, among which we feature [Dr. Tri Nguyen](#), [Richard "Rich" Chang](#), and [Tatum Leclair](#). Moreover, [Dr. Shin Shin Tang](#) proudly announced the recent publication of her book, *Asian American Psychology and Psychotherapy: Intergenerational Trauma, Betrayal, and Liberation*.

Also in this issue, we present an article by our copywriter [Nicole R. Benquechea](#), who interviewed [Dr. Gitika Talwar](#) regarding mental health affordability. We also highlight guest contributors [Emi Ichimura, MS](#), and [Koji Tohmon, BS](#), who shared their thoughtful perspectives on navigating shame in the context of internalized discrimination. Additionally, we are honored to share the projects by 2021-2023 AAPA Postdoctoral Leadership Fellows [Minsun Lee, PhD](#), [Catherine Teotico-Lee, PsyD](#), and [Jenny Qin, PsyD](#). As a complementary feature, we also have thoughtful reflections from outgoing Leadership Fellowship Program Co-Chairs [Drs. Grace S. Kim](#) and [Nadine Nakamura](#), along with those from incoming Co-Chairs [Drs. Koko Nishi-Lee](#) and [Jan Estrellado](#).



Co-Editors-in-Chief Sophie and Lauren with Editorial Intern Lydia Lui, JD

Finally, we are excited to share guest contributor [Dr. Jeannie Celestial](#)'s interview with her colleague [Christine Melendres, LCSW](#) on her selection as a 2023 Filipino Young Leaders Program Delegate, as we recognize Filipino American History Month in October. Considering these contributions altogether, we warmly consider the themes of the Fall 2023 issue as [community](#) and [gratitude](#). We are thankful to those who have bravely used their voices to advocate and educate others in the midst of deeply painful events happening in the world, while holding space and compassionately learning from one another.

With this being the end of our term as Co-Editors-in-Chief, we remain immensely grateful to our hardworking and dedicated newsletter team, along with our amazing guest contributors. We especially would like to express our appreciation to each and every one on the newsletter team: [Aida](#), [Ben](#), [Darcy](#), [Linda](#), [Linh-Nhu](#), [Nicole](#), [Sheela](#), [Sue](#), and [Vera](#). We also have had the greatest pleasure working with [Lydia](#) as our Editorial Intern for the past two issues and Copy-Editor throughout our term. It has been an incredible learning experience to collaborate with each other and navigate challenges that came up together as we published each issue. Although we started out unfamiliar with each other, we have come to consider each other close colleagues and even got a chance to meet up in person in New York. We highly encourage everyone in AAPA to become involved with the newsletter in some way to further engage with other members and learn about the diversity in talents and perspectives of our community.

As we wind down our tenure, we are very excited to introduce [Caitlyn Suen](#) and [Alexandra \(Sasha\) Vasilou](#) as the new Co-Editors-in-Chief for 2024-2026. We look forward to their work with our wonderful team in addition to other new members who are joining.

As always, please let us know if you have any questions, comments, or feedback at newsletter@aapaonline.org. Happy reading!

newsletter@aapaonline.org



Finance Officers' Report

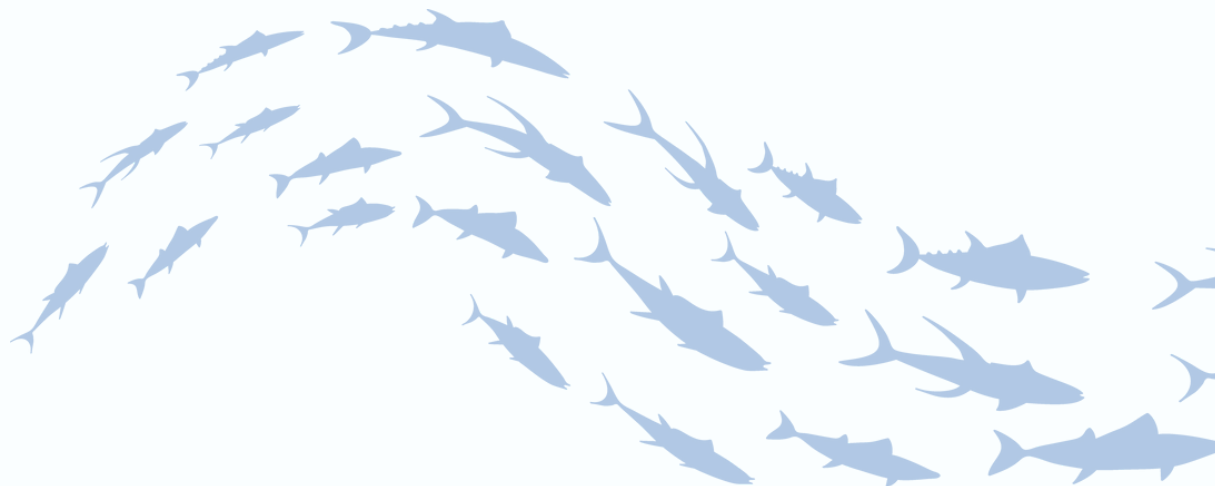
Fall Quarter 2023

AAPA's Co-Finance Officers (FOs) Cat Bitney, Amanda Breen, and Flora Surjadi are happy to report that AAPA's bank accounts are in good standing. Our total combined balance from E*trade, Chase, and PayPal is \$645,784.01 as of October 19, 2023. Subtracting fiscal agent accounts and AAPA Division balances, AAPA's main account has \$520,800.53 in working capital.

We don't have much news to share this quarter, but we are happy to share the following brief, but important, updates with the AAPA membership:

Looking for a new finance officer Amanda Breen is scheduled to leave their FO role this fall after extending their term for a year. We are in GREAT need of a third FO to join Cat and Flora. If you have any interest in exploring this role, please reach out to the FO team at finance@aapaonline.org.

2022 Taxes Cat is working with our accountant to complete AAPA's 2022 taxes for submission.



Hello AAPA Members!

Updates from the Membership Team

Currently, AAPA has a total membership count of **1,442** members. Student members continue to comprise the majority of our membership. See the table below for a breakdown of our membership by membership category.

As an AAPA member, you can edit your membership account by logging into your account on 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, please do not hesitate to contact our membership team at membership@aapaonline.org.

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

Best wishes,

AAPA Membership Team



Membership Category	# of Members
Student	834
Professional	599
Retiree/Emeritus	9
Total	1442

Note: This report is re-published from the Spring 2023 issue.

Join and Share the AAPA Provider Directory

By Susan Han and Judy Huang

AAPA PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Sponsored by the Asian American Psychological Association

Help us connect

AAPI with

culturally-aware

providers

Sign up today!



Provider
Directory

Please continue to amplify the AAPA Provider Directory to your networks (via social media and emails to your various listservs). In order to best promote comprehensive access to our AANHPI communities, we would like to encourage as many providers as possible to sign up. Thank you in advance!

Division on Students

Responses and Results from the 2023 DoS Mentorship Office Hours Program

Since its inception in 2021, the primary objective of the Mentorship Office Hours program has been to fortify our nationwide community by establishing a platform where members can forge meaningful connections and seek valuable advice, guidance, and support. This initiative is a collaborative effort between two key divisions within the AAPA: Division on Students (DoS) and the Education and Training Committee (ETC), embodying the spirit of fostering interdivisional connections throughout the AAPA community. Following the conclusion of the 2023 programming, a program evaluation survey was distributed to AAPA members who had participated in the program, either as mentors or mentees. Survey responses were collected from early August 2023 to early September 2023. The purpose of the survey was (1) to assess the program's utilization and the satisfaction levels of its participants, and (2) to gather valuable feedback from participants to further enhance the program's overall experience.



This year, the Mentorship Office Hours Program ran from April 2023 to July 2023, featuring the participation of 25 dedicated volunteer mentors. Based on registration data collected through Google Forms, we observed a remarkable total of 102 "office hour" registrations by AAPA members who sought to connect with mentors. Notably, nearly 30% of these participants registered for multiple office hours, either with the same mentor or different ones. On average, mentors generously hosted between two to three mentorship office hours, while mentees typically attended one to two mentorship office hours. To gauge the impact and significance of these mentorship office hour sessions, mentors were asked to rate their experience on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not at all meaningful) to 5 (Extremely meaningful). The results were overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of mentors endorsing a rating of "4." In addition to these ratings, mentors shared their motivations for volunteering as mentors, which included a strong desire to give back to the AAPA community and to connect with AAPA student members. Mentees rated the mentorship office hour sessions in terms of helpfulness by using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Not at all helpful) to 5 (Extremely helpful). The feedback from mentees was highly encouraging, with the majority of them endorsing a rating of "5." Moreover, mentees had the opportunity to express their thoughts on the sessions through open-ended responses. They described the sessions as empowering and enriching, highlighting the invaluable support they received outside of their institutions. Furthermore, these sessions instilled greater confidence in mentees, making them more comfortable to seek guidance from mentors in the future.



In conclusion, the Mentorship Office Hours Program stands as an invaluable resource and a vital source of connection for the AAPA community. This is underscored by the resounding endorsement from survey respondents, with a remarkable 100% expressing their support for the continuation and establishment of the AAPA mentorship office hour program as a permanent and enduring resource for our members in the future. We extend our heartfelt gratitude once more to our dedicated mentors, mentees, and the entire AAPA community for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions that have made this programming a resounding success. Your dedication and enthusiasm are truly the cornerstones of our thriving mentorship community.

DIVISION ON MULTIRACIAL AND ADOPTED ASIAN AMERICANS



The DMAA Executive Board had their first in-person planning retreat in Washington, DC this past August! DMAA also held a meet-and-greet and had a wonderful time catching up with some new and returning members. Thanks to all who attended and please be on the lookout for more upcoming DMAA events!



ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA, BETRAYAL, AND LIBERATION



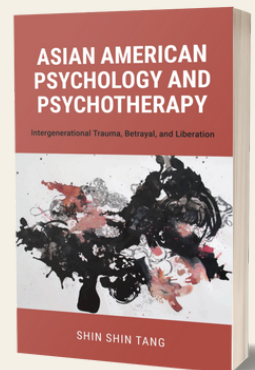
Shin Shin Tang, PhD (she/her) teaches at Oregon State University and maintains a private practice in Eugene, Oregon. She has provided psychotherapy to a wide range of Asian American communities for more than two decades. She has also conducted national and international research focusing on the intersection of trauma, gender, and culture.

I am happy to announce the release of my new book, ***Asian American Psychology and Psychotherapy: Intergenerational Trauma, Betrayal, and Liberation***, published by Rowman and Littlefield. It is my hope that this book:

- Raises awareness of the high rates of anti-Asian racism and of adverse childhood experiences among Asian Americans;
- Contributes to decolonizing psychology research and practice; and
- Is a valuable guide for clinical training.

The testimonials of many diverse Asian Americans bring to life the multicultural theories presented in the book. Scannable links to curated multimedia resources are also included to enhance student learning.

The book can be purchased using the QR code below:



Exam copies can be requested by emailing textbooks@rowman.com

Dr. Debra Kawahara to Become APA's First Asian American and First Japanese American President

We are incredibly thrilled to congratulate Dr. Debra Kawahara on being elected as the 2025 President of the American Psychological Association.

"My vision is of a kind, just, equitable, and inclusive world that treats people with respect and dignity. This will require all of us to be leaders with courage and integrity. Together we can strive to build trust, encourage belief in our goals, and inspire passion and commitment in the fulfillment of our Association's mission as we enact an inclusive vision for a better APA and a better world."

Please see below for additional information about Dr. Kawahara and her election.

APA Press Release:

[APA elects Alliant International University professor Kawahara 2025 president](#)

Pacific Citizen Article (see page 9):

[DR. DEBRA KAWAHARA to Be the First Japanese American President of the American Psychological Assn.](#)



Featuring Division on Southeast Asian Americans

DoSEAA is a relatively new division in AAPA. How did DoSEAA come about?

In October 2020, I attended the AAPA virtual conference, and I remember feeling so inspired by the powerful words and perspectives on “community-care” as “self-care” by Dr. Nellie Tran, who was serving as the AAPA vice president. Coupled with the context of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time, I reflected on my own desire—and need—to be in community; such that, with the collective, we can put forth efforts to engage in “community-care.”

This motivated me to email Nellie and share my wishful thinking and grand ideas for a potential professional “home” within AAPA with others who shared the same Southeast Asian (SEA) identity, as well as those who shared the same desire to care for the SEA communities in North America. In response, Nellie was not only super supportive of my ideas/vision but also asked if I would be interested in leading this effort. Fast forward to the summer of 2021, our eight-member DoSEAA working group (consisting of Thanh Nguyen, Pa Her, Anne Saw, Nellie Tran, Nancy Truong, Seint Kokoky, Sophie Nguyen, and Maximilian Tokarsky) pushed forward a petition to establish DoSEAA. The petition gained much support from AAPA members at large (200+ signatures) as well as the AAPA Executive Committee (EC) members, who ultimately voted “yes” for us to move forward with the formation of a new AAPA division. - Thanh Nguyen

What are the division’s goals and missions?

The mission of the DoSEAA is to foster a community of students and professionals committed to promoting the empowerment, visibility, and wellbeing of Southeast Asian Americans (SEAs) through a greater understanding of the social, cultural, emotional, political, and personal factors that impact the psychology and experiences of SEAs. As a division, our overarching aims are to (a) increase representation and retention of SEAs within AAPA and within the mental health field, including the psychological discipline, (b) create and nurture a close-knit community of psychology/mental-health oriented students and professionals who are committed to serving the routinely neglected Southeast Asian American communities, and (c) intentionally and strategically work to challenge systems of oppression to promote community healing and thriving.

Could you tell us more about DoSEAA's recent and upcoming activities?

We host regular virtual meet-ups for Vietnamese-speaking mental health learners and professionals to consult with each other and provide support for one another. During this past summer, we held six drop-in writing sessions for anyone who wanted to work on a writing assignment in a shared online space. We also hosted a virtual social event during the summer and another recently in October. Two DoSEAA EC members and a general member will be panel speakers in an information workshop about applying to graduate school in the mental health field with an emphasis for prospective SEAA students. We are open to and welcome any event and activity ideas from members.

What is your vision and hope for DoSEAA in the near future?

In the near future, we hope to increase member engagement, continue creating opportunities for our DoSEAA members to make genuine connections with one another, and carry out initiatives and events in response to our members' interests/needs.

Is there anything else you would like the readers to know about the division?

As a division in our infancy, we really hope to gain continual support and engagement from our membership so that DoSEAA can grow and develop. We truly hope that DoSEAA can be the "professional home" for others and remain active for years to come.

How can interested AAPA members join and/or support DoSEAA?

AAPA members can officially join DoSEAA by adding our division to their AAPA membership dues. Given that we are a new division, AAPA members can also support DoSEAA by referring others who may be interested in joining our growing division and joining us for upcoming events open to AAPA members.

For more questions or inquiry about DoSEAA, where can we reach out?

doseaa.communications@aapaonline.org



Meet the DoSEAA Executive Committee



Thanh Nguyen (she/her)
PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow
Seattle Children's Autism Center



Uyen Sophie Nguyen (she/her)
MA, School Psychology Doctoral Candidate
Fordham University



Seint Kokokyi (she/her)
PhD, Assistant Professor & Clinical Health Psychologist,
Dept. of Clinical Health Psychology
Max Rady College of Medicine University of Manitoba



Nancy Truong (she/her)
PhD, Clinical Assistant Professor
Arizona State University



Pa Her (she/her)
PhD, Clinical Assistant Professor
University of Wisconsin-Madison

DOSEAA MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



Tri Nguyễn

HE/HIM

What is your cultural background and identity?

Vietnamese American

What is your affiliation (e.g., program name, workplace)?

Counseling Faculty at San Diego State University, Therapist in Private Practice

What do you cherish about your cultures?

Our rich history and traditions, particularly, our collectivist and interdependent cultural values.

How did you come to find and become involved with AAPA in general and DoSEAA in particular?

I've been a member of AAPA since 2009 when I was working toward my master's degree in MFT. However, I was not actively involved in AAPA until early 2023 when a DoSEAA member posted about connecting with other Vietnamese-speaking therapists. I was like, what a great idea! Since then, I've enjoyed connecting with fellow AAPA members regularly to discuss clinical issues, research projects and share resources/experiences related to working with Vietnamese populations.

Could you tell us about your current work and professional interests?

I have been a counseling faculty at San Diego State University for just over a year. So far, I like this new role working with college students while navigating my way around campus as a faculty rather than a student. I continue to enjoy working with couples and families in my private practice and doing workshops in the community where I get to practice in my native language. My clinical and research interests include culturally responsive counseling with AAPINH, and more specifically, intercultural counseling with Vietnamese populations in the US and Viet Nam. I am also interested in social constructionist ideas and practices, couples/family therapy, solution-focused therapy and narrative therapy.

Please share a fond or meaningful memory of your experience in AAPA/DoSEAA.

Earlier this summer, I appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the workshop on working with SouthEast Asian Communities with Dr. Pa Her and Thanh Nguyễn. I really enjoyed connecting with Pa and Thanh while preparing for the workshop and learning from each other in the process.

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

I am older and hopefully a bit wiser. Also, my thinking about therapy and multicultural counseling has shifted from “how can I be culturally competent” to “how can I support clients exploring their cultural traditions and values that promote their mental health and emotional well-being” through incorporating a decolonizing framework.

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

If you have the opportunity, learn and practice in your native language. It makes a big difference for our communities to have access to bilingual clinicians. Ask your program directors about intercultural and decolonizing counseling practices with AAPINH populations. Share with them your experiences, if any, about how Eurocentric theories and practices contribute to access/barriers to care for many AAPINH and other BIPOC communities.

Social Media Handles

Instagram: [@tringuyenmft](https://www.instagram.com/tringuyenmft)

What is your membership level?

Professional

“I’ve enjoyed connecting with fellow AAPA members regularly to discuss clinical issues, research projects and share resources/experiences related to working with Vietnamese populations”

What are some of your hopes for the future?

I hope for a peaceful end to the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East. I would love to see multicultural counseling courses being replaced by indigenous-driven theories and practices for AAPINH and other BIPOC populations.

MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



Richard "Rich" Chang

HE/THEY _____

What is your cultural background and identities?

I am the child of Hmong refugees, born and raised in the Central Valley, California. I am also a first-generation college student, queer, and able-bodied. I give thanks to my Elders who continue to guide, teach, nourish, and protect me.

How did you come to find and become involved with AAPA?

My need for community led me to find AAPA. During undergraduate studies (and even now), many of my professors are White and cisgender, even though the institution is categorized as a minority serving institution (MSI). I found myself feeling bored, frustrated, and sometimes, hypervisible when speaking about the lack of diversity and social justice. I found myself looking for others who share similar identities and experiences and AAPA was that for me.

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

My advice for students is to seek mentorship, someone to guide, support, encourage, and inspire you to reach your goals. I have been extremely fortunate to have mentors who share similar identities and experiences. Because of their mentorship, I am thriving in academics, scholarship, and service. Sending love, appreciation, and gratitude to Drs. Gloria Wong-Padoongpatt, Angela-Minhtu Nguyen, Que-Lam Huynh, Rosa I. Toro, & those who I did not name, you know who you are.

How can members best take advantage of their AAPA membership?

The best way members can take advantage of their AAPA membership is to be involved. For students who would like to know more about graduate school and other career opportunities, sign up to meet with scholars, faculty, and practitioners during AAPA's Mentor Office Hours Program. AAPA members are always sharing resources through the listserv, so please check those out. They are often free and a great way to learn more about the field.

What are some of your hopes for the future?

One of my hopes is to see the Division on Southeast Asian Americans (DoSEAA) grow. There are so many SEAs out there seeking community but do not know that DoSEAA exists. As we grow, I hope we can continue to build community, support each other at different phases of our careers, and offer mentorship and collaborations.

Another one of my hopes is to see where AAPA goes next—we're in good hands. It's inspiring to see the wonderful things folks are doing within the community and to see how we support and uplift one another. I know many of us are looking forward to meeting in-person again at AAPA's convention so more news will come later. *wink*

Which Divisions are you a member of?

Division on Students, Division on LGBTQQ, Division on Southeast Asians

Social Media Handles

Instagram: [@richardrichchang](#)

Twitter: [@richardrichcha](#)

What is your affiliation (e.g. program name, workplace)?

Psychological & Brain Sciences PhD Program with an emphasis in Social Psychology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

“It’s inspiring to see the wonderful things folks are doing within the community and to see how we support and uplift one another”

Anything else you would like to add about your AAPA experience?

Because of my involvement within AAPA, I've met so many wonderful people—we've cried, laughed, danced, and most importantly, continue to love—that inspires me to keep doing social justice work. AAPA is my home and I hope many individuals continue to find a home in AAPA.

MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT



Tatum Leclair

SHE/HER _____

What is your cultural background and identities?

I am a transracial Chinese adoptee and a cisgender woman. I grew up in Massachusetts.

How did you come to find and become involved with AAPA?

Shujianing Li invited me to be an incoming assistant co-chair for the annual convention's mentoring committee! I had been curious about AAPA and it was the perfect opportunity to get involved and meet other members.

Please share a fond or meaningful memory of your experience in AAPA.

I have many—although all online thus far, I am excited to meet people in person! Something that really stood out to me was, in addition to being so impressive and prolific, everyone is so very kind, welcoming, and encouraging at AAPA. People take the time to check in and get to know you, and are eager to celebrate and acknowledge others and their work.

How can members best take advantage of their AAPA membership?

I think the most valuable way is by making connections and meeting people. Learning follows from there, so join a division, volunteer, apply for opportunities, etc.

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

Get involved! Volunteer, apply for opportunities, reach out to potential mentors, and get a pulse on current issues the community is facing or researching.

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

As a PhD student about to start dissertating, I am still early in my career. However, I did take a year off after completing my Master's to apply to schools, and was very insistent starting my PhD that maintaining my mental health was vital. So far, I'm content with how I prioritize my health, time, and self-kindness, because graduate school is stressful.

What do you cherish about your cultures?

I really admire the resilience and innovation of Chinese Americans, looking back at our history. And of course, the rich traditions, holidays, and food. As for the transracial Asian adoptee community specifically, watching the growth in the past few years online has been really powerful. Having our range of experiences be seen and represented and having opportunities to connect are really important to me since we occupy our own unique piece of the diaspora.

What does an ideal society look like to you?

One that is diverse, curious, equitable, kind, compassionate, and accountable.

Social Media Handles

LinkedIn: Tatum Leclair, MA

Instagram: @teamashaaa

Which Divisions are you a member of?

Division on Students (DoS) and Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans (DMAA).

What are some of your hopes for the future?

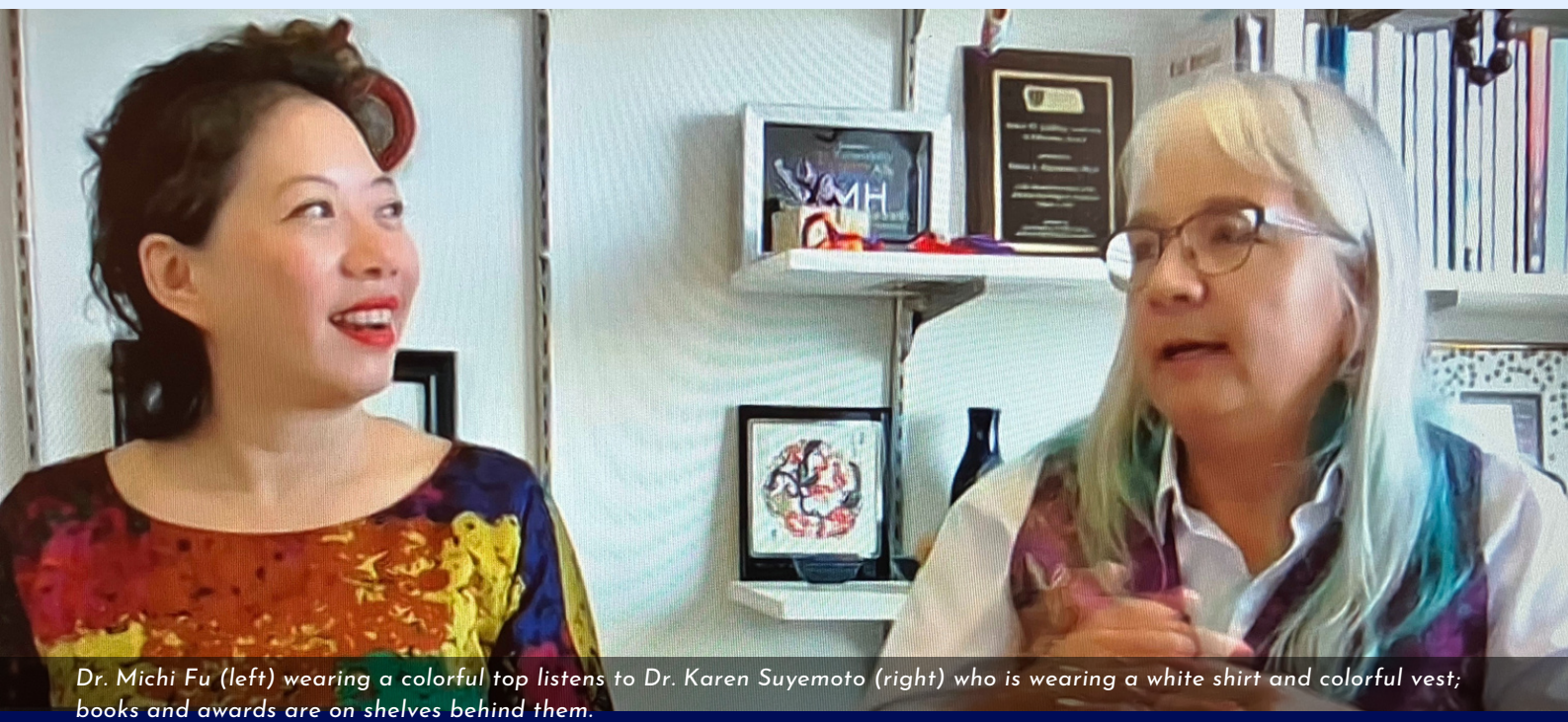
To complete my doctorate in the next couple of years! And grow ASHAAA—A Safe Haven for Asians and Asian Americans. I'm a cofounder along with fellow AAPA member, Shujianing Li, and am very excited about the community work we've been doing. Supported by AAPA and the National Council of Asian and Pacific Americans (NCAPA), we launched an advocate burnout toolkit for managers of NCAPA organizations in 2022. It's also available for free at our website (<https://www.ashaaa.org>) and we welcome any feedback. Currently we are working on developing a burnout toolkit for BIPOC students at the University of Minnesota.

AAPA Division on Women Presents

Digital HerStory Project with Dr. Karen Suyemoto

Interviewed by Michi Fu, PhD

by Sue H. Kim, PhD



Dr. Michi Fu (left) wearing a colorful top listens to Dr. Karen Suyemoto (right) who is wearing a white shirt and colorful vest; books and awards are on shelves behind them.

From her beautiful campus office with a tranquil view of sailboats in nearby Boston Harbor, Karen Suyemoto, PhD shared about painful times of feeling alone and angry in grad school, “hating social stuff” as an introvert, and then being warmly welcomed by AAPA women. She recalled that Drs. Gisela Lin, Alice Chang, Reiko True, and Christine Iijima Hall were all “really warm and positive.”

Dr. Suyemoto didn't know in grad school that she should go to conferences, but she saw Gisela Lin, a fellow student, assisting with conference registration, so she volunteered as well. Feeling bad and awkward at Division 45 dances and social hours (torture for those of us who are introverts), Dr. Suyemoto found AAPA to be a place where she could “be seen and make a difference.” It was easier to make conversation with others at AAPA where she was actively welcomed and invited to move into leadership.

In particular, Dr. Alice Chang was a special role model for Dr. Suyemoto. "She was a firecracker, warm, always positive, pushing for more representation and involvement, not scared of anything...[while] I was scared a lot." Not only did Dr. Chang "get intersectionality...structurally," she also bravely pushed against sexism and the old boy network, [even] within the Asian American psychology community.

Despite feeling "frankly terrified," Dr. Suyemoto lobbied hard to get AAPA's Executive Committee to approve the organization having divisions, arguing that we needed a division on women and that "Asian American women have different experiences [than Asian American men do]." Back then, some AAPA leaders were concerned that having divisions might alienate others. Once the decision was approved, "there was a fear that the Division OF Women would seem exclusive so there was strong encouragement that it be [called the] Division ON Women." The entire process was difficult, and Dr. Suyemoto remarked on how her AAPA female elders took a lot of hits along the way.

When asked by Dr. Michi Fu about what she wished someone had told her when she was entering the field of psychology, Dr. Suyemoto echoed what Dr. Iijima Hall said during her DoW Digital Herstory interview: "Not everybody is trustworthy." Also, she wished she "would have been more self-protective and conscious of replenishing [her] energy" along the way. Last year, she was so burnt out that her main goal on sabbatical was to recover from getting "caught up in the bitterness, pain, and anger...of the last two years." She knew she wanted to get centered in love again.

And yet it took Dr. Suyemoto time to learn to "do what [my] values and heart tell me." She recognized that she can be a really angry person, in some moments not holding her vision and values, and becoming who she doesn't want to be. "Oppression can do that," especially in an academic culture dominated by white supremacy.

What does she wish she spent LESS time and energy on? "Worrying I wasn't doing it right... getting tied up with thinking, I'm supposed to... [write the ROI grant, publish the book, etc.]" It took time for Dr. Suyemoto to "root out what success was" when it was easy to get sucked into the loop of achieving. She remarked, "I wish I spent more time on joy."

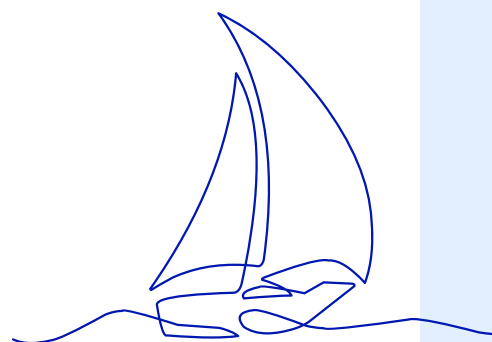
One of her biggest joys has been mentoring students - "I believe in them!" The best compliment she ever got was from a student who told her that, "I pushed him to achieve things he didn't think he was capable of achieving."

Dr. Suyemoto expressed excitement about the energy AAPA's younger folk bring, as well as the attention and care

given to inclusion. "[AAPA is] less sexist, it's less homophobic...we've come forward in our intersectional self." She loved seeing the "outward-facing activism" of AAPA leadership in the past couple years, even though she admits she was mostly "checked out" on sabbatical during that time.

I wish someone had told me, this is gonna be hard — and you're gonna feel it — and it will be okay.

Dr. Karen Suyemoto



Knowing that “a lot of students are still damaged in their [graduate training] programs,” she wishes AAPA could have more energy focused on fostering survival for students and early career professionals. With more town halls, more tiered mentoring, and relational supports, AAPA could promote us “caring for each other.”

Even though she never thought of herself as a leader, Dr. Suyemoto just “had stuff I wanted to have happen...” and as she worked on those goals, she found herself volunteering for leadership positions, even while frightened and unsure of herself. It was hard. She did feel it. And it is better than okay.

Dr. Karen Suyemoto is Professor of Clinical Psychology, Asian American Studies, and Critical Ethnic and Community Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She was interviewed on September 22, 2023 by Dr. Michi Fu as part of the AAPA Division on Women Digital Herstory Project.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Sue Kim



AAPA Postdoctoral Leadership Fellowship Program Q&A

Outgoing program co-chairs Drs. Grace Kim and Nadine Nakamura kindly shared reflections on their 13 years of service together:

What is the AAPA Postdoctoral Leadership Fellowship Program, and how did your involvement in it begin?



Grace Kim, PhD



Nadine Nakamura, PhD

Nadine: The AAPA Postdoctoral Leadership Fellows Program was created by Dr. Karen Suyemoto in 2008. Grace and I were the two fellows in the second cohort of fellows in 2009. I came back as a mentor in 2013 and in 2016. In 2018, I became co-chair of the program with Grace.

Grace: Same first sentence as what Nadine said! I co-chaired the program with Dr. Sam Wan from 2011-2014, was the individual mentor to three psychologists, and co-chaired the program again with Nadine from 2018-2023.

Personally and/or professionally, what has been a valuable lesson for you in your time with the program?

Nadine: Personally, it has been incredibly rewarding to meet and support so many wonderful Asian American early career psychologists. Professionally, it has really shaped my views on what values that I bring to leadership.

Grace: Personally, I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to connect with amazing early career psychologists, as well as mid- to more advanced-career psychologists who mentored our fellows or joined us for professional development panels. All the honest and personal conversations we shared in the program have stayed with me. Professionally, being a leadership fellow and serving as the co-chair helped me consider leadership in a more empowered, nuanced, and relational way.

What is a fond memory and/or noteworthy challenge that you navigated while as co-chair?

Nadine: One challenge that we encountered as co-chairs was the COVID-19 pandemic. We were counting on being able to meet fellows in person at the start of their fellowship year at the AAPA convention, but instead had to develop relationships on Zoom for the majority of our time as co-chairs. Despite this drawback, I will fondly remember the cohorts of fellows we got to know over those years.

Grace: A fond memory I can think of is how Nadine and I worked together to match our fellows with their individual mentors. We would consider what the fellows requested or were looking for, reach out to various mid- to more advanced psychologists, and connect fellows with their mentors. At times this felt a little bit like a professional match-making process, which made us laugh. I am so grateful to all the mentors, because almost always they were quick to say, “Yes,” and were willing to support the fellows’ professional growth.

How has your definition or even your own style of leadership developed over the years while being a part of this program?

Nadine: One feature of the program is that we invite Asian American psychologists in leadership to come to speak to the fellows. Over the years, common themes have emerged, including that most of those leaders are doers who didn’t necessarily see themselves as leaders. I think the lesson there is to not wait until you feel like a leader to start doing leadership.

Grace: This program has done its job in demystifying leadership for me. I started out feeling that I was someone who was willing to step up and do something (or I would say “help doing something”) because work had to get done. But I never really thought that I was a leader. In my mind, a leader was someone who was charismatic and very outspoken, and as an introvert, these qualities didn’t sound like me. Over the years, through my involvement with the leadership fellows program, I have learned that relational leadership that focuses on building community, creating empowering connections, and facilitating the organizational process while having a presence, is my leadership style, which suits and works for me. As a result, I feel much more comfortable with the notion of leadership and feel okay calling myself a leader.

What is a fun fact about your co-chair that you found out about them while in the program? What have you come to appreciate about them?

Nadine: Grace is someone that I can always count on to show up consistently and be present and reflective. I will miss our monthly meetings with the fellows where I got to benefit from Grace’s wisdom and warmth.

Grace: I always appreciate Nadine’s thoughtfulness, kindness, and astute analysis of any situation! Having an opportunity to meet Nadine and work with her for a long time has been the best gift this program has given me. I thank the program not only for the leadership training but also for this friendship with Nadine I gained through it.

Incoming co-chairs Drs. Koko Nishi-Lee and Jan Estrellado also kindly shared their reflections:

What has been your experience with the program, and what led you to assume your positions as the new co-chairs?

Koko: The program is really what brought me back into getting involved with my community and connecting with other AAPI-identified psychologists. I was somewhat jaded and lost in trying to find a professional space when I was starting out as an early career psychologist and this program helped me connect to mentors, trailblazers, and other AAPI-identified psychologists who helped me feel a sense of belonging.

What do you consider as strengths of the program, and how would you like to further develop it?

Koko: I think professionally, the focus on mentorship, networking, and creating spaces for Asian American psychologists to connect, support, and inspire each other is definitely one of the program's biggest strengths. But for me, I have come to appreciate the thoughtfulness, the intentionality and care behind the program's goals towards helping Fellows not just grow and develop their leadership skills on a professional level, but also helping them become more grounded and confident in who they are as a person.

What are you most excited or curious about overseeing the program?

Koko: I am excited to learn from and be inspired by the early-career psychologists in the field! There is so much talent out there, and it's truly exciting to see what research topics, ideas, and projects people are interested in. This selfishly helps me to expand my knowledge and awareness while pushing me to continue growing and evolving both professionally and personally. I also cannot contain my excitement to work alongside my longtime friend Jan!

Who would you like to see return or invite to become even more involved in the program, whether as mentors, guest speakers etc.?

Koko: I would love to see past cohorts return and become involved in the program as much as possible - either as mentors, guest speakers, or to come back for a reunion! I know that there has been some talk about that for a while now because this program has truly created this family of fellows, and it would be really amazing to bring them all back for a reunion!

How do you and your co-chair complement each other? What have you learned about them so far?

Koko: I don't even know where to start - Jan is someone who I look up to and admire so much, and is also one of the people that cracks me up the most! Jan and I have known each other since undergrad, so I feel very lucky to work alongside someone that I trust, I respect and have so much fun with. I love that we have a foundation of friendship and trust already established so that we can be as open and honest with each other or as serious or silly as need be.

2021-2023 AAPA Postdoctoral Leadership Fellows Projects



Minsun Lee, PhD, (she/her) is Associate Professor and Director of Training in the Counseling Psychology PhD Program at Seton Hall University. Dr. Lee conducts research on bicultural identity, racial and cultural experiences in psychotherapy, and the intersectional experiences of Asian Americans. She is also a licensed psychologist in New Jersey and New York, serving primarily Asian and Asian American clients using a relational and structurally-informed approach. She strives for liberatory praxis in research, teaching, and clinical practice.

About Dr. Lee's Project:

Dr. Lee's AAPA Leadership Fellows Project is a structurally and culturally informed psychotherapy training for therapists based on her previous research on Asian American clients' experiences of race talk with White therapists. The training includes education on the historic and current racialization of Asian Americans in the U.S. context, introduction to a structural-cultural-relational model of case conceptualization, and application of the model to psychotherapy to help therapists incorporate structural and cultural analysis into their case conceptualizations and interventions. She plans to implement the training and collect data to evaluate its process and outcome. Please email minsun.lee@shu.edu for more information about the training.

Jenny Qin, PsyD, (she/her) is a licensed clinical psychologist at Georgia State University Counseling Center, where she serves as Training Director for the APA doctoral internship site. In addition to her supervisory and training related work, Dr. Qin's interests include working with the emerging adult population, emotional resiliency skill acquisition, collectivistic values exploration, and intergenerational trauma in the Chinese American community. Her clinical background includes intensive training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) through Behavior Tech, LLC and she often works from a third wave behavioral approach focused on mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions.



About Dr. Qin's Project:

Dr. Qin's AAPA Leadership Fellows Project is a fact sheet on the Chinese Cultural Revolution and its relevant themes as it relates to intergenerational trauma in the affected Chinese diasporic community. The fact sheet includes a general historical overview of the time period and its key events as well as an anthology of resources (e.g. books, websites, articles, videos, etc.) relating to the Cultural Revolution. Finally, it includes a guide to themes of intergenerational trauma designed for therapists working with diasporic community members either of the survivor or second-generation population. Please email qqin@gsu.edu for more information if interested.



Catherine Teotico-Lee, PsyD, (she/her) is a licensed clinical psychologist in California and Washington. She currently works at Framework Associates based in Los Angeles and plans to open her own private practice, HEALeidoscope Therapy, in January 2024, where she plans to serve patients from both California and Washington. Dr. Teotico-Lee specializes in racial/cultural identity, immigration/acclulturation, ADHD, anxiety and depression.

About Dr. Teotico-Lee's Project:

Dr. Teotico-Lee's AAPA Leadership Fellowship Project is a podcast called HEALeidoscope. In the podcast, she discusses a kaleidoscope of topics around healing and mental health with the aim of destigmatizing, demystifying, and decolonizing mental health for all. For the inaugural season, she focuses on specific Asian American mental health issues, with the hope of expanding to other marginalized groups in the future. Three episodes have been released so far, highlighting the following issues: Race, culture, and the Asian American experience; colonial mentality in Filipino American communities; and the Chinese Cultural Revolution and its effects on intergenerational trauma.

Dr. Teotico-Lee would love to highlight more Asian American psychologists and other mental health issues in the coming episodes, so if you would be willing to lend your voice and expertise, she invites you to reach out to her at drcat.teotico@gmail.com. She is looking for clinicians who would be willing to discuss a variety of issues, so please don't hesitate to reach out!



Podcast

Healeidoscope

Dr. Catherine Teotico-Lee, Psy.D.

To listen to the podcast, here is the link: [Healeidoscope with Dr. Catherine Teotico-Lee, Psy.D.](#)



Making Mental Healthcare Affordable Without Sacrificing Mental Health Professionals' Welfare

by Nicole Benquechea, MA

“Sometimes I feel frustrated about our economic burden and wonder who advocates for our financial well-being?”

Gitika Talwar, PhD

Recognizing the total costs of the mental health crisis affecting our nation is essential. If left untreated, mental health disorders can impact children, adults, families, and communities emotionally and economically. In June, **Dr. Gitika Talwar (she/her)**, a Ph.D. community-clinical psychologist, discussed the challenges faced by private practitioners. She emphasized the need for better working conditions, affordable mental health, and self-care, as significant concerns can affect one's ability to live comfortably and securely.

In a recent conversation with Dr. Talwar, I gained valuable insights into the state of mental health practitioners. According to Dr. Talwar, clients seeking mental health services should not be made to feel guilty, but instead, we should collectively hold the mental health system accountable for creating change. The struggles faced by mental health practitioners are complex and multifaceted, and Dr. Talwar's private practice has shed light on significant issues. Specifically:

- ▶ **Lack of funding.** The government provides limited mental health services and counseling funding. This lack of funding is one of the significant contributors to the shortage of mental health therapists. Many mental health providers must rely on private insurance or self-pay to cover their services.
- ▶ **Poor reimbursement rates.** Insurance companies or government programs often do not adequately reimburse mental health providers, leading to low provider reimbursement rates, which can deter providers from entering or remaining in the field.
- ▶ **Low retention.** The current number of mental health professionals does not meet the population's needs, partly due to the low reimbursement rates. Still, mental health is not a particularly attractive profession to younger generations because of its stigma.
- ▶ **Increased need for services and limited access to care.** The increased demand for mental health services is outpacing the supply of providers. In addition, clients, especially those in rural areas, often have limited access to care because of a lack of public transportation or proximity to a mental health facility. And mental health providers often choose not to work in rural areas because of poor reimbursement rates and low pay. These factors can prevent people from getting the treatment they need.

Dr. Talwar has a Ph.D. in community-clinical psychology from the University of Maryland. Her training included working with asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, and individuals born and raised in the U.S. She continued her work after graduation by supporting a Native American tribe and exploring the impact of colonization, genocide, and intergenerational trauma on native mental health. Dr. Talwar's professional identity is shaped by her work with communities that have experienced the effects of systems on mental health. As a mental health advocate, Dr. Talwar addresses the impact of systems on mental health. She believes that relying solely on medication is insufficient, especially when access to necessities such as clean drinking water or justice for victims of domestic violence is lacking. Dr. Talwar has always been interested in understanding how the world affects people who suffer, which drew her to become a community clinical psychologist.

Dr. Talwar noticed that her colleagues at her private practice were struggling to make ends meet and had to supplement their income by working at other organizations. This led her to understand the importance of financial independence for long-term security and retirement planning. Health insurance is also a significant benefit that most private practitioners cannot access, unlike their counterparts who work for specific organizations. Considering her personal experience with income and health insurance, Dr. Talwar began to wonder how private practitioners could protect themselves and their finances.



Photo by SHVETS production

According to Dr. Talwar, mental health professionals are integral to their communities and possess valuable resources from their professional expertise and personal experiences. They should recognize their clients' humanity and provide them with long-term support rather than just damage control during a crisis. Focusing solely on damage control may lead to burnout and is not a sustainable mindset. Mental health professionals should prioritize their needs, including baseline and income requirements, to prevent burnout. By taking care of themselves first, they can better support their communities without feeling resentful or burnt out.

To address the financial needs of mental health practitioners, it is essential to partner with organizations such as the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) and the American Psychological Association (APA). These organizations can facilitate organizational change and advocacy to create systems that support therapists, allowing them to offer better support to their communities. Dr. Talwar encourages practitioners to discuss their needs and not feel ashamed for having them. To work sustainably, therapists must identify and meet their needs. Dr. Talwar also believes that therapists must be aware of the financial challenges that their clients may be facing. She encourages therapists to ask their clients about their financial situation and to be flexible with their payment arrangements. Dr. Talwar believes everyone deserves access to quality mental health care, regardless of their financial situation.

Dr. Talwar kindly shares resources for AAPA members and practitioners to access affordable mental health care, set up referrals with their clients, affordable therapy programs, and learn about their finances. You can find these resources at:

- ▶ Modern Union: <https://modernunion.org/>
- ▶ Therapy Fund Foundation: <https://therapyfundfoundation.org/providersignup/>
- ▶ Mental Health Liberation: <https://mentalhealthliberation.org/therapists/>
- ▶ Asian Mental Health Collective: <https://www.asianmhc.org/lotus-therapy-fund/>
- ▶ The Loveland Foundation: <https://thelovelandfoundation.org/faq/>
- ▶ NAMI Seattle: <https://namiseattle.org/support-resources/bipoc-mental-health-resources/>
- ▶ *Lean In*. MAKE BANK (LIMB): <https://www.heyttiffany.com/us>
- ▶ The Money Sessions Podcast: <https://www.heyttiffany.com/author/gypsieoktober9876/>
- ▶ Therapy Reimagined: <https://therapyreimagined.com/modern-therapist-podcast/overcoming-your-poverty-mindset/>

As a society, we often overlook mental health care, and the stigma surrounding mental health only exacerbates the issue. It's crucial to recognize that mental health care is just as important as physical health care and deserves equal attention. By working together and advocating for change, we can ensure that mental health care is accessible and valued by all who need it. Like Dr. Talwar, mental health care providers must recognize the risk of undervaluing their services and prioritize their mental health. Neglecting mental health systems and institutions not only stigmatizes those seeking help but also undervalues the efforts of mental health practitioners. Open discussions and advocacy for mental health are essential to ensure that it is included in all conversations.

“I REALIZED THAT I BROUGHT IT ON MYSELF”

Navigating Interpersonal Shame in the Face of Internalized Discrimination



BY EMI ICHIMURA, MS (SHE/HER) & KOJI TOHMON, BS (HE/THEY)

For many of us, the recent surge in anti-Asian messages and discriminatory behavior has evoked a painful yet familiar experience. According to data collected from March 2020 to December 2021, there were 10,905 reported hate incidents, including racially motivated assault, vandalism, robbery, and homicide against Asian Americans (Yellow Horse et al., 2022). Nearly a third of all Asian American adults expressed concern about being threatened or physically attacked, which is the highest percentage of any racial or ethnic group (Pew Research Center, 2021). The “perpetual foreigner” narrative continues to be an aching reality for Asians residing in the United States. It is increasingly important for us to delve into the interplay between these geopolitical factors and our individual lived experiences as psychologists wanting to support the AAPA community.

In August 2022, my lab surveyed 224 Asian American adults from Prolific on their experiences with shame, or “a highly unpleasant self-conscious emotion arising from the sense of there being something dishonorable, immodest, or indecorous in one’s own conduct or circumstances” (APA). We also asked about how frequently participants encountered discrimination (e.g., “You are called names or insulted”; Williams et al., 1997) and how they responded to such events. All but one participant indicated that they experienced discrimination at least once a week.

We stumbled upon something rather intriguing in our research. When encountering discrimination, 34.82% of the participants in our sample responded “yes” to the prompt, “I realized that I brought it on myself.” We conducted a moderation analysis and found that among individuals who had low levels of interpersonal shame, denying this self-attributing belief (in essence, “I did not bring it on myself”) had a protective effect against loneliness. However, those who scored high on interpersonal shame and denied self-attribution had the highest level of loneliness in our sample. This finding contradicted our initial hypothesis, as we had expected that internalizing the event by blaming themselves would lead to increased feelings of loneliness, and that rejecting the self-attributing belief would have a protective effect for all levels of interpersonal shame. To gain a deeper understanding of these results, we delved into what it meant for participants to respond “no” to this specific prompt.

Saying you did not bring the event on yourself when the event still happened means that you acknowledge that you had no control over the situation, and that it would have happened regardless of what you have done. This minimizes self-blame, but also portrays discrimination as an inescapable, unchangeable reality. While the response intuitively seems more protective, that was not the case for participants with high levels of interpersonal shame, who based on previous research, are already more prone to exhibiting hopelessness, a lack of motivation, and disconnectedness (Edlund et al., 2002; Barney et al., 2006; Jorm et al., 2007; Jagdeo et al., 2009; Schomerus et al., 2009; Rüsche et al., 2014). Thus, it is possible that those with high levels of shame report feeling lonelier precisely because they are aware of the scale of the issue of discrimination, and that it is not possible for a single person to effectively combat it. Without subsequent consideration or a concrete plan of action, this naturally ends in the surrender of one’s own personal agency.

Reflecting on the wisdom shared during the APA Division 45 conference in July, a statement from Dr. Nadine Nakamura has stuck with us: “Systemic oppression thrives on us internalizing our own oppression and staying silent.” It is clear that internalization occurs when we blame ourselves or take responsibility for the pain we experience, or even when we deny the existence of the experience altogether. However, what struck us in our research is that the meaning of internalization varied depending on an individual’s susceptibility to interpersonal shame.

Individuals contending with high levels of interpersonal shame and an awareness of the systemic nature of discrimination often confront a complex challenge that appears to exceed their individual control. If their feelings of shame do not hinder them from sharing their experiences and, moreover, allowing those experiences to be contained and held by others, their awareness of discrimination can play a protective role. However, it seems that for many, the burden of shame they carry prevents them from seeking the social support they need to address the issue or cope with it effectively.

This calls for further research in understanding this trend, as it could prompt a reevaluation of our conversation around discrimination. Focusing solely on systemic racism without acknowledging and addressing the underlying shame experienced by individuals may inadvertently exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation. Consequently, this disengagement can further perpetuate the marginalization of Asians and Asian Americans within U.S. society (Storer et al., 2020). The poet Cathy Park Hong wrote, "To be Asian in America during the time of coronavirus is to feel very alone... But it's a different form of isolation carved out by that insidious model-minority myth, with its implication that as long as you worked hard and didn't ask for handouts, racial inequities could be overcome."

"Systemic oppression thrives on us internalizing our own oppression and staying silent."

We emphasize the significance of not only combating systemic oppression but also supporting individuals in navigating their shame and finding ways to foster connections. For many Asian Americans, the commitment to social harmony often takes precedence over confrontational and proactive coping strategies. However, it is worth considering that upholding social harmony can manifest in various ways (Noh et al., 1999; Moore & Constantine, 2005; Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006).

Shame can lead individuals to believe they are isolated, but empathic connection serves as a powerful antidote to this feeling. Cultivating empathy, whether through therapy, support groups, or simply seeking a deeper understanding of others' experiences, can help individuals recognize that they are not alone, although it will not be as simple and straightforward as it sounds. By focusing on resisting the belief that one's individual identity is not worthy of respect or belonging, we can work towards a more empowering approach that minimizes the isolating impact of discrimination.

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE MELENDRES, LCSW

2023 FILIPINO YOUNG LEADERS PROGRAM DELEGATE TO THE PHILIPPINES

by Jeannie E. Celestial, PhD, MSW



FYLPRO Closing Ceremony, Seda Residences Makati:
Left to Right: Leezel Tanglao, FYLPRO President;
Christine Melendres, FYLPRO Delegate;
Joanna Duarte, Senior Director, Social Development,
Ayala Foundation



Christine Melendres, FYLPRO Delegate at
Malacañang Museum - Presidential Museum
and Library

In Summer 2023, **Christine Melendres (she/her)** (AAPA Division on Filipinx Americans Co-Coordinator for Mentorship) was selected for the 10th cohort of the Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO). FYLPRO is a collaboration between the Philippine Embassy, Consulates General in the U.S., and the Ayala Foundation. Christine was chosen as a delegate due to her demonstrated leadership in providing culturally responsive mental health services to the Filipino community. I got a chance to interview Christine about her prestigious award and immersion experience in the Philippines.

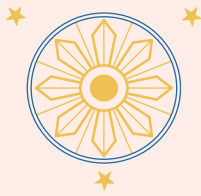
Jeannie (JC): *What is the Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO)?*

Christine (CM): FYLPRO is a network of high-performing, next-generation leaders who advance the Philippines and the Filipino people through their advocacy and expertise in various industries. FYLPRO's mission is to expand the pipeline of Filipino young leaders in the diaspora. By connecting them to the motherland, FYLPRO fosters collaborative multinational relationships that create innovation and support the socio-economic progress of the global Filipino community.

JC: *What led you to apply for the program?*

CM: I knew that the FYLPRO Immersion Program would afford me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to network and build community with like-minded Philippine- and U.S.-based visionaries, committed to making systemic positive changes.

I wanted the opportunity to deepen my knowledge and understanding of the Philippines. I was eager to learn about challenges facing the Philippines. I wanted to engage with other leaders and experts who could inform my work as a mental health leader within the Filipino American community.



JC: Do you identify as a balikbayan? What does the term mean to you personally?

CM: "Balikbayan" is a combination of two Filipino words: "balik," which means "return," and "bayan," which means "home" or "town." I do consider myself a balikbayan because I was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the U.S. when I was 3.5 years old. This FYLPRO visit allowed me to immerse myself in the Filipino culture, traditions, and hospitality of the Philippines. I was also able to reunite with my parents who now reside in the Philippines as well as spend time with extended family.

JC: How did returning to your ancestral country feel different as a FYLPRO delegate?

CM: It felt different as a FYLPRO delegate because in the past, I would typically visit the Philippines when someone from my extended family passed away. The FYLPRO Immersion Program provided me with a unique opportunity to learn from inspiring mentors and immerse myself in the Filipino culture and community. It broadened my horizons, expanded my network, and allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the issues and challenges facing the Filipino diaspora. The Program had a profound impact on my life. This experience was truly transformational and life-changing for me. Throughout the Program, I gained invaluable knowledge, skills, and perspectives that have empowered me as a leader, therapist, and entrepreneur.

JC: Who are some memorable people you met on the trip?

CM: I was honored to meet former Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. Jose L. Cuisa, Jr. and Mrs. Victoria J. Cuisa, whose vision brought FYLPRO to life in 2012. I also had the privilege to meet the current Ambassador Jose Manuel "Babe" del Gallego Romualdez.

I also met the co-founder of MindNation, Cat Triviño. MindNation is a Mental Health platform that provides online therapy, training and seminars, and crisis helplines.

Another person I met was Dr. RJ Naguit, a Public Health and Mental Health Consultant. He's an advocate, passionate about programs that address the needs and challenges of vulnerable, marginalized populations in the Philippines.

Papel De Liha, fondly known as "PG," was our tour guide during the Arts & Culture Day. She also serves as the President of the Cebu Association of Tourguides Inc. PG made Philippine history come alive at various historic sites, blending storytelling with humor, wit, and passion.

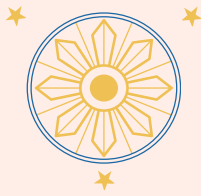
Lastly, my most cherished interactions were with the other FYLPRO delegates, dedicated to making positive impacts both in their communities and beyond. Their unwavering commitment and passion for their causes are truly inspiring. To learn more about these remarkable delegates, please visit:

<https://fylpro.org/filipino-young-leaders-program-announces-2023-immersion-cohort/>

JC: Do you feel that attitudes toward mental illness and therapy are changing in the Philippines? If so, how?

CM: There is a noticeable shift in attitudes toward mental illness and therapy in the Philippines, which reflects a broader global trend towards increased awareness and acceptance. There are now more mental health education and programs that help provide information about mental health and the benefits of therapy. Moreover, Filipinos have greater access to information about mental health and therapy because of the internet and social media. Online platforms also provide a safe space for individuals to seek help. Furthermore, advocacy groups have formed to champion mental health issues.

The stigma around mental illness remains a deeply ingrained cultural issue. Some individuals, particularly those from older generations, may still view therapy and mental health challenges negatively. This highlights the need for continued efforts to destigmatize mental health struggles and therapy.



At the macro level, it's essential to implement policies and allocate resources to provide accessible and affordable mental health services. On the micro level, individuals can contribute to change by openly discussing mental health, offering support to those in need, and seeking therapy themselves when required.

The gradual shift in attitudes toward mental illness and therapy in the Philippines is a promising development, but it will require ongoing efforts from all sectors of society to create a more accepting and supportive environment for those dealing with mental health challenges.

FYLPRO Closing Ceremony, Seda Residences Makati. The 2023 FYLPRO Delegates in alphabetic order are:

1. Tracy Badua (San Diego, CA)
2. Arienne Calingo (South Bend, IN)
3. Walbert Castillo (Las Vegas, NV)
4. Nikki Chan (Stockton, CA)
5. Yana Gilbuena (Oakland, CA)
6. Trish La Chica (Mililani, HI)
7. Athena Lao (Astoria, NY)
8. Juslyn Manalo (Daly City, CA)
9. Cindy Martin (Chicago, IL)
10. Christine Melendres, (San Ramon, CA)
11. Lourdes Moldre (Vallejo, CA)
12. Christian Osmena (Phoenix, AZ)
13. Rey Paolo Roca (Norwalk, CA)
14. Jan Tancinco (New York, NY)
15. Patricia Tumang (Glendale, CA)



Jeannie E. Celestial, PhD, MSW, (she/her) is the Co-Coordinator for Mentorship for AAPA Division on Filipinx Americans. She is a co-editor and co-author of *Clinical Interventions for Internalized Oppression* (Cognella, 2023). Reach her at jeannie@drcelestial.com.