

University of Massachusetts Boston  
Asian American Studies Program



Graduation Celebration  
2018-2019

28 May 2019

## Asian American Studies Program Affiliated Faculty – May 2019

Ping-Ann Addo, Associate Professor, Anthropology  
Pratyush Bharati, Professor, Management Science and Information Systems, College of Management  
Elora Chowdhury, Professor and Chair, Women's and Gender Studies  
Patrick Clarkin, Associate Professor, Anthropology  
Loan Dao, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development  
Xiaogang Deng, Associate Professor, Sociology  
Christopher S. Fung, Senior Lecturer, Anthropology  
Richard Hung, Associate Professor, School for the Environment  
Sari Kawana, Associate Professor, Modern Languages  
Denise Khor, Assistant Professor, American Studies  
Peter Kiang, Professor and Director, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development  
Marlene Kim, Professor, Economics  
Son Ca Lâm, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Haeok Lee, Professor, College of Nursing & Health Sciences  
Andrew Leong, Associate Professor, Philosophy and Law  
Raymond Liu, Professor and Chair, Marketing, College of Management  
Lusa Lo, Associate Professor, Special Education Program, Curriculum & Instruction  
Rajini Srikanth, Professor, English; Founding Dean, Honors College  
Lakshmi Srinivas, Associate Professor, Sociology  
Karen Suyemoto, Professor, Psychology & Asian American Studies  
Shirley Tang, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development  
Linda Thiem, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Kim Soun Ty, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Leslie Kim Wang, Assistant Professor, Sociology  
Paul Watanabe, Professor, Political Science and Director, Institute for Asian American Studies  
Zong-guo Xia, Professor, School for the Environment  
Wenfan Yan, Professor, Department of Leadership in Education

### The Program

For over thirty years, UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program has offered intellectually-challenging, emotionally-engaging, culturally-responsive instruction in the classroom with holistic practices of mentoring, community-building, service-learning, and advocacy to address the social and academic needs of students as well as the critical capacity-building needs of local Asian American communities. The program offers the most Asian American Studies courses, faculty, and community linkages of any university in New England. The program's alumni include teachers, social workers, health care providers, business entrepreneurs, and leaders of local Asian American community organizations. By grounding our curriculum, teaching, and applied research in the realities of local Asian American communities and by respecting the knowledge and bilingual/bicultural skills that many UMass Boston students bring to the classroom, the AsAmSt Program creates powerful learning environments for all students to gain critical understanding about the historical experiences, voices, contemporary issues, and contributions of diverse Asian populations in the U.S. Graduate students from any area who have Asian American Studies interests can serve as teaching/research assistants, mentors to undergraduates, and special project developers for the program. AANAPISI students from Bunker Hill Community College and high school students in UMass Boston's pre-collegiate programs or those from partnering community youth programs are encouraged to take advantage of AsAmSt's learning opportunities. Community members and organizations as well as alumni participate in our activities in short- and long-term ways. Since 2010, UMass Boston has been the only research university in New England designated and funded by the U.S. Department of Education as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI).

## Celebrating our 2018–2019 Graduates in Asian American Studies

We proudly celebrate eight undergraduates who have fully completed our six-course program-of-study requirements in Asian American Studies: Nelson Cheung, Sam Fadrigalan, Marylou Francisco, Parmita Gurung, Hang Diem Thi Phan, Channeit Som, Thu Theresa Anh Tran and Megan Truong. They are the newest among 117 AsAmSt concentrators since 2000. We also recognize Penhsmanang Kan and Zainab Salejwala, two graduate students who have been closely affiliated with Asian American Studies prior to and through completion of their master's degrees in Transnational Cultural Community Studies (TCCS). Similarly, we offer fresh congratulations to many dozens of other graduating students who have learned from and contributed to AsAmSt courses and projects as part of their educational journeys at UMB.

*Gratitude always to our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners and to the AANAPISI-funded Asian American Student Success Program for generous AASSP support and assistance! Special appreciation to alumni Phil Le and Phoumara Nuon for faithfully donating again to this year's graduation, and to alumnus Chris Ward and partner, Irene Li, the James Beard Rising Star Chef of Mei Mei Restaurant, for their Double Awesome contribution. Facing yet another year of UMB budget constraints and conflicts, we especially appreciate our support from the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development and College of Education and Human Development.*



Chancellor's Awards for Distinguished Teaching are among the highest honors that UMB faculty can ever achieve. In 2019, Karen Suyemoto joins Shirley Tang as the second woman of color in UMB history to gain such recognition, while Paul Watanabe has received the Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Service and Peter Kiang has received both the Distinguished Teaching and Service Awards. Though deeply treasured, we note that the iconography of the award – the university's seal, based on the Massachusetts state seal – is also deeply divisive in its depiction of Algonquian indigenous presence under the sword of the revolutionary settler colonists. The award is weighty in many ways, as its wearer is well-aware. Meanwhile, the subtle, textured shades of brown in the middle image show one of several, frequently wet ceiling tiles in the Asian American Studies Program office in the Phillis Wheatley building (2nd floor, Room O97), and the rainbow-tinted image on the right similarly shows the area above a missing ceiling tile where water frequently drips from the floor above our office during heavy rains. Within our AsAmSt Program space, we proudly but pragmatically produce more than our share of distinguished teaching/research/service moments each year, yet always, as these images suggest in both concrete and conceptual ways, with consideration for the realities and limitations of history and structure, time and place.

# Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies

Nelson J Cheung (張俊輝)



I am a second generation Chinese American. Both my parents immigrated from Hong Kong to New Hampshire where I was born. After a few months, my parents moved to Boston and we settled near Chinatown where I spent most of my childhood.

When I first came to UMass Boston, I honestly did not know of the existence of the Asian American Studies Program. It was thanks to a friend by the name of Kim Soun Ty who suggested that I take Southeast Asians in the US (AsAmSt 225L) with Professor Shirley Tang that I realized just how amazing the Asian American Studies Program is. I ended up taking two more courses taught by Professor Tang, Cambodian American Culture and Community (AsAmSt 270) and Asian American Media Literacy (AsAmSt 370). Shortly afterwards I had to take some time off from UMass Boston due to personal life issues, but when I returned to UMB with three semesters left, I took an AsAmSt course in each of my last three semesters. Boston Asian-American Communities (AsAmSt 423L), Asian American Cultures and Health Practices (AsAmSt 345) and lastly, Asians in the United States (AsAmSt 223L). Somewhere between taking my last two courses, I was made aware of the six-course Asian American Studies Program-of-Study. Upon completion, I was met with relief, simply because I was happy to graduate. But a part of me is also a little sad because it feels like I'm closing a large chapter of my life.

In all the years that I spent at UMass Boston, I never truly looked forward to any class as much as I did an AsAmSt class. The professors are friendly, engaging, and very understanding. Being a part of the AsAmSt Program taught me to see my community in a different light. For example, despite living near Chinatown, I never looked into Chinatown's history. I always saw Chinatown as simply a place to hang out after school or grab a quick and cheap bite. Now I see Chinatown as that and so much more. Chinatown is a place of growth and struggle in its own right, with rich historical events and hidden cultural aspects. Thanks to Peter Kiang's course, Boston Asian American Communities, I was shown parts of Chinatown that I would probably never have known about in my lifetime.

Asian American Cultures and Health Practices was another course that really impacted how I view health habits. One thing I always do now is warn my friends who have that Asian glow that they shouldn't drink because they have a higher risk for certain types of cancer. But more importantly, Asian American Health allowed me to revisit one of the reasons why I stepped away from UMass Boston for a period of time, and analyze how that event may have occurred. This event was my father's passing. Prior to this event I did a video project on my father for a different AsAmSt course, Asian American Media Literacy. This is another unexpected thing I am thankful for with the Asian American Studies Program. Because of that class, I was able to have the most recent footage of my healthy father before he became bed-ridden by his illness. And for that I'm very grateful to Professor Shirley Tang who gave me that precious opportunity. The Asian American Studies Program has been the best thing ever to happen to UMass Boston, and I am happy that I was able to attend and be a part of the recent 30th year anniversary gallery. I hope that the Program continues to foster the promising UMass Boston community and prospers in its greatness.

As a recent graduate, I am currently looking to start my career. At the moment I'm honestly not sure how my learning in AsAmSt will be useful in my future line of work. However, I know for a fact that I will continue to spread the word and look out for my friends and their health habits. For now, I can definitely say that I will visit the Asian American Studies Program here and there. If my professors will allow it, perhaps I will sit in on a few classes and, if capable, be a guest speaker.

## **S.A.M. Reyes Fadrígalan**

I am a 1.8 generation Filipinx-American. I was born in the Philippines and raised in America. Ever since I could remember, my parents had me immersed in the Philippine culture in Massachusetts. That meant that I got to see my Philippine relatives often, went to Iskwelahang Pilipino (Philippine Cultural School), and danced in traditional Philippine dance companies. Although I have trouble speaking my home country's language (Tagalog), I continue to have a strong sense of my cultural identity and love for my ethnic community.



Before I was introduced to Asian American Studies, the way I viewed myself in terms of ethnic identity and my place within the Filipinx community was full of insecurities. I used to question if I was “true” to my ethnic background since I couldn’t speak my native language. I was told that my looks didn’t match Philippine beauty standards and that I was disregarding cultural expectations. During my first Asian American Studies class on Asian Women in the US, I discovered how important it was to think more deeply about my ethnic identity and how to hold it with pride rather than with discomfort. Asian American Studies helped give me the motivation to reactivate the Filipinx Cultural Club on campus and has fed my passion in mentoring and teaching. Asian American Studies challenged me in a way that I never thought possible. This program has helped me feel grounded in my studies and has carved a career path that I am passionate for.

This program helped me discover where I want to take my future career and how to approach it. Asian American Studies has taught me how to interact with different communities, analyze social environments with a critical and mindful eye, and how to claim the power of my own voice. I am aiming to be involved in programs and non-profit organizations that include mentoring youth from AAPI or LGBTQ+ communities. I will use what I’ve learned in Asian American Studies to teach others the importance of self-reflection and community belonging and engagement.

I would like to thank the Asian American Studies Program and their incredibly hardworking and inspiring faculty for playing a huge role in teaching me the importance of cultural identity and community.

## María Lourdes “Marylou” C. Francisco



I am a Filipina who immigrated to America in 1983. I came with the aspirations of my mother for a better life. My life growing up here, however, was a stark contrast from my protected and stable childhood in the Philippines, being the only child. With all that I have gone through in my teens, 20s, 30s and even 40s, the pursuit of higher education never left me, despite repeated delays, starts and stops.

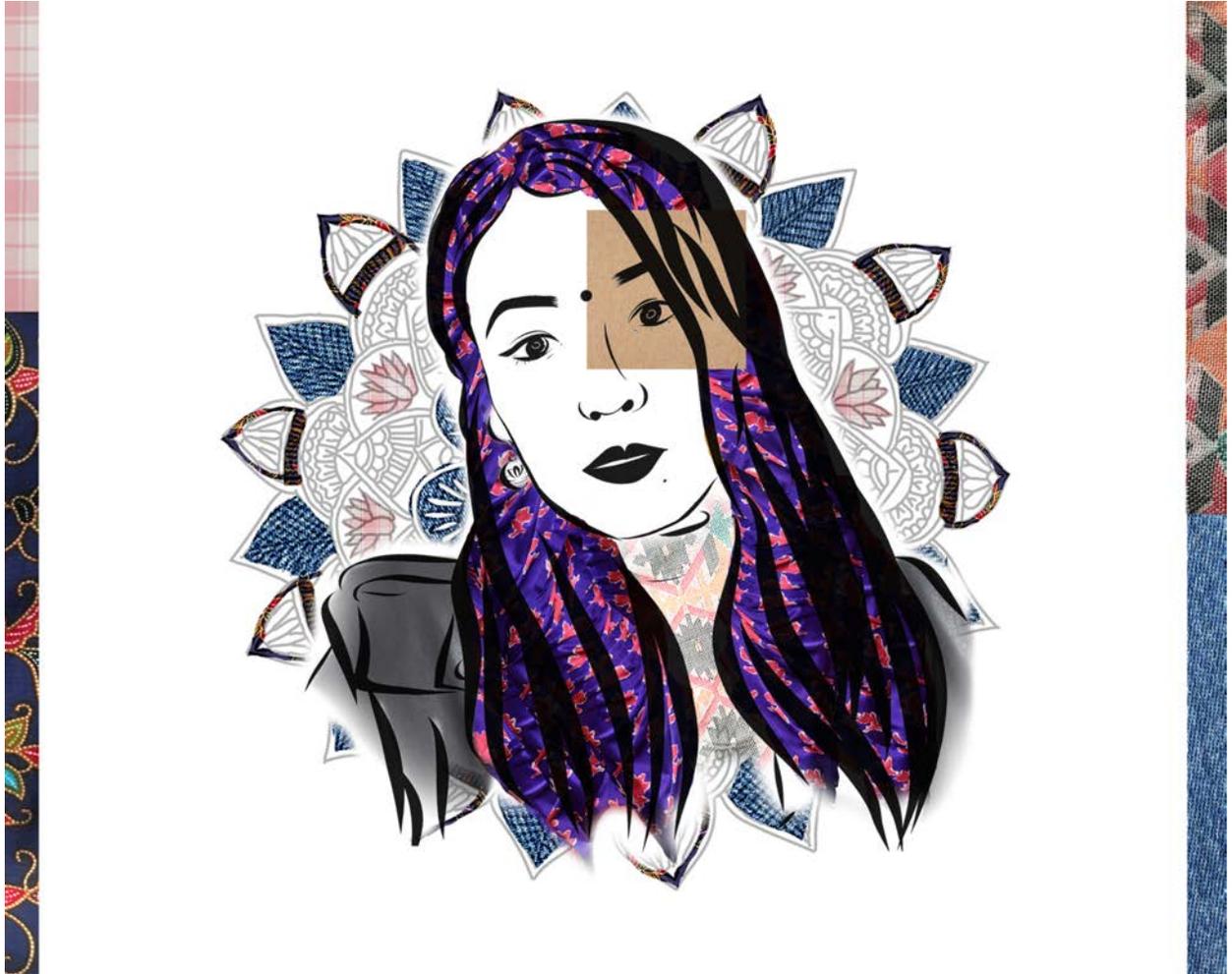
As a non-traditional student, attending UMass Boston was a good fit. I started in Spring 1989. I was among working adult students whose passions include activism, community-building, learning and, self-reformation and reclamation. At that time, there were only a handful of Asian American Studies courses offered and, if I recall correctly, Dr. Peter Kiang taught them all! In each AsAmSt course that I have taken, I found my voice and my relevance. I served the UMB community in student government as a student senator and created life-long alliances. After a long absence from UMB, coming to campus to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Asian American Studies Program re-ignited my desire to complete my own undergraduate degree. And, here I am.

As an Asian American, I never lost sight of the lessons gained from past generations who made their way to the land of the free and the home of the brave. For example, my decision to become a United States citizen came as a result of watching the oral history of an older Asian woman who wanted to be counted; she wanted to be able to vote. I am majoring in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies with a Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies. With each concentration I have learned to listen for and demand the voices of the unheard. Thus far, my career path has taken me through the medical/healthcare field. I know that new roads are ahead.

## Parmita Gurung (पारमीता गुरुङ)

I am a 1.8 generation Nepali American womxn graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. At the core, I am the eldest daughter, *chhori* of two driven immigrant parents who've instilled in me the values of community, hard work, and humility. I am an older sister, *didi* to a fiery, charmingly goofy, and inquisitive young lady, Jess. I recognize that I am a *chhori* not only to my parents, but also my aunts, uncles, and grandparents who've supported my learning and education journey. I am a *didi* not only to my younger sister, but also the 1st- 2nd generation immigrant youth in transnational communities navigating American culture and institutions while staying true to their heritage.

For the majority of my life in academia, I felt the need to compromise my sense of identity and home. In Spring 2016, I took my first AsAmSt course, Southeast Asians in the US with Dr. Peter Kiang and the rest is history. For the first time in a long time, I was thrilled to learn again. The curriculum wasn't anything like I experienced in Nepal's education system, certainly nothing like my ten years in the Boston Public Schools, nor my first year in higher education. AsAmSt gave me the space to reflect deeply and honestly with myself. Upon reflection, I articulated how my involvement in communities and organizations doing grassroots work led me to self-discovery, empowerment, and healing. AsAmSt gave me the tools and platform to speak my truth and share my story. I realized that I was not alone in my fight; I realized the power in numbers. AsAmSt, AASSP, and ASC gave me opportunities to educate and advocate. I learned to reclaim my narrative through storytelling, creating art, facilitating workshops, events, and classes while advocating for the voice, space, and rights that AAPI and immigrant communities deserve.



I gained clarity in my identity as a South Asian American womxn and the systems of power and inequity that govern America. I realized I was merely getting by, keeping my head down and quietly navigating around institutions designed for the success of cis white men. I became hyper-aware of this during my internship at the State House, exacerbated by the reality of the political climate. Still, I am grateful for Linda's Asian Women in the US course for encouraging me to apply for this fellowship. With the Asian American Women's Political Initiative, I learned to channel my anger and resist in more productive ways, one of which is through art. I believe my passion for filmmaking grew stronger while crafting my digital story in Dr. Shirley Tang's Asian American Media Literacy course. I continued to use filmmaking as a communicative and empowering tool to reach stakeholders in effective ways; "moving images move people to make movements" will always stick with me because I experienced it firsthand. Tri inspired me to experiment with different art media and always follow through with intention and impact. Now, I see how intrinsically art, activism, and politics are tied. I am in the process of organizing a digital collective space for other Nepali youth to create and share thought-provoking content addressing social justice issues and realities that generate discourse and change. I hope these projects will ultimately strengthen community/family relationships and bridge intergenerational gaps among Nepali transnational villages.

When thinking about post-grad plans and the future, I often consider what a luxury it is to be able to take the time to soul search for a deeper purpose and fulfillment while our immigrant/ refugee parents had to make ends meet for survival. I am grateful to Kim and Chu for mentoring me through this process of next steps. For youth of color and of low socioeconomic status, it is especially critical for them to feel a strong sense of community, belonging, and identity in a country that makes them feel othered. It is in the resiliency of educators with culturally responsive pedagogies that their students become future community organizers, policymakers, and educators themselves. It is because of UMass Boston's Asian American Studies family and community that I aspire to pursue a career in education. I commit to shaping a transformative educational experience to help nurture the next wave of leaders to thrive and give back to underserved communities in their own unique ways.

## Hang Diem Thi Phan

I am a second generation Vietnamese American woman born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. I was brought up primarily by my mom, a northern Vietnamese woman who left her home with her two sisters from Hanoi to Hong Kong to Texas, and then finally, Massachusetts. My mom has been a single parent for most of my life, which meant that she was the only person providing a source of income for my sister and me. With her working quite often, I was looked after by my Americanized cousins, which in due time, felt that I tapped in my "American" side rather than my "Vietnamese" side. During the summer of my sophomore year of high school, I had the opportunity to work as a teacher's assistant at a Vietnamese community center in Dorchester, called Viet-AID. Feeling disconnected from my Vietnamese roots, I didn't realize how much of a culture shock it was for me to be around so many Vietnamese folks every day. After that summer at Viet-AID, I couldn't help but feel like I needed to know more about my family, my roots, and/or my identity. When I entered UMass Boston as a nursing student, I still felt disconnected, which ultimately affected my grades as well. With the help of the Asian American Student Success Program, I was encouraged to take my first Asian American Studies course, and little did I know that it would change my life.

When I took Southeast Asians in the US, it opened my eyes to a war that affected the lives of my family members. It also opened a conversation I had with my mom about her experiences with the war and her life in general. Through Asian American Studies classes, I have been able to learn more about the histories of my family and the communities around me, as well as my identity as a Vietnamese American woman. At a young age, I was always fascinated by health care and knew I wanted to provide care for a living, so I thought that nursing would be a good fit for me. After learning more about the field, and being more immersed into the Asian American Studies Program, I decided to change majors to Exercise and Health Science, with the intent of going into public health. Through my Asian American Studies classes, I have learned about various health disparities that are targeted towards Asian Americans, and also recent immigrants and refugees.



I am currently working as a clinical research assistant for head and neck related cancers. Within the next few years, I want to obtain a Masters of Public Health, specializing in epidemiology. Through my experiences at UMass Boston, the Asian American Student Success Program, and the Asian American Studies Program, I want to combat the various health disparities that target minorities in order to lessen the gap within health care. Although I am not directly giving care to people, I hope that through research, I am able to develop programs and spread knowledge that I have learned from my Asian American Studies classes. The Asian American Studies Program gave me an outlet to not only be myself, but to be able to explore the layers of my identity. I am forever grateful for the love and support from the professors and faculty within the Asian American Studies Program and the Asian American Student Success Program.

Thank you.

### Channeit Som ( សំ ចាន់នាថ )

I'm a queer, second generation Khmer/Cambodian American from Lynn, MA with a refugee background through my parents. I was born in Boston and have been residing in Lynn ever since. My background is a mix of being surrounded by diversity but also with low-income communities. I didn't grow up in a single family house, but I'm grateful to be living in a 3-family house instead.



Starting my journey with AsAmSt was unexpected. I had been acquainted with a few faculty and students through my sister before coming to UMB myself in Fall 2014. I did not immediately take my first course, until my sophomore year with Peter: SE Asians in the US (AsAmSt 225L). Through this class, I produced my first video project about my parents' migration—this later translated into me doing more work on Khmer American identity. As my AsAmSt classes progressed, I decided to go back to my hobbies, but learned to add a purpose behind projects. Will this be representative of my community and/or myself? If so, how do I frame this in my own way? My identities now became a single description of who I am. I can be queer, Khmer, androgynous, and a leader all at the same time.

I became the president of the Khmer Culture Association on campus and produced a digital story (AsAmst 370) focusing on my coming out story -- which won the Boston Asian American Film Festival Shortwaves competition in 2018. Given the opportunities, I was also able to teach workshops on queer identity in AsAmSt courses through Kim Soun Ty and Linda Thiem. Without AsAmSt and everyone in that office space, I don't think that I would have been able to complete these milestones. The space became my second home and also held many conversations that shaped my path in this Program, whether from personal stories to planning events.

My future plans are continuing to work on projects of my interests and to prepare myself for graduate school. Everything that AsAmSt has taught me, I plan to use—to think critically about what meaningful work is and how to help my own chosen family/community.

This is still a process and not a path that's taken most often. But I'll be trying.  
Stay lit, y'all.

## Thu Theresa Anh Tran



I am 2nd generation Vietnamese American born in Worcester, MA. I currently reside in my hometown Randolph, MA. I am the only daughter of David Dung Quang Tran and Hoa Nhon Le Tran and the youngest sister of Khoa and Vu Tran. I graduate with a major in Psychology and minor in Biology and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I hope to pursue a career in Event Management in the future. I also plan to stay involved with Vietnamese American Community of Boston by being part of the planning process for Tet in Boston and volunteering at Vietnamese Community events.

My brother Vu, graduated from the AsAmSt program-of-study about 5 years ago and always pushed for me to take at least one Asian American Studies class. I always asked him, "But why?" He always said, "I feel that you would really like the classes and plus, you get to learn more about who you are as an Asian American. Who knows! Maybe you would end up liking them." After taking my first AsAmSt class, Intro to Asian American Studies, in the fall semester of my sophomore year, it opened up my eyes on who I am as a Vietnamese American. Asian American Studies also made me feel more connected to my culture, and to understand more in depth about the trauma and family history that my parents have both been through. I always knew my parents struggled migrating to America. However, I never knew the details in between about their migration story. I decided to minor in Asian American Studies to learn more about WHY it is crucial to think about deep topics such as mental health, family dynamics, family expectations, etc, beyond the surface level. I wanted to learn more about who I am and start having more in-depth conversations in the classroom and outside of the classroom with my friends and family. My involvement with Asian American Studies has impacted me as a student here at UMass Boston because it has made me want to inspire my community by going above and beyond to think more, and to become more aware of the importance of having these personal, and important conversations. During my time here at UMass Boston, I have been heavily involved with Vietnamese Student Association, and I always felt that it was important to have the members become more aware about Asian American Studies due to the learning outcomes an individual can take out of it.

Asian American Studies has taught me more about diversity, culture, and community. Wherever I end up in the future, I plan to keep the learning lessons, conversations, key points, and memories I have gained from Asian American Studies in the back of my head. I want to stay involved with Asian American Studies by keeping in contact with professors and attending some Asian American Studies events to show support. This program has helped me become even more empathetic, and that is a trait I will forever have now.

### **Megan Truong (張仁儀)**

First and foremost, I would like to say that being a part of the Asian American Studies Program has been such a privilege, and my gratitude towards the program is immense. I identify as a second generation Chinese Vietnamese American, eldest of four daughters of refugees, and the first in my family to attend a four-year university. I will graduate with a bachelor of science degree in biology and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. Being able to graduate from college is not only for me, but for my family. I was born and raised in Lawrence, Massachusetts where I was often the only Asian American student in the classroom, being compared to Asian American actresses and actors who looked nothing like me, called racial slurs, and outcasted until I was about 10 years old. Since both of my parents worked, I was often not at home, but found solace with friends and the community around me who were majority Dominican Americans. Through this, I was losing my own native tongue to speak Cantonese Chinese as we continued to move around the Lawrence area, but I was able to pick up writing and speaking in Spanish. My family decided to move to North Andover, Massachusetts, a majority Caucasian American community, in pursuit of better educational resources for my sisters and me. Being in North Andover, the racial slurs and

negativity towards Asians and Asian Americans were much worse. In my senior year at North Andover High School, I decided to initiate a student organization along with my sister called the Asian Student Association to promote cultural awareness and diversity for everyone to feel welcome amongst our high school community. Despite our intentions of inclusivity, there was outrage across the school: "Why are you starting this? If you're doing this, I'll start a white club." The morning before our very first meeting, my sister was able to catch a group of Caucasian freshmen boys who wrote *white power* on one of our posters. At this point, there had been countless racial terms defacing our posters, but she was actually able to catch them in the act red-handed. Unfortunately, only one boy was suspended, while the rest were let go. Two boys, in particular in that group, were the president and vice president of the freshman class. I spoke to the school superintendent about the issue, but she just said, "This isn't a witch hunt. We will not suspend everyone." From then on, I made sure that the club was loud and proud, so I researched all I could on the history of Asian Americans, collaborating with other student organizations, having discussions in relation to colorism and other related issues.



I decided to pursue the AsAmSt program of study because of my experience in high school. What I realized when I took Asian American Studies was that I had done so much research on Asian American history in high school, but I didn't even think about the communities and spaces I take for granted, including my own family's history. My first-ever Asian American Studies course was Southeast Asians in the US taught by Son Ca Lam; this changed the paradigm of what I knew. I learned so much about my

family's sacrifices to make it onto American soil, and this all started with small conversations with my own mother. I never thought I would ever hear my mother's refugee story. There were so many underlying complexities, so every time she brought one topic up, she had to introduce another just for more context.

After Son Ca's course ended, I didn't want this process of intentional deep reflection and understanding to stop. From then on, I decided to take on the program-of-study in Asian American Studies along with my major course requirements. Throughout these courses, not only did I discover and rediscover my familial past through communication with my mother, but also reclaimed my own earliest memories. I was also able to apply methods and aspects of what I had learned from Asian American Studies to serve in different leadership positions for student organizations on campus like the Pre-Dental Society. In the course, Teaching and Learning in Asian American Studies (AsAmSt 498) taught by Dr. Shirley Tang, which had a focus on Chinese diasporas, I decided to take on this opportunity to explore more of the ethnic Chinese part of me as I am Vietnamese Chinese American. For the first time ever, I flew on a plane, and my peers and I were able to attend and present at the national Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) conference. That particular weekend happened to be during the traditional Ching Ming holiday to honor ancestors, and what made this trip even more special to me was that I was able to see my maternal grandfather's grave in California for the very first time. He was Chinese, and married to my grandmother who was Vietnamese. He had passed away before I was even born, but even so, this was an endearing moment for me. I was told that I was the second person of the second generation of kids from our family from the East Coast to ever visit my grandfather's grave. That trip immensely impacted me in personal ways I never thought of and reminded me to be thankful for everyone and everything.

My future plans aren't clear, but one of my long-term goals is to become a pediatric dentist; one who won't make patients uncomfortable, especially patients of color and AAPIs. Because pediatric dentists specifically serve children and individuals with disabilities, I aspire to be culturally aware of these patients' concerns, and able to serve patients in a respectful, meaningful way. Growing up, my mom always reminded my sisters and I about how beautiful our teeth are, in contrast to her experience growing up when she didn't have the knowledge nor resources for simple oral health care. I know my mother, my grandmother, and many of my relatives would never be able to smile as confidently as I can, given that my family was fortunate enough to be able to afford oral health care here due to their hard, laborious work to survive in Vietnam, journey as refugees, and build their lives here in America. I have observed my family members' hair turning gray far too quickly, and their hands wrinkled to the bone from exertion compared to others who didn't have to work in difficult jobs. Since my family members used their manual dexterity skills for survival, I have opportunities and choices that my parents didn't have. The field of dentistry values manual dexterity as an essential skill, so it is such a privilege for me to be able to pursue what I want to do, when my parents, relatives, and grandparents didn't have these same opportunities. I can apply this skill in ways to empower patients with a simple smile, to enable individuals to smile as confidently as I can. And if dentistry doesn't work out, public health also interests me, thanks to the course Asian American Health Practices and Cultures taught by Dr. Minjin Kim. This course opened up new avenues for me to address and serve AAPI health needs. Regardless, I am hoping to use what I know through Asian American Studies to serve communities that need resources.

## Recognizing Graduate Student Contributions

### PenhSamnang Kan (កន ពេញសំណាង), M.S., Transnational Cultural Community Studies (TCCS)

I am an international student from Cambodia, and a second-generation child of parents who survived the genocide. I am the first person in my family to come to study in the United States, thanks to the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development (SGISD) and the Institute for Community Inclusion where I worked as a graduate student assistant in film production and editing from 2015 to 2017. My first master's degree capstone research project was an organizational case study analysis and an original 30-minute documentary film focusing on the history, impact, and future vision of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in addressing memory, justice, and healing for people who survived the Cambodian genocide. My second master's degree capstone project was through Transnational, Cultural and Community Studies (TCCS) where I was addressing the intergenerational and creative cultural expression of three Cambodian men in the diaspora, focusing on their history, culture, and art. I have a passionate interest in the role of documentary media and education in addressing the legacy of trauma and genocide in Cambodia and for the Cambodian diaspora. I have also actively worked with the digital storytelling in Asian American Studies co-production team under my faculty advisor, Dr. Shirley Tang since 2015. I love to document and listen to stories because each story has its own beauty and meaning that helps us to learn and develop ourselves through pain, suffering, joy, anger, happiness, love, confusion, survival, life, and death. I believe that these stories are a source for making change.



The AsAmSt Program has been very important for me since I came to study in 2015. The Program is my home in the United States. I am lucky enough to know and to work with Dr. Peter Kiang and Dr. Shirley Tang as my supervisor and my advisor. They provided me with so many opportunities to work as a teaching assistant with several AsAmSt professors and lecturers. I have been a teaching assistant to Dr. Shirley Tang since 2015, helping with such courses as AsAmSt 370 Asian American Media Literacy, AsAmSt 420 Advanced Topics in Asian American Studies: AANAPISI Digital Media, AsAmSt 498 Teaching & Learning in Asian American Studies, and AsAmSt 225L Southeast Asians in the U.S. I was also a teaching assistant for lecturer Kim Suon Ty for AsAmSt 270 Cambodian American Culture and Community and AsAmSt 225L Southeast Asians in the U.S. Kim has been a beautiful and patient mentor, too. From those courses I engaged, I learned, and I came to understand the pain, the life, the survival, the meaning, and the hardships that those diasporic people struggle with as they attempt to find a real home in the United States. The AsAmSt Program inspires me to do more, to grow critically, and to remind myself of the importance of being a human in order to live in this world today. It has allowed me to attain more skills and innovation ideas, and inspired me to document, to produce, to move, and to make a change myself. My education at UMass Boston has helped me to grow critically and allowed me to understand how I can apply my knowledge and research skills in a very meaningful and useful way as a producer to make deep, yet simple storytelling documentaries with messages that everyone in the audience can easily understand and connect with.

My capstone project in TCCS, a documentary centered on oral history that addresses the creative cultural expression of three generations of Cambodian men in the diaspora, allows me to use all the knowledge that I learned from the AsAmSt Program to capture the beauty of the intergenerational cultural expression that is somehow still missing from the larger view, since not many people are interested or want to do this kind of work. Thus, my supervisor and advisor allowed me to address the history and evolution of the Cambodian diaspora, since the culture might be lost if we don't preserve the beautiful art that Khmer people have carried for thousands of years. I try to document the struggles to define home in the Cambodian diaspora, the challenges of being a biracial Cambodian, and the power and energy within the Cambodian diaspora to make change despite the injustice they endure since resettling in the United States. After escaping from war and genocide that the U.S. helped perpetuate, some families arrived here almost 40 years ago, but still fight to live, still fight to survive, still suffer, and still live in pain.

I plan to go back to Cambodia to carry the knowledge and stories that I have learned, especially from the AsAmSt Program. First, I want to share with the younger generation Cambodians who want to learn from my experience. Second, being an international student is not easy, but the value that I will carry as an international student in my country with two graduate degrees will enable me to expand my passion and impact to document and produce change in my Cambodian community which hungers for healing, education, and development. I want to produce more educational videos from a Cambodian perspective in the context of history, art, culture, and language in order to be usable in the Cambodian diaspora community, as well as to educate others about Cambodians and Cambodia. I hope I can continue to collaborate with the AsAmSt Program by providing some resources that the institution needs. And I am proud if some courses in the AsAmSt Program will use my products in the future to share more with the next generation of UMass Boston students.

Zainab Salejwala, M.S., Transnational Cultural and Community Studies (TCCS)



I graduated in 2017 with a BA in Psychology and minored in Asian American Studies and Sociology. As a first-generation college student, I was pretty lost in navigating undergrad life, and grad school was not a fathomable reality. But I went straight into grad school with the encouragement of my mentors and without much inquiry due to my love for learning. I quickly recognized how severely underprepared I was in navigating graduate-level unspoken expectations and workload.

I am forever grateful for the level of depth that Asian American Studies curriculum and pedagogy allowed me to reflect myself in my classroom projects which I carried into grad school. My first year of grad school, Helen Ngo, Madeline Le, Johnny Vo, Katie Mai and I coordinated the Fall 2018 celebration of the 30th Anniversary of Asian American Studies. That opportunity not only gave me the ability to exercise my leadership skills but to engage in the history and co-construction of the history of AsAmSt at UMB. Doing workshops in Linda Thiem's *Asian Women In the U.S* along with my capstone research reminded me why I decided to stay in higher education. Asian American Studies gave me the language, tools, and histories to be able to advocate for Asian Americans and issues in spaces where they may be overlooked.

My graduate degree is for my parents, even if they don't have any idea what I got my degree in nor accept me after. I pursued my degree to start the end of too many cycles of intergenerational internalized trauma. This one is for the closeted people, for my communities, my research participants, students of color, queer Muslims, QTPOC, brown women who get silenced and self-silence, for black and brown bodies that don't get recognized, for students who never see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and for all those deeply hurt by systems of oppression. This one is for the kids who never made it. This one is in honor of all the loved ones in my life who have passed into another life.

I am grateful and thankful for the love and support through this rigorous process from the people and places that continue to be a part of my life and those that are no longer a part of my life. I am thankful for those who reminded me of my potential, resilience and gave me the space to amplify my/our voice. Thank you to Asian American Studies, Dr. Peter Kiang, Tri Quach, Dr. Loan Dao. Thank you to Asian American Student Success Program, Pratna Kem, Sara Boxell, Joyce Wang, Frances Chow. Thank you to Academic Support Programs, Susan Irvings, Polly Welsh, Michael LeBlanc, Meesh McCarthy, Ian Drinkwater, Kathleen Raddatz, and Khaïtan Allen (thank you for all your supportive gestures and keeping me sane). Thank you to Transnational, Cultural and Community Studies, TCCS Faculty and my TCCS Committee, Dr. Karen Suyemoto, Dr. Aminah Pilgrim (hugs) and Dr. Connie Chow. Thank you to my research teammates, Thanh Nguyen and Michelle Stuart. And the most heartfelt thank you goes out to my TCCS cohort, Taina Teravainen, Jeannette Mejia, Mirlande Thermidor, Izzie Villanueva, Allie Richmond, Grace Furtado, Penhsamnang Kan, Jimena Cascante, Fernanda Macedo, Juan Blanco, Myles Green, and friends for always having my back, wiping my tears and making me laugh. Thank you for never letting me quit.

My immediate plans after graduation are to continue as a research assistant with the Honors College, co-teach for Directions for Student Potential, and possibly become a Lecturer in the Fall. I hope to continue social justice and equity work whether it is within higher education institutions or outside of them. Completing an undergraduate and/or a graduate degree is momentous, and I hope you celebrate that.

Keep going. Keep growing.

"Today I celebrate my strength. I have survived." - Joan Larkin

## 2019 Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Teaching - Karen Suyemoto



We proudly applaud Dr. Karen L. Suyemoto as the 2019 recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Teaching. Karen's teaching and advising at all levels of undergraduate and graduate education, and her mentoring of students in the Clinical Psychology doctoral program, in particular, have been highly impactful and greatly appreciated since 2000 when she was first hired in Psychology with a joint appointment in Asian American Studies.

Among numerous contributions to AsAmSt, Karen designed and intentionally cross-listed one of her early signature courses, Asian American Psychology (Psych/AsAmSt 238L) – both to model the integrative, intersectional approaches of her joint appointment and to attract diverse students from each field who could develop shared interests in connecting the areas of psychology and mental health with Asian American populations and contexts. Initially developed in 2004, it has been a consistently popular and well-enrolled course for the past 15 years. One of Karen's unique gifts has been her consistent mentoring of Clinical Psychology doctoral students in their own teaching of Psych/AsAmSt 238L during the past decade, including Thanh Nguyen, Danielle Godon-Decoteau, Fanny Ng, and John Tawa. In Fall 2019, current doctoral student Noor Tahirkheli will offer the course for her first time, again with Karen's support and supervision.

Karen's most recent, direct teaching in Asian American Studies was AsAmSt 200 Introduction to Asian American Studies in 2015 (photos above). Karen created this course originally in 2003 as a way of introducing students not only to the academic field of Asian American Studies, but also to the extensive resources and networks for doing Asian American Studies specifically at UMass Boston. In her 2015 version of the course, she enabled students to conduct research regarding the past, present, and future impacts of the Asian American Studies Program and to produce posters for campus-wide exhibition – some of which re-appeared last year in conjunction with our 30+ year anniversary exhibition.

For these and so many other reasons, we proudly celebrate the university's recognition of Karen's teaching career.

# AsAmSt Program Sampling from 2018-2019

## SGISD Homeplace Transitions



Since becoming rooted within the School for Global Inclusion & Social Development (SGISD) in 2014, AsAmSt students, staff, faculty, and alumni have contributed in multiple ways to advance SGISD's mission, profile, and portfolio, including the Institute for Community Inclusion's 2018 Tomodachi Leadership Training Program (lower left), co-led by AsAmSt alumna Miwa Tanabe.

We appreciate the significant milestones, ongoing support, and fresh opportunities signaled by the retirement of SGISD Founding Dean, Bill Kiernan (lower right), and the administrative transition of SGISD as a robust unit within the College of Education & Human Development, led by Dean Joe Berger (upper right).

Renowned UCLA professor Mitchell Chang's return visit in Fall 2018 to keynote the 25th anniversary celebration of UMB's Higher Education doctoral program also served to remind us that Mitch (upper left) was one of the UMB faculty at the time who co-authored our proposal to have the Asian American Studies Program formally approved by university governance as one of the campus's first explicitly-intercollegiate academic units during the 1990s.

## Community in the Curriculum



Community leaders such as AsAmSt alumna, Jenny Chiang, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Asian American Commission, supervised students from Kim Soun Ty's Spring 2019 AsAmSt 390 Community Internship course, as did UMB alumna Shinobu Ando (AACA), Carolyn Chou and Kevin Lam (AARW), and others. One of numerous speakers throughout the year in AsAmSt courses and events, The Honorable Tram Nguyen, the first elected Vietnamese American state legislator in MA, posted about her visit to Loan Dao's Spring 2019 course, AsAmSt 250G Rise Up! Asian American Leadership and Social Change.



**Tram Nguyen** is at UMass Boston.

February 19 · Boston · 🌐



Pleasure meeting the students of Dr. Dao's Asian American studies class on February 19th, the Day of Remembrance commemorating internment of Japanese Americans. We can't let history repeat itself by allowing our government to treat certain groups as less than. We need to continue to celebrate the contributions that immigrants have made to our great nation. Thanks for the insightful discussion.



## Community-Engaged Research and Practice



CNHS Prof. Haeok Lee with Spring 2019 students in AsAmSt 345 Asian American Cultures and Health Practices at the Vietnamese American Community Center in Dorchester to conduct blood pressure screenings with elders.



Cedric Woods and Lorna Rívera, Directors of the Institute for New England Native American Studies and the Gastón Institute, joined AsAmSt Prof. Shirley Tang at the Office of Community Partnership's 2019 Fireside Chat.



Institute for Asian American Studies Director, Paul Watanabe, presented "Asian Americans in Greater Boston: Building Communities Old and New," co-authored with Shauna Lo, for the 2019 report, *Changing Faces of Greater Boston*, commissioned by the Boston Foundation.

## APAHE 2019 and Continuing AANAPISI Leadership



Through generous AANAPISI funding support, nine students in Shirley Tang's course, AsAmSt 498 Teaching & Learning in Asian American Studies - Chinese Diaspora and AANAPISI Leadership, traveled with Kim Soun Ty, Miwa Tanabe, and AASSP staff to Oakland to present two panels at the April 2019 national Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) conference. AASSP Assistant Director and AsAmSt alumnus, Pratna Kem, delivered a plenary performance poem to open the conference. Meanwhile, Sara Boxell (below with Tri Quach) served her first year as AASSP Director, following the 2018 retirement of founding director, Pat Neilson (below with CEHD Associate Dean for Research, Takuya Minami).





After the APAHE conference, AsAmSt 498 students visited the historic Angel Island immigration detention center with Sam Lee, a volunteer bilingual docent and Asian American Studies master's student from San Francisco State University. Their bilingual field trip re-traced the first visit to Angel Island by UMB AsAmSt students and faculty in 1992, following their own presentations at a national Asian American Studies conference in San Jose.

## Remembering Chancellor Sherry Penney



B/W photos from a 1993 campus/community forum on the State of Asian Pacific America: Policy Issues to the Year 2020; color photos from the 1992 launch of the Fund for Asian American Studies, prior to the creation of the Institute for Asian American Studies and the expansion of Asian American Studies courses in the curriculum.

In mourning the tragically unexpected deaths of former Chancellor Sherry H. Penney and her husband, MIT emeritus professor, Jim Livingston, at their Florida home in May, we share a profound sense of loss, love, and appreciation. Dr. Penney was the ceiling-breaking first woman to serve as Chancellor at UMass Boston, and the longest-serving Chancellor in campus history. Sherry arrived at UMass Boston in Summer 1988 – just as the initial cluster of Asian American Studies courses (AsAmSt 223, 225, 228, and 423) was being taught with support from the William Joiner Center. Over the next few years, while dealing with the deepest budget cuts ever imposed against the state’s public higher education system, Sherry was also well-aware of the intense challenges facing the diverse, rapidly growing Asian American population in metro Boston, especially among second wave refugees from Southeast Asia. She celebrated the creation of the Institute for Asian American Studies in 1993, and established the first dedicated funding account for AsAmSt in the annual campus budget allocation process – which remained foundational over the next two decades. The above images document two public moments when Sherry joined us in proudly claiming and modeling our commitment and capacity as “the community’s university” – 15+ years before our successful collaborative efforts to gain federal AANAPISI designation and to generate over \$5.4 million in US Dept of Education AANAPISI awards.

## The Asian American Studies Program recognizes with appreciation:

- Steve Ward, whose career-long dedicated service within UMB's Institutional Advancement division helped to sustain reciprocal, highly-engaged relationships with AsAmSt alumni in ways that are irreplaceable;
- Kamal Bawa, Distinguished Professor of Biology and one of UMB's most senior Asian American faculty, who was elected in 2019 to the American Philosophical Society, the oldest learned society in the U.S.;
- Denise Khor, Assistant Professor of American Studies, whose recently-designed and cross-listed course, Asian American Cinema (AMST/AsAmSt 315L), was supported by a Mellon Foundation High-Impact Humanities mini-grant and approved by UMB governance with the possibility of being offered in 2019-2020;
- Peter Kiang and the AsAmSt Program for receiving the 2018 Sojourner Award from the Chinese Historical Society of New England (CHSNE) for long-term contributions to the Chinese American community;
- Honors College Founding Dean Rajini Srikanth and Women's and Gender Studies Department Chair Elora Chowdhury, whose co-edited first edition of *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Human Rights: History, Politics, Practice* was published by Routledge in November 2018;
- Karen Suyemoto, who was named as a Fulbright Scholar to teach and conduct research on ethnicity, race, and migration at Malmö University in Sweden during 2020;
- Linda Thiem, AsAmSt instructor and alumna, who joined the AANAPISI grant-funded Program for Asian American Student Advancement (PAASA) at Middlesex Community College in Lowell as their Program Specialist in January 2019;
- Jocelyn Lee, master's student in the Historical Archaeology program, who is working closely with Boston's City Archaeologist, Joe Bagley, to conduct the first ever archaeological dig in a northeastern Chinatown, beginning in July 2019 at 6 Hudson Street in Boston;
- Mr. Stanley Chen and family for enabling the SCCS program to further expand in providing valuable scholarship support for community-minded AsAmSt students. Of 38 students who have received support during the past nine years, 31 have successfully graduated, one withdrew from UMB, and six are currently matriculated.
- all faculty and invited speakers who taught and presented in AsAmSt courses during 2018-19, and everyone involved with our US Department of Education AANAPISI Program-funded Asian American Student Success Program led by Sara Boxell with co-PIs Joan Becker, Peter Kiang, Paul Watanabe, and Shirley Tang and core staff Pratna Kem, Frances Chow, and Karen Chi.

For more information, visit UMB's Asian American Studies Program at [www.umb.edu/asamst](http://www.umb.edu/asamst) and the Asian American Student Success Program at <http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/aassp>. If able, please consider contributing to the Asian American Studies Program Capacity Fund: <http://www.alumni.umb.edu/AsAmSt30>.