

# University of Massachusetts Boston Asian American Studies Program



Graduation Celebration

2022-2023

22 May 2023

## Asian American Studies Program Affiliated Faculty – May 2023

Ping-Ann Addo, Associate Professor and Chair, 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  
Christopher S. Fung, Senior Lecturer, Anthropology  
Richard Hung, Associate Professor, School for the Environment  
Peter Kiang, Professor and Director, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
Pratna Kem, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Marlene Kim, Professor, Economics  
Andrew Leong, Associate Professor, Philosophy and Law  
Raymond Liu, Professor and Chair, Marketing, College of Management  
Lusa Lo, Professor, Special Education Program, Curriculum & Instruction, CEHD  
Rajini Srikanth, Professor, English; Dean of the Faculty  
Lakshmi Srinivas, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
Karen Suyemoto, Professor, Psychology & Asian American Studies  
Shirley Tang, Endowed Distinguished Professor for Asian American Studies  
Kim Soun Ty, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Linh-Phuong Vū, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
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, CEHD

### The Program

For over thirty-five years, UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program has offered intellectually-challenging, emotionally-engaging, culturally-responsive, culturally-sustaining instruction in the classroom with holistic, high-impact 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 understandings 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 those from partnering pre-collegiate and community youth programs are encouraged to access AsAmSt's learning opportunities. Community members and organizations as well as alumni participate in our activities in many short- and long-term ways. Since 2010, UMass Boston has been the only research university in New England designated and funded each year by the U.S. Department of Education as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI).

[ Cover Photo: pk -No Silence; No Violence – Justice for Liêm Trần, AsAmSt Program mobilization, Norfolk County Superior Court, Dedham, MA. 14 December 2022. see story on p. 31 ]

## Celebrating our 2022-2023 Graduates in Asian American Studies

This year boasts our largest-ever number of AsAmSt graduating students. Arlene Vu is the 23rd student to successfully design, propose, and finish a 10-course individual major in Asian American Studies at UMB. She accompanies 15 students in 2022-2023 who have completed at least six courses and all AsAmSt program-of-study requirements. They include: Tenzin Dechen (བསྟན་འཛིན་ བདེ་ཚེན), Lily Sirin Horburapa (ศิริรินทร์ หอมบุรพา), Kamalpreet Kaur, Tommy Hoàng Lâm, Stephanie Alyza Gapongli Mastinggal, Jenny Ngeth, Anthony Nguyễn, Jenni Nguyễn, Nyah Pérez, Husnain Shah, Lee-Daniel (LD) Tran, Richard Tran, Ada Tsang, Helen Võ, Dennis Weng (翁鴻彬), and Ping Zhou (周萍). They account for nearly 10% of the 155 students in total who have graduated with AsAmSt concentrations since 2000. Additionally, two AsAmSt alumnae, Maryanne E.M. Chow and Yan Hua Liang (梁燕华), earned master's degrees in two of the College of Education & Human Development's graduate programs.

Beyond our core students profiled here, we applaud the hundreds of other graduating students who have taken at least one AsAmSt course as part of their *education for life* at UMB. We also deeply appreciate our AsAmSt students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, dedicated donors, and AANAPISI allies including IAAS, AARO, and SGISD/CEHD for their valued contributions this year.

## From a Seed Planted Fifty Years Ago to a Sustainable Orchard and Forever Forest

A full half century has passed since Dr. Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa proposed to offer the very first Asian American Studies course at UMass Boston in Spring 1973. His rationale to create The Asian American Experience (aka Asian Minorities in America)—a foundational, multidisciplinary course that we continue to offer every semester currently as AsAmSt 223L - Asians in the US—asserted: “some students are already asking for courses on Asian Americans... students will have to know something about the Asian population in American communities.”

From Prof. Miyakawa's initial proposal exactly 50 years ago to the dedicated investment announced in 2023 of a \$6M Endowed Distinguished Professorship for Asian American Studies that is inaugurally held by Prof. Shirley Tang, the course-by-course, year-by-year, decade-by-decade progress of our AsAmSt Program has been undeniable and is now guaranteed in perpetuity.

7. Can this course be offered without increase in staff? If not, explain. Yes.

8. Any other costs? (specialized supplies, etc.) If possible, though not essential, possibly one or two field trips locally and one or two speakers of several Asian groups in Metropolitan Boston.

ACTION ON COURSE REQUEST

	Signature	Date
Request prepared by	<u>T. Scott Miyakawa</u>	<u>January 31, 1973</u>
Recommended by department		
Recommended by the appropriate division committee		
Approved by the chairman of the division		
Undergraduate courses:		
Recommended by Faculty Senate		
Approved by the Chancellor		
Recommended by curriculum committee of Graduate Council		
Approved by Provost		
Approved by Trustee Committee on Faculty and Educational Policy		
Approved by the Board of Trustees		

# Individual Major in Asian American Studies

Arlene Vu



I am a second-generation Vietnamese American woman who is proudly graduating with an individual major in Asian American Studies and an additional major in French. I was born and raised in Falmouth, MA—a small town on Cape Cod, where my refugee parents settled down to live out the “American Dream.” They worked so hard and sacrificed so much to be able to take care of our family, that words could never adequately describe my love and appreciation for them. That is why I have dedicated my work, my labor of love, to Asian American Studies, in honor of their legacy.

I started my academic journey at UMass Boston in the fall of 2014. At the time, I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and become a computer engineer. It wasn't at all what I was interested in, but it was the only way I could see myself living up to his expectations, even though I was uncertain if it was the right choice for me. I tried my best, but I was having trouble keeping up—I could no longer force myself to struggle anymore, and had to follow my heart if I wanted to succeed. I changed my studies to global affairs and spent the next few years pursuing an online degree, feeling much more at ease learning about world cultures and politics. But still, I felt disconnected from my education. I lacked a personal connection to the material and missed the human connection absent from an online classroom. I wanted to return to the place at UMB where I felt most at home, which is what led me to Asian American Studies and through which my academics, my identity, and my purpose have aligned.

*Southeast Asians in the U.S.* with Dr. Peter Kiang was the first course to help set me on my path. Through learning our history, I finally had explanations for the experiences that shaped my upbringing. I was taught to understand and embrace my identity instead of rejecting it. And most importantly, my voice and creative expression were invited and welcomed, transforming how I viewed myself, my art, and my education. I thought this was the last I would see of Asian American Studies as I was getting closer to graduation, but two years later, I came back to the program in full force. A semester in *Asian American Media Literacy* with Dr. Shirley Tang was all it took to convince me that I was following my North Star, as I discovered my passion for research, storytelling, and knowledge production. Since then, I've completed ten courses in Asian American Studies, have been a teaching assistant for the department and a production assistant on the Digital Storytelling Team, and have met so many wonderful students, faculty, and friends through our community. Nine years ago, I was clueless, lost, and directionless. Today, I am moving forward with greater clarity and determination than ever. And though it has certainly been a long road to graduation, I wouldn't change a thing. My heart has led me here, to Asian American Studies, where I belong.

I'd like to thank everyone in the Asian American Studies Program for your wisdoms, support, and kindness—you all continue to motivate and inspire me, every day. I am also deeply grateful to be completing my individual major under the College of Education and Human Development and give my sincerest thanks to all those involved in enabling this process. I hope that my case will encourage other students to major in Asian American Studies, too! It is my commitment to stay involved with the program long into the future as there is still much work to be done. I'm looking forward to having more time to focus on my creative work in Asian American Studies, because this is not the end, but the beginning of a new chapter...!

# Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies

Tenzin Dechen (བསྟན་འཛིན་བདེ་ཚེན་)

Born in Chauntra, India, I am of Tibetan American heritage and was brought up in Somerville and Medford, Massachusetts. My family has an immigrant and refugee background, and my parents have always been hardworking and driven, encouraging me to succeed. I am blessed with two incredible siblings who are a source of inspiration and motivation for me daily. In 2018, I earned my high school diploma from Medford High School and became the first person in my immediate family to seek higher education. Initially, I enrolled as a biology major at UMass Boston, but in 2020, I finally decided to follow my passion for Asian studies with Asian American Studies as an additional program-of-study.



In 2018, I developed an interest in Asian American Studies after enrolling in a course titled Asian Women in the United States. This class ignited my passion for the subject, and I went on to take additional courses in the field during my time at UMass Boston. In 2020, Dr. Peter Kiang's course, Asians in the United States, introduced me to the possibility of teaching an intro to Asian American Studies course as a TA, along with three other outstanding women. This opportunity allowed me to develop my leadership skills, engage collaboratively with peers, and plan academic lessons. The class, my peers, and Dr. Kiang provided tremendous support and encouragement, making this experience an unforgettable memory.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Lakshmi Srinivas, with whom I have been collaborating since the summer of 2022 on an individual research project centered around my family's

immigration experience and genealogy in the United States. This is an exceptional opportunity that I will always cherish and look to further develop.

Overall, my participation in the Asian American Studies Program has had a profound impact on both my personal growth and my academic pursuits. This program enabled me to embrace my authentic self and introduced me to numerous remarkable and enthusiastic individuals who welcomed me into their community and made me feel like I belonged both on and off campus. I am eternally thankful to all those who encouraged me to pursue this degree.

As I depart from UMass Boston, I plan to utilize the knowledge I have gained through my involvement in the Asian American Studies Program to make a positive impact in social justice and advocacy work for Asian American communities, starting with my own Tibetan community in Boston. In addition, the skills I have acquired in research, analysis, and community organizing will be transferable to various fields that I may pursue in the future. My goal is to leverage my understanding of Asian American histories and experiences to develop innovative and inclusive programs and initiatives that address the issues and challenges faced by these communities. To stay involved in the field, I aim to engage with community-based organizations, attend conferences and events, and collaborate with fellow scholars, activists, and community members. I will also continue to expand my knowledge by staying up-to-date with current issues affecting Asian American communities and sharing my insights and perspectives with others.

## Lily Sirin Horburapa (ศิริรินทร์ หอบุรพา)

I was born in Bangkok, Thailand. At just two months old, my parents and I moved to Schaumburg, IL where my dad had found work. Economic recession moved my family from Illinois to Quincy, MA to be closer to family. In the places where I resided as a young Thai-American girl, there were rich Asian American communities. In Thailand, I was surrounded by family, always held in caring arms. In Schaumburg, I had childhood friends of Thai, Filipino, and Japanese descent. In Quincy, I found long-lasting friendships and connections in the thriving Chinese and Vietnamese communities of the South Shore.

I always felt secure in my identity as an Asian American. The food I ate, the languages I spoke, the way I looked was mirrored in that of my friends and family. Although I felt comfortable in my culture and skin, I struggled to feel connected. My Thai language skills were lacking. My connection to family felt distant and strained. In Spring 2020, I enrolled in Intro to Asian American Studies (ASAMST 200) and realized I wasn't alone in that feeling. My professor (who I soon came to learn was the director of the program), Dr. Peter Kiang, recognized a desire in me to do more. After two uncertain semesters, interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Peter asked me to return to ASAMST 200 as a teaching assistant. I felt honored and nervous. How could I contribute to the program as a TA having only taken one class?

Peter showed me what Asian American Studies means. To put it in his words from the first day of Intro to Asian American Studies:

“You are the syllabus”

Asian American Studies is me. It is my family and my friends and my classmates and my professors and the strangers I pass on the street. Asian American Studies allows its scholars to recognize, nurture, and create academic value from their own identities and stories. In my years as a student, intern, and teaching assistant in the program, I have told stories I never would have believed there was a space for in higher academia. I have made connections with people who bravely shared the strengths and pains that come



with the Asian American identity. I have taught and learned and failed and succeeded. Never did my peers or my professors make me feel inferior even in times of struggle. Being a part of Asian American Studies has shown me that my story matters and that listening to others' stories may matter even more. This program is more than a course list or an item on a resume. The values of its pedagogy run deep within its staff, students, and curriculum. I am so proud to have been able to be part of this space.

It is hard for me to put into words how Asian American Studies will stick with me. I believe it comes along with me every day. Being part of this program has connected me with various opportunities that have shaped that way I think about my future. My internships with Boston Public Schools and the HALE Intrepid Academy showed me different

sides of education. My position as a teaching assistant across three different semesters taught me more than I can concisely articulate. I am grateful for my classrooms and wish the students and my fellow TAs the best. Although I am not certain of what the future holds for me, I am sure the foundation and connections I built in the Asian American Studies Program will help guide me. As I figure out where my path leads, the Asian American Studies pedagogy of connection, care, and thoughtful work will stay with me.

Always.



## Kamalpreet Kaur

I am a 1.5 generation Indian American who immigrated to the US at the age of 15 along with family from the state of Punjab in India. I am graduating from UMass Boston as an Honors College student with a degree in Biology and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. When I had recently moved to the US, the adjustment took time. Thanks to the diverse environment I was exposed to in Boston and at UMass Boston, I was able to feel a sense of belonging. Before taking courses in Asian American Studies, I did not pay much attention to how being an immigrant and a person of color had impacted me in shaping my identity. During my college career, I took various courses that would complement or be easier to pair with my science-heavy courses. I started by taking the Becoming South Asians course (AsAmSt 226). With my background, I hoped it might be an inviting course. That was my gateway to Asian American Studies. After that, I took multiple courses in Asian American Studies such as Asians in the United States, Introduction to Asian American Studies, Indian Cinema, and independent Study.

Through these classes, I was able to explore the experiences and rich history of Asians in the US, and I wanted to learn more. I was fascinated by the resilience of Asian American communities fighting against the prejudices they faced. These courses were packed with great experiences and sources of knowledge. During my junior year, when I was looking for topics for my senior thesis for the Honors College, I found the option of taking an independent study through Asian American Studies. A chance encounter with an Indian International student led to the spark of an idea. From there, I decided to plan my senior thesis in Asian American Studies, exploring the experiences of Indian International students studying at UMass Boston. My research project was relevant to the university and could benefit



from my multilingual Indian background. When we mention Asian Americans, we sometimes forget that migrants are also part of this population. I felt that documenting the experiences and struggles of international students was important as they offer so much to the American economy and culture.

I am a pre-med student interested in public health and I plan to advocate for better healthcare outreach for minority groups in my local community. The overlap of my interests in public health and medicine motivated me to become involved in the Asian American Studies Program. By being a part of this program, I had such a great experience and have adapted a learning attitude and openness toward other people's experiences, while also developing a better sense of my own identity. I hope to navigate the healthcare system to develop outreach programs for underserved communities such as refugee populations. I plan on actively participating to raise awareness about Asian American struggles and challenges.

I want to thank the team managing this program. These courses were some of the most engaging atmospheres I have been a part of during my four years here at UMass Boston. I enjoyed the different aspects of Asian American Identity developed in these courses. So much forgotten history was shared, and learning how it was connected to the present was enlightening for me. I appreciate the team for working hard and actively advocating for Asian Americans and providing such courses to share a wealth of knowledge with us students.

## Tommy Hoàng Lâm

I am a second-generation Vietnamese American born in Gretna, Louisiana and raised in Worcester, MA. To understand my background, I had to appreciate my parents' roots. They are South Vietnamese natives who fled during the second wave of Vietnamese refugee (boat people) migration to the US. They came to America when they were in their youth and struggled financially, culturally, and with the separation of their family. Their nail technician skills barely made a living for a family of six, but over time they sent four boys to college with three of us graduating from Boston College (2014), UMass Amherst (2019), and now me from UMass Boston (2023). I am a highly motivated first-generation college student who loves to make an impact in whatever industry I place myself. I have worked in community landscaping, retail, the food industry, the tech industry, the content production industry, and in orchestral music. The arts have always caught my attention as a powerful way to convey human emotions, experiences, and imagination through storytelling, music, and visual media. My experiences led me to focus on establishing my own entrepreneurial venture in the media production industry. I create videos, photos, and other content for weddings, corporate events, and diverse clients through TommyLamMedia.

I focused on Asian American Studies at UMass Boston because of my own lack of identity with the Vietnamese community. I felt that in my early education, I questioned myself about why my parents had to work from sun-up to sun-down, to come home to make me food, and to repeat. My lack of understanding of "WHY" went on until I was exposed to Dr. Shirley's AsAmSt 225 course exhibition where I witnessed

other Asian American students producing great works with the help of the AsAmSt Program office and community. That was something I wanted to be closer to. So, to get closer, I needed to be involved.



After my first semester at UMass Boston, I took a trip with my father for three weeks to Vietnam in January 2019 to explore, find, and build the identity I lost while growing up in America and to make up some lost time we missed with each other during my youth. By the end of this trip, I found the Vietnamese in Vietnamese American. Since then, I have included AsAmSt courses every semester to complete the Program-of-Study. Taking both AsAmSt 225 & 370 (Iykyk the pure pain, struggles, and healing that Dr. Shirley's great teaching holds within those courses) was a test of knowing the skills you hold, and being able to present those skills when needed, even when you're not called on—taking initiative. In my final semester, I took AsAmSt 390 Asian American Community Internships with Prof. Peter Kiang. I was able to intern with VietAID where I am helping in food justice programming, digital and media content creation, and the launch of a community garden in Fields Corner. One project for the internship is to make a donor development video for VietAID to raise funds to create a

better environment with stronger direct services and programs to help the community of Dorchester—the heart of the Vietnamese community. In the presence of Prof. Peter in class this semester, I feel that I finally know who he is, and why he continues to do the work he does. I would like to really thank the Asian American Studies Program and everyone in the Office for helping me find my home in a world of pain and hurt to finally heal the wounds I was blinded by for many years. Thank You for clarifying my purpose!

I believe in the missions, goals, and WHYs that Asian American Studies work is rooted in. To keep myself continuously connected to my own roots in the future, I see myself balancing corporate work, personal entrepreneurship, and non-profit community work. Building and balancing these pillars of work-life will maintain food for the dinner table while generating extra money from the personal business to be able to provide for the community. Learnings from my AsAmSt courses have taught me the identity that I hold, how we work within the community around us via others' interconnectedness, and how to teach the next generation. These experiences have grounded me to be a server, to be kind, and to be understanding.

How I will stay involved with the Asian American Studies work wherever I go is to continue to be connected within the community. I will continue working towards a higher good with hopes of making an impact—to be able to look back on what I was able to do, do it to the best of my ability, and provide more than I thought I could offer. This is how the Asian American Studies Program has made me want to work on a higher level to connect more of us with our roots while healing from the pains and trauma that we all hold and share within our hidden stories. I will stay involved by maintaining, creating, and expanding my connections within the Program office and use my skills to help advance the mission of Asian American Studies with the community around me.

## Stephanie Alyza Gapongli Mastinggall



I am a second-generation Igorot Filipina American and proud daughter of immigrant parents. I thank them for consistently upholding our Indigenous Filipino customs and keeping the presence of our homeland alive. Growing up in the predominantly white town of Norwood, Massachusetts, could have been a very negative experience if not for my family, my best women of color friends, and the many teachers I had throughout my public education. I recognize that it was a privilege to never have felt like I didn't belong somewhere. Although experiencing "gifted child" syndrome throughout my childhood has undoubtedly had its mental toll on me as an undergraduate student, I acknowledge that this has led to a generally positive experience growing up in a predominantly white town. I am thankful for the BIBAK family-friends I knew in the UMass Boston Filipino club, Hoy! Pinoy! for providing a welcoming place within the campus environment. Thanks to them, I never felt lonely or unsupported during my transition from high school to university, especially as a commuter student.

Before I took my first Asian American Studies class, I did not know the department even existed. I have never had an educational experience that revolved around our stories as Asian Americans, so the thought of being able to engage at that level in my university education did not even cross my mind when I started. Thus, I did not know what I was getting myself into when I took my first course in the program, Asians in the U.S., with instructor Kim Soun Ty in the spring of 2021. I do not even remember how I found that class to enroll in, but, of course, it was fate. I like to believe that my ancestors brought me to that point, especially during the double pandemic of COVID-19 and anti-Asian violence. Like many other students in the class, I felt immense anger, frustration, and sadness, knowing that our Asian American history was practically erased from my entire public education experience. These feelings were intensified during that semester after the spa shootings in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 16th, 2021. After seeing that violent intersection between gender and race, I felt compelled to continue my studies in the Asian American Studies Program. I realized that I desperately needed to know and learn more. The anger I held for our education system and the lack of empathy for our Asian and Asian American experiences, combined with my love for the classroom community, solidified my existence in this program.

After sobbing in front of everyone in my AsAmst 423 Boston's Asian American Communities class after watching the documentary, *The Fall of the I-Hotel*, I recognized my longing to become more engaged with Filipino Studies. I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Still, I am ultimately a person with many interests and passions. In fact, if I could get multiple degrees in different topics without going broke, I would do it in a heartbeat! However, as many of us children of immigrants know, money is not always accessible to us. I am always getting in touch with alums to figure out my own way of connecting my educational pursuit to become a sex therapist with my desire to pursue Filipino studies. I am passionate about discussing proper sexual education and other health-related topics with our Asian American communities, where this knowledge is much needed but never acknowledged. Our communities need help in many ways, and I believe that everyone who has done a program-of-study in Asian American Studies here at UMass Boston can insert their knowledge anywhere.

After college, I am taking a needed break from academia because I pushed myself to the brink as an undergraduate. I will be traveling, experiencing new cultures, and meeting new people. I may even change others' perspectives of what it means to be an American by sharing my life stories as an Igorot Filipino American woman. There will never be a day when I will not miss the Asian American Studies office and the healing, nurturing, and thriving community that the small space enables inside. Wherever I end up in life and in whatever I do, I want to create a space like that for people like me, no matter how small it may be.

## Jenny Ngeth

I am a First-Generation Khmer American woman. It was from my experience of growing up in a predominantly white town to refugee parents that I was able to recognize the need for resources and representation within communities. Recognizing that academia is a privilege, I have been fortunate to have become the second within my extended family to be honored with a degree. Receiving this degree has

always been for the culture more than for myself. My parents, Samneang Keo and Peter Ngeth, like many of my big family, are survivors of the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979) auto-genocide that resulted in the deaths of two million of our people. My parents have shown true resilience and have always wanted what was best for me. I am so lucky to live this lifetime as their daughter! Outside of Academia I am a very spiritual person and I enjoy cooking, meditating, hiking, having mental-health discussions, and seeing where each day takes me! I feel the best when I'm engaged with others and I want everyone to feel the excitement of every moment. I often find myself taking on mentorship roles and I will always advocate for someone in need.



I never imagined that there was a term to describe the way that I felt for all of my upbringing—that term is ‘intergenerational trauma’. But then, when taking an AsAmSt course for the first time (as a transfer student)—it finally clicked within 19-year-old Jen’s head that that was exactly what I felt, what I still feel, and what I need to work on. And so, I continue to devote these days to breaking generational curses and preserving Khmer history. Honestly, I think that graduating is, in itself, one step closer. I’ve also been able to have mental health discussions with my parents, though they were resistant at first and it’s been very dear to me to connect with my mom especially—not just as mother and daughter, but also as woman to woman. AsAmSt courses like my first one, 225L Southeast Asians in the U.S with Son Ca Lam, reminded me what home was away from the city. Kim Soun Ty’s 270 Cambodian American Culture and Community allowed

me to understand the importance of preserving our culture and the power of proverbs. PK’s 423 Boston’s Asian American Communities reminded me that I have just as much of a right to take up space and that my contributions matter, too.

I was also fortunate to be able to grieve the loss of my *Tha* (Grandpa) with my 423 classmates and educators within AsAmSt courses. When I returned to school after taking a gap semester, I told Kim Soun Ty about *Tha*’s passing. She showed me the AsAmSt graduation booklet from 2020-21 which included a screenshot and recap of a moment within her 270 course when *Tha* had sat with me and greeted my class over Zoom; it had been so affirming to hear my *Tha* and Kim and my classmates speak Khmer to each other then, and it’s empowering to have that memory memorialized in the AsAmSt Program archives now.

I'm still managing my grieving these days. I still question if I'm being the best daughter and granddaughter I can be—but I will always honor my Tha in each and every day. I miss my best friend dearly and, for him, I will continue to move mountains and make him proud.

Thank you, AsAmSt, for allowing me the opportunity to not just delve deeper into my own experiences and identities, but for also allowing me to have the discussions and platform to have my families' voices amplified after decades of being silenced while adapting to new, foreign lands. I got to share stories of my momma's garden :), stories of her up-bringing, her perspective on the Khmer Rouge, her recipes, and everything else she's kept in her heart for way too long. That means a lot to me and I know these moments meant a lot to my family, too.

These past two years have been rough, but I still remain hopeful in the opportunities that are to come my way. I've felt the most expressive, passionate, and vulnerable while taking AsAmSt courses, but after graduating in December, I have lately had to rebuild myself to speak in these ways again. I often look back at old assignments to remind myself of who I once was, who I am, and everything that has come along with that, but I truthfully still struggle to feel the same amount of passion. Facing a loss of connection, I have challenged myself to release these frustrations towards my current capabilities and to look within. I had isolated myself for so long, as I feared getting hurt by others, but as I have mentioned—I feel the most connected within my communities. So I am hopeful that if a previous Jen could articulate herself so easily and proudly, then this current Jen will be able to achieve the same, if not more, over time. I have struggled with memory loss and feeling a weird neutrality towards every day, but when I look back at what I was able to achieve in AsAmSt, I know I can be hopeful.

## Anthony Nguyễn

I am a Vietnamese American born and raised in Dorchester, MA. I proudly come from a family of immigrants and refugees. My family is the most important thing in my life. My mother, father and younger sister are also lifelong residents of Boston. Fun fact: I am the oldest of over a dozen cousins. Being a lifelong Bostonian, I grew up in a diverse environment where I was able to embrace my family's culture as well as those around me. I have been very blessed to have such a large family. There is no doubt that the city I call home has shaped me to become the person I am today.

I started my undergrad as a biology and pre-med student. I was taking heavy STEM courses with all my energy invested toward someday working in the medical and public health field. Halfway through my college career, I enrolled in Pratna Kem's AsAmSt 250G class which introduced me to a whole new world of academics and history. This led me to continue my studies with the Asian American Studies Program where I worked closely with Professor Tang and the digital storytelling team. This was a time when I discovered more about myself, reclaimed forgotten history, and unlocked a new lens with which to see the



world. It was a life changing opportunity for me to learn about my family, culture, and history of Asian Americans in the United States. I was able to learn, share and reflect in a more holistic way that was different from my traditional STEM classes.

During my time with AsAmSt, I was able to learn about the lived experiences of my instructors, staff, and fellow students. I would like to extend this knowledge and the lifelong relationships we have built to continue to research, to add to the incredible work that has been done and is being done for Asian Americans and POCs. I hope to become an example for the youth coming up to take a chance to reflect more about their past and add to the future. Whether my work takes me to medicine, public health or civics and government, I will carry my experiences with AsAmSt into every decision I make.

## Jenni Nguyễn

I am a second-generation Vietnamese American, born in Newburyport and raised in Haverhill, MA. I began my undergraduate education in Fall of 2014 and graduated with a BA in Social Psychology and program-of-study in Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The goal of my academic work is to pursue a career as a Mental Health Counselor or Social Worker or Sports Psychologist. My hobbies for a living are creating content on social media, fitness, and traveling. I currently work at Dana Farber Cancer Center in Boston which focuses on treating cancer patients. I plan to explore many more opportunities to care for the community on my path.

The reason I decided to focus on Asian American Studies at UMass Boston is originally because of my guidance counselor who recommended me to take an Asian American Studies course with Professor Dao in 2014. At first, I only came to this course to get credit to graduate. But, as I got to know the Asian American community of Boston, I became more passionate to pursue this valuable path.



Asian American Studies helped me find my identity and voice as a Vietnamese American. I've had many moments of involvement in AsAmSt as an undergraduate student. The impact I most value is the 2018 Asian American Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) conference in Oakland, CA, where I presented with my AsAmSt 497 classmates. This national conference gave me a clearer perspective about what I can do to access more voices to support many generations' mental health needs.

What I want to do in the future is mental health therapy for children in hospitals. My Asian American Studies training will be useful in settings where different generations need to understand one another. Our community should always value where they come from and be able to express and respect one another. I hope to unite and bring love and respect to the Asian American community in any way I can with my Asian American Studies tools and connections. I will never forget this was how I found myself. I hope to create more content and bring greater success and inspiration to many more Asian Americans to be okay with pursuing their own passions and dreams. Every generation should take the opportunity offered by Asian American Studies. I hope the AsAmSt Program can broaden many more individuals, once they become immersed in it. Thank you, Asian American Studies, and farewell.



## Nyah Pérez

I am a mixed race, Dominican and Pakistani American 1st gen student. I was born and raised in Queens, New York where I was the second of three siblings and the eldest daughter. My father is from Pakistan and my mother is from the Dominican Republic. Growing up mixed and having divorced parents often made me feel like I was caught between two different worlds. I never really found a space where I felt like I didn't have to choose between both of my ethnicities, until I started taking Asian American Studies.

My freshman year I attended CUNY Hunter College in New York City as a Psychology major. I struggled to feel interested or connected to school because I wasn't learning about topics I cared about. Then I transferred to UMass Boston in Fall 2020 as a Psychology and Human Services major. Both my freshman



year and my fall semester at UMB left me feeling very lonely and seeking community, but then I took Asian American Studies.

I took two Asian American Studies classes in Spring 2021: Asians in the U.S with Kim Soun Ty and Asian American Leadership with Pratna Kem. For the first time in my undergraduate career, I felt connected and motivated to learn more. I also wanted to explore my South Asian identity further and unpack the South Asian experience. The following semester I became Pratna's TA and then I took Dr. Suyemoto's Asian American Psychology class which truly changed my life and opened my eyes to the diversity within and among Asian Americans. The first times I ever felt seen within the classroom and within higher education as a whole occurred in these classes, for which I am forever grateful.

My future plans are to get my master's degree in social work and public health with a focus on underserved communities, especially POC. I hope to provide therapy to students of color and increase access to mental health resources, advocate for culturally responsive mental health providers, and cultivate safe spaces students can find outside the classroom, no matter what backgrounds they come from. I hope to create the kind of support and spaces for other students and children of color that I needed growing up.

## Husnain Shah

I am a Pakistani American and a 1st generation student graduating with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Information Technology (IT) as well as a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I was born and raised in New Jersey, but now call Boston home. Since I can remember my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have all valued the culture of Pakistan and instilled that in me growing up. My parents sacrificed much to give me this opportunity to get a college degree. For that I am forever grateful and strive to make them proud. It feels strange to say I'm finally graduating, almost surreal honestly.

Nonetheless I am extremely excited for this next chapter in my life and will cherish the friends and memories I made throughout undergrad life at UMass Boston.

When I first started my undergrad educational career at UMB, it felt very stale. I was just commuting into school, taking my classes, and then going home. I'd hang out with friends here and there, but it felt unfulfilling. I was just going through the motions. The only thing keeping me going were thoughts like "Baba has been working day and night forever so that I could go to college" or "Mama would be so sad if I dropped out, all her work would be for nothing". The pressure I felt was crushing me and I didn't know what to do, but then I came across the Asian American Studies department in the Spring of my sophomore year. The first Asian American Studies course I took was to fill a graduation requirement. However, taking that class re-lit a flame in me that had gone out long ago. A passion for education. I was learning about myself, my peers, our history, and why all of it matters so much. I wanted to take more and more classes, I wanted to learn and grow through these courses that opened my eyes and showed me how much more there was to life and education. Throughout my years with AsAmSt, I feel as though I've grown wings so that post-graduation I can take off and fly wherever I want. The department, staff, classmates, and everything else in between have really helped me grow and learn in ways I didn't imagine possible.



I'm not sure what the future will hold for me, and I don't have any concrete post grad life plans. I know I want to work and finally be able to really help my family, my community, Asian communities throughout Boston, and myself through a career in the tech industry. Graduate school is also a possibility, one that I know the Asian American Studies Program will help me maneuver and succeed in just like they did with my undergrad. The support and opportunity I have is an extreme contrast from how my parents came to America from Pakistan in the late 90s and have had to be in survival mode for much of their time here. But it's thanks to their sacrifices that I'm not under a similar pressure, and also thanks to them that I am completing my undergrad degree.

## Lee-Daniel (LD) Tran

I am a 2nd generation Vietnamese American and the youngest of a refugee father and immigrant mother who are both from Vietnam. My older sister was also born in Vietnam, so I am the only one in my immediate family who was born in the United States.

Before I came to UMass Boston, I had a very deep connection to Boston's Chinatown from my time with the Asian Voices of Organized Youth for Community Empowerment (A-VOYCE) under the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC). I spent 4 years with that program where I learned about the history of Chinatown; a history full of resistance and resilience in the face of overwhelming changes that were and are still threatening its physical space and the people who make their home there. I had a lot of deep connections to staff and peers at ACDC and A-VOYCE who were a huge part of my life before I came to UMass Boston, and who gave me a clear sense of direction for what I wanted to do in college.

I came to UMB, full of enthusiasm to get into the field of Community Development, to support and preserve the Asian American community. But I soon realized that I only meant or knew the Chinese and Vietnamese communities. My limited perspective was a disservice to other diverse ethnicities, experiences, and cultures as well as contexts and stories for different Asian communities who have migrated to the United States, both willingly and through forced flight from their home countries.



The Asian American Studies Program challenged me on this and more, including how to consider my own identity of being Vietnamese American. Taking AsAmSt classes, talking with professors, instructors, and classmates, made me realize that I had been running for a long time—running away from confronting what it meant to be Vietnamese and so doing the work in Chinatown where I didn't have to explain to people why I didn't speak the language or know Chinese culture because I wasn't Chinese. But being in Dorchester or predominantly Vietnamese-populated spaces, I was embarrassed and ashamed that I could understand the language, but not speak it and I didn't know much about the culture either. My internship supervisor, Carolyn Chou, at the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW) posed a related question to me: why do our Vietnamese organizers keep leaving Dorchester? So, the pressure and anxieties of confronting my discomfort with being Vietnamese in the Vietnamese community came into full view. Talking to Peter with his teachings, his encouragement of getting to know my fellow students and other Asian American Studies professors and instructors gave me much needed comfort in validating my own experiences, my own story, and the various identities that I have and am still figuring out. I am truly grateful for what I have learned, the conversations I have been a part of, and the people I have met.

After this final semester of complete immersion in four+ AsAmSt courses: AsAmSt 200 - Intro to Asian American Studies, AsAmSt 370 -Asian American Media Literacy, AsAmSt 294 - Resources for Vietnamese American Studies, AsAmSt 390 - Asian American Community Internships, and an AsAmSt independent study with Peter, I am graduating in Spring 2023 with a Bachelor of Arts in Community Development and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I plan to continue my work in the development, preservation, and sharing of stories in Asian American communities. Though I may still be most familiar with Chinese and Vietnamese experiences, I do intend to engage more fully with many other Asian communities of metro Boston. I want to encourage young people, especially young Asian Americans, to be more civically engaged and aware of those around them, the systems they are a part of, and the movements they can contribute to. While we have our individual experiences, we also play a larger role in the Asian American experience, whether or not we know it, believe it, and realize it. We also play a role in the experiences and progression of parallel and adjacent movements as well such as Black Liberation, LGBTQ/Gay Liberation, and countless others. A win and loss for our movements is also a win and a loss for others. We have to broaden our perspectives and support one another.

I want to thank Pratna Kem, Erica Lam, Peter Kiang, Shirley Tang, Harry Chuck Gilliam, Teresa Tran, Christine Nguyen, Angelina Hua, Caroline Chou, Jeena Chang and Suzie Kim. You all have had such a meaningful impact on my life from our conversations, your words of wisdom, teaching moments, and reflections. I have grown so much emotionally and mentally, and I would not be who I am if not for your dedication to the work you do and the commitment you have to supporting and educating others. I carry a part of each and every one of you with the decisions I make, the impact I want to have, and the growth into who I want to become.

To my parents: thank you for always supporting me, even if at the moment it seems like we are clashing a lot. I hope I have made you proud with my accomplishments and I hope I can keep doing so in the future.

To the Asian American Studies Program: I hope to stay in contact with the Program, the friends and mentors I have met, and the professors and instructors who have spent countless hours on the work they do which makes the Program what it is. I plan to further document and capture the experiences of those around me as a photographer and hope to join my Community Development and Asian American Studies passions with these tools of storytelling and visual documentation. You have been an invaluable resource and inspiration for me. I hope to reciprocate if and when you ever need me.

Thank you. With much love, appreciation, and gratitude.

## Richard Tran

I'm graduating with a degree in Psychology. As a first-generation college student, I'm proud to share that my parents hail from different parts of Asia—my father from Beihai, China, and my mother from Saigon,



Vietnam. However, I was born and raised here in Boston, MA, where I was fortunate to grow up in a diverse Asian community in Chinatown. This makes me a second-generation Chinese American.

Before taking an AsAmSt course, I never really reflected on my identity as an Asian American or Chinese American. It wasn't until my friend invited me to take an Asian American Studies course with them, and I needed credits, that I decided to give it a try. Southeast Asians in the US (AsAmSt 225) opened my eyes. During the pandemic, though, I forgot about Asian American Studies until I took another course—AsAmSt 423 Boston's Asian American Communities. Once again, I was reluctant to take the course at first, but it turned out to be one of the most impactful experiences in my individual journey. I remember being handed a large packet of readings on the first day of class and being shocked. But I soon found myself enjoying the course as I learned about prominent figures such as Harry Mook, William "Bill" Moy, Frank Chin,

Kathleen Chin, and Reggie Wong. The course took us to different locations in the community, such as Chinatown, Fields Corner, and Mt. Hope Cemetery, where I learned about the history of my community and what it means to be a member of it. It opened my eyes to see how important it is to have a place. One of the most memorable assignments in the course was about connecting dots that have been with me since the beginning—dim sum. I never understood how important dim sum was for the community until I did the

final project for this course. The question "Which is important to claim for the Asian American Community? Voice, Space, or Rights?" still resonates with me today, and I continue to reflect on it. This marked the beginning of my "Asian American" journey.

In addition to 423, I also took Asian American Cinema which showed me how important representation was. Later on, I took Asian American Psychology, which also fulfilled my psychology degree requirement. This course questioned my identity and what it means to be Asian American. We talked about mental health, stereotypes, and how the pandemic affects Asian Americans. I was particularly intrigued by the focus on mental health and how it isn't prominent in the Chinese community. For my final project, my group created something for the counseling center that revolves around specific events and provides coping mechanisms for them. These events were Asian American-focused, and some of them involved things that happened during the height of the pandemic. This experience made me want to be more involved in Asian American-focused psychology in the future. I hope to incorporate my degree in psychology and my learning from the courses I've taken in Asian American Studies and fuse them together. Overall, I am grateful for the things I've learned in these courses. They've helped me grow and understand my identity as an Asian American. I encourage others to take these courses if they have the chance. They won't fully understand how important these courses are until they take them. Thank you.

## Ada Tsang

I am an Asian American student and a first-generation college student. I am graduating with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. My parents were born in Hong Kong so I was able to learn Cantonese growing up and I still do learn more now because it is important for my identity being Asian American. I believe that learning another language besides English helps make my identity even more important because I could understand more about my own culture and my parents' past history. I am grateful to them for raising me well and making sure that I don't lose my identity as an Asian American growing up in the US.

I decided to include a focus on Asian American Studies because I wanted to learn more about my identity and hear about other people's different experiences growing up as an Asian American in the US. I found their stories interesting and how they were different from everybody else's. I have also learned that they grew up



in different lifestyles that were unique to them. I really enjoyed learning about their stories and it helped widen my perspectives on the different identities that each person held. Everyone has something to hold on to that helps make them who they are and what they can do with it.

I am not sure what my future goals are but all I know is that I learned a lot during my time in the Asian American Studies Program. It has helped me so much from learning and deepening my own identity to expanding and sharing my own stories with other people. I have also learned a lot from other people's experiences as well. I will forever remember it and will never forget what I learned. I will also use what I learned in the classes to try and integrate it throughout my life and to my friends and family as well.

## Helen Võ

I am a second-generation Vietnamese American woman who was born and raised in Worcester, MA to parents who are both refugees of the Vietnam War. My father was part of the Vietnamese Boat People exodus and my mother arrived in the U.S. during the third immigration wave.



Since I was a child, I always felt very proud of my ethnic culture and was filled with glee at any representation of Vietnamese culture or language within school or in mainstream media, though this was quite minuscule throughout my upbringing. I still smile when I think back to my time in elementary school on the day when I received a homework assignment that revolved around a Vietnamese folktale. I remember running home and immediately starting on the assignment. The next day, I still remember my classmates asking me how to correctly pronounce “bánh chưng” and my teacher applauding me in front of the class for being able to truly understand the material. I always let out a chuckle when I think about how proud a 9-year-old girl could be at homework and at the mention of Vietnamese sticky rice cake, but this assignment—it encompassed someone like me.



From that point on, I never saw any similar representation for the rest of my childhood and adolescence. I still remember my disappointment after combing through my entire school library looking for just one book about Vietnam, and nothing was there. Although my discontentment was intense, it was also brief. I accepted that this was what the opportunity to grow up in America had entailed, the disintegration of my own ethnic culture.

Things began to change when I entered university, my first experience with Asian American Studies was AsAmSt 223L - Asians in the United States taught by Kim Soun Ty. While I'll always appreciate how remarkable the course curriculum was and how exceptional Kim's teaching is, I couldn't continue with Asian American Studies because I was still questioning where I stood with my own identity. But each semester afterwards, I could never stop looking at the course catalog. Four years later, a course appeared that I could not turn away from: AsAmSt 294 - Resources for Vietnamese American Studies. After begging the instructor, Linh Phương-Vũ, to allow me to enroll past the deadline, I'm glad my persistence worked out because my life soon changed. Over 10 years had passed since seeing that one folktale in elementary school, and now, I was reading Vietnamese folktales each week in my university-level Vietnamese American Studies course with other people who had been seeking the same thing as me this entire time.

In Winter-Spring 2023, I returned to Vietnam to immerse myself in my homeland language and culture. I am thankful for all the people I've met in the cramped Asian American Studies office, the trouble we got into outside of class, and the laughter shared throughout. I deeply treasure all of the connections I've made within Asian American Studies, especially Linh, who has become a sister to me and is simply a strong Vietnamese woman whom I immensely look up to, as well as the teaching assistant I had for AsAmSt 294, Minh Nghĩa Nguyễn, who has become a good friend who continues to uplift me during times of doubt and emboldened me to be proud of my strengths that come with being Vietnamese American, regardless of whether I was standing in the U.S. or in Vietnam. I can finally say I'm truly proud of who I am. Once I return back home, I am looking forward to all the opportunities in getting involved with the Vietnamese community, all while preserving our culture and language, remembering where our parents came from, and simply valuing who we are as Asian Americans. But for now, I'll do exactly that while I'm here in Vietnam.

## Dennis Weng (翁鴻彬)

I am a second-generation Chinese American student. My parents immigrated from Guangzhou, China in the late 1980s. I have two brothers, one older and another younger. I will be the first one in my close family to graduate from higher education. I had a background of community involvement prior to college and continued to expand on this throughout my UMB experience. I have been involved in the student-led organization, the Vietnamese Student Association, since my freshman year, and served as a VSA president for two years.



Originally, I decided to take an AsAmSt course just to fill some credits. Through AsAmSt 225 - Southeast Asians in the U.S., I was able to begin my journey in discovering myself as an Asian American by talking with my parents. Being a busy commuter student at UMB makes it hard to sit and reflect about my day. But through the Asian American Studies Program, which implements reflection and building emotional capacity in its pedagogy and curriculum, I was able to understand myself better.

Another aspect of the Asian American Studies Program that really impacted me was the idea of activism and community involvement. Through Asian American Psychology, I learned about our rich history of activism and community involvement. This pushed me to advocate for spaces that Asian American students can call "home" by being involved with student leadership as VSA president. I also got more involved with communities outside of UMB through helping youth development programs in Chinatown and then volunteering in the Dorchester Fields Corner neighborhood.

Though I studied IT (Information Technology) as my major at UMB, I contemplate whether I want to stay at my current job being a Teen Leader at the Wang YMCA in Boston Chinatown. I feel that I am able to teach the

values that I have learned in my time with the Asian American Studies Program to the youth here, which I feel is important in the development of young Asian American teens. But I also think back to the various guests whom I met during the Boston's Asian American Communities course who balance between involvement with the community and their full-time jobs. I would hope that I am able to do something like that in the future as well.

## Ping Zhou (周萍)

I am a first-generation Chinese immigrant currently residing in Quincy. My family and I came to the United States in 2001, where we first lived in Allston. I attended Josiah Elementary School and became very familiar with the Boston Chinatown area. By the time I attended Josiah Upper School, my family and I had moved to Roxbury. Later I attended Boston Latin School and eventually attended Suffolk University.

Now you may wonder, how did I end up in UMass Boston and AsAmSt? Long story short, I had health problems and when I recovered, UMass Boston served to be an affordable and somewhat convenient location. Initially, my major at UMass Boston was Computer Science. However, after an introduction to an Asian American Studies course, I knew this was something I wanted to major in. Because AsAmSt was not available as a major for undergraduates at that time, I completed the AsAmSt Program-of-Study.

AsAmSt has allowed me to understand the Asian and Asian American communities and the challenges we face. As a child, the world seemed beautiful to me; the concept of race was virtually non-existent for me. As I grew older, I came to realize the world was not what I thought it was like. I saw racism, but I didn't understand it. I did not understand why racism exists, when did it start to exist, nor when it will end. AsAmSt enabled me the opportunities to find answers to my questions.



I graduated from UMass Boston with a bachelor's degree in Asian Studies and a Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies. After graduation, I began my career in the affordable housing field at Winn Companies in the Connected Communities department as a Program Associate. I provide administrative support to the Senior Vice President and Director of Workforce Initiatives. In this role, I am able to help make measurable, positive social impacts. I love it!

# Recognizing Graduate Student Contributions

## Maryanne E.M. Chow, M.S., Rehabilitation Counseling

I am Burmese-Chinese American. I received my undergraduate degree at UMass Boston in 2013 with a degree in psychology and program-of-study in Asian American Studies. It's surreal that ten years later, I'm receiving my master's degree in rehabilitation counseling here. During these ten years, I have been



blessed with many opportunities to explore my professional and personal growth from volunteering abroad to working in various communities, and I have the program to thank. Being part of Asian American Studies has shaped my perception of how I want to be part of my community in creating connection, support, awareness, inclusion, diversity, and unity. The classes in the program are all unique in that the curriculums help us dive deeper into our history as immigrants/descendants of immigrant families and how it shapes who we are as first/second generations which challenges us to think about who we want to be in the future. I was drawn to the AsAmSt Program because of how much I resonated with the teachings and being able to connect with other peers. The knowledge I gained from these introspective classes deepened my understanding of myself as an Asian American living in the U.S with my hard-working immigrant parents who gave up everything in their country, Myanmar, to seek a better future.

AsAmSt believes in their students and truly cares about education and community. There is no goodbye as professors and staff maintain their connection to alumni and provide support when needed. I appreciate having a voice, space, and sense of community in the program during my undergrad years, and still now, ten years later when I'm graduating again with my master's. I hope to continue this long-lasting connection and will further utilize my skill sets to contribute to my community as a proud Asian American.

## Yan Hua Liang (梁燕华), M.Ed., Early Childhood



Coming to a new country without speaking the language was scary and tough. Being around most people who speak fluent English, I used to feel ashamed of my identity and felt like I belong to nowhere. I felt like such a foreigner in the United States and an outsider in my hometown. My status of not being able to identify as an American or Chinese made me confused for many years about who am I and where I should belong. The Asian American Studies Program at UMass Boston gave me a sense of belonging and helped me find my own identity. Dr. Peter Kiang opened the door for me to connect with the Asian community. The long connection he has with Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center provided me with a chance to work as a volunteer at Acorn Center for Early Education and Care. This initial opportunity planted a seed of passion for early childhood in my heart and inspired me to further my education and profession.

My experience working with immigrant families made me understand the advantage of being bilingual. I learned to value the languages I speak, the culture I have, and the educations I received from both China and the United States. From feeling ashamed of my identity to now feeling proud of who I am and where I came from, I am proud to be a Chinese American.

With my background and experience, I wish to continue serving families and children in the Asian community. I am currently working as a multilingual Family Engagement Coordinator at Acorn Center for Early Education and Care. My responsibilities include referring families to resources in the community, serving as a guide for families in navigating the special education referral process, and ensuring families and children receive support and advocacy when needed, especially for low-income immigrant families. I am a lifelong learner and an individual who is dedicated to serving children and families.

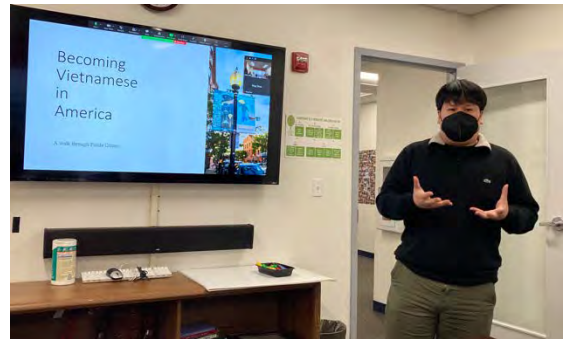
# AsAmSt Program Sampling from 2022-2023

2023 JFK Undergraduate Award Winner – Lee-Daniel Tran



[Photos: L/R: LD with parents and Provost Berger at the AsAmSt 370 festival; at the January 2023 rally for Arif Sayed Faisal; project presenting in AsAmSt 423]

LD Tran is the 2023 recipient of the John F. Kennedy Award for Academic Excellence which is given to the graduating senior at UMB who “best exemplifies academic excellence, commitment to service, and good citizenship.” Along with his major in Community Development, LD completed the AsAmSt program-of-study with 11 courses—comparable to a second major (student profile on pp. 20-22). LD is the fifth Asian American to receive UMB’s JFK Award since 1977.



LD’s father, Hien Tran, also a UMB alumnus, took the first reincarnation of Scott Miyakawa’s AsAmSt course taught by Peter Kiang in Spring 1987. Hien’s classroom photo was re-created by LD taking the same Asians in the US course in the same Phillis Wheatley classroom building 35 years later in Fall 2022.



## No Silence, No Violence; Justice for Liêm Trần

The December 2022 photo on the cover of this booklet shows 25 AsAmSt students, staff, faculty, and alumni who filled a Norfolk County Superior Courtroom for a sentencing hearing and then rallied on the



courthouse steps to demand justice for Liêm Trần, a 69-year old Vietnamese refugee who was ruthlessly assaulted in front of the North Quincy Red Line T station in February 2021. The white male attacker left Mr. Trần unconscious and bleeding on the freezing sidewalk with a fractured skull and severely damaged spinal cord. According to the Quincy police incident report, Trần was discovered by a



pedestrian who initially thought his motionless body was a dumped bag of trash. During the early months of Mr. Trần's recovery, AsAmSt instructor and PhD student, Linh-Phuong Vũ (right photo), provided bilingual/bicultural support for the family to access resources and carefully share their traumatic story publicly.

After sentencing at the court based on a guilty conviction, Liêm Trần's son, Dennis Ngô (left photo) commented on both the impact of AsAmSt community advocacy and the limitations of the justice system: "As you know, there is no hate crime charge... My father and family have gone through an adjustment in lifestyle and are looking forward to some closure... Thanks again to you and your class for their presence. My family is touched to see a steadfast body who will lead the next generation."

Through deep teaching/learning about pre-COVID contexts of anti-Asian violence in metro Boston—including the historic mobilizations for racial justice following the Dorchester stabbing murder of Anh Mai in 1983, the Enough is Enough arson rally by Cambodians in Revere in 1987 and the Dapper O'Neil - Teach Me No Racism rally by Vietnamese at Boston City Hall in 1992—our AsAmSt programmatic presence, purpose, and praxis were clearly manifest in this moment. Why are we here? No silence, No violence.



## Faculty and Alumni Legends and Leaders



Recognized in January among Get Connected!'s first-ever A-List of the Most Influential Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Greater Boston were UMB alumni Abby Nguyen-Burke, Sothea Chiemruom, and Elaine Ng, as well as President Pam Eddinger of our sister AANAPISI Bunker Hill Community College. Additionally, alumna Mary Truong and Profs. Peter Kiang and Paul Watanabe were honored as three of the city's 25 Legends, Leaders, and Pioneers. [left photo credit of Paul, Pam, and Vivian Li by LD Tran]

## Research Praxis Salon



In order to harness our core graduate students' combined cultural/linguistic, methodological, and epistemological strengths in the tradition of rock-paper-scissors complementarity, our AsAmSt-based Research Praxis Salon (RPS) met throughout 2022-2023 to closely engage several fresh books across the fields of Vietnamese and Khmer Diaspora Studies, Critical Refugee Studies, Indigenous Studies, and more. Co-led by GISD PhD students, Kim Soun Ty, Linh-Phuong Vũ, and Khong Meng Her, together with Applied Linguistics PhD student Minh Nghia Nguyen and CECS alumnus Asa Peters, the RPS also provided shared support for dissertation research planning, conference preparation, and other aspects of how to address realities and contradictions of U.S. academic structure/culture from our distinctive AsAmSt stance. The RPS crew will co-teach AsAmSt 225 Southeast Asians in the US in Fall 2023.



## Modeling Leadership with National Reach



Together with students from his signature Honors 380 course on the WWII Japanese American incarceration, beloved Prof. Paul Watanabe joined the 54th annual pilgrimage to the Manzanar National Historic Site in April. Channeling the spirit of fellow Utah-born Japanese American legend, Wataru Misaka—the first non-white professional player in NBA history (New York Knicks, 1947)—Paul showed how daily life persists, even amidst unjust confinement, through the desert version of street basketball. [photo: Pratna Kem]



Asian American Resource Office (AARO) director, Dr. Sara Hoang, spoke at the national Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE) conference in Oakland in April. AARO staff and UMB alumni, Karen Chi and Sokpagna Chuon, and UMB AANAPISI students actively participated. [photo: Karen Su]



Prof. Lakshmi Srinivas and Paul Watanabe spoke as panelists at Brown University in October 2022 regarding the state of Asian American Studies on the East Coast.



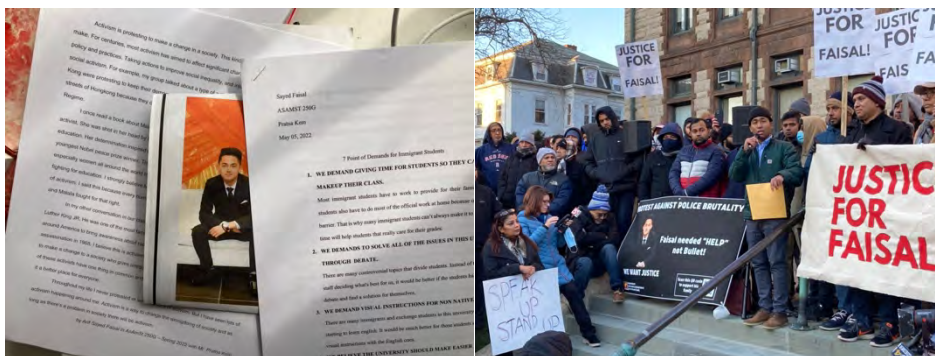
## Passages and Purposes



Among too many losses of life during 2022-23, the passages in Massachusetts of three revered elders—Dr. Franklin S. Odo, Dr. Nelson Y.S. Kiang, and Hon. Melvin H. King at ages 83, 93, and 94 respectively—carried special meanings due to their unique, transformative visions and boundless, decades-long energies which directly influenced our programmatic origins, philosophical outlooks, and material praxis from the 1980s to the present. We imagine them enjoying multiple conversations together now in the dimensions shared by ancestors, while we work to fulfill expectations that each modeled so purposively throughout their lengthy, rich lifetimes in this world. [photos L/R: Franklin Odo in 2014 with former presidents of the Association for Asian American Studies, including UMB Prof. Rajini Srikanth; Mel King, before receiving his Honorary Degree at UMB's 2014 Commencement; Nelson Kiang with Chancellor Suárez-Orozco in Boston, 2021].

## Arif Sayed Faisal and AsAmSt 250G Pedagogies of Life and Death

AsAmSt faculty, staff, and classmates have mourned and reflected on the legacy of Arif Sayed Faisal since January 2023 when he was fatally, needlessly shot by Cambridge Police while in crisis. Faisal took AsAmSt 250G - Asian American Leadership and Social Change in Spring 2022 with Prof. Pratna Kem, and he produced prophetically powerful coursework regarding educational struggles of immigrant students,



meanings of activism, and his family's Bangladeshi immigrant dreams. At a January rally organized by the Bangladesh Association of New England to demand justice, Pratna spoke to the crowd as a teacher, and delivered a brown envelope intended privately for Faisal's

parents which contained their son's vital words and ideas from the final semester of his university life. Some of Faisal's AsAmSt 250G articulations can still inform the full visioning of UMB as an AANAPISI immigrant-serving campus. Additionally, the AsAmSt Program has initiated a planning process for a campus tree-planting in 2023-2024 to offer remembrance of Arif Sayed Faisal for future generations.

## The Endowed Distinguished Professor for Asian American Studies



The unprecedented history-making year of 2022-2023 is most profoundly defined by the appointment of Prof. Shirley Tang as the inaugural Endowed Distinguished Professor for Asian American Studies, thanks to a breathtaking, anonymous gift of \$6M to AsAmSt at UMB. Responding, in part, to the need for Asian American Studies amidst the recent pandemic of anti-Asian violence, the intention of the transformational gift is also

inspired by the nearly 20-year impact of Shirley's storytelling curriculum/pedagogy and original story data research/development. The Endowed Distinguished Professorship for Asian American Studies is one of only eight such faculty positions at UMB, and the most generously capitalized. In her esteemed new faculty role, Shirley will be expanding the Program's storytelling platform and planning a targeted conference for 2024-2025. [Left top photo credit: Ikeda Center; bottom: Nía Duong]



The Asian American Studies Program recognizes with appreciation:

- our dedicated AsAmSt students, faculty, staff, teaching/research assistants, alumni, guest presenters, and community partners as well as our donors whose sustaining contributions ensure our continuing impact,
- SGISD Director and Associate Dean, Sheila Fesko, and Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Anita Miller, who are each retiring in 2023 after long, impactful careers of service at UMB, including countless instances of support and intervention for Asian American Studies.
- our community of local Asian American leaders and entrepreneurs who provided a wide range of collaborative opportunities, from internships for advanced AsAmSt students to material support and excellent direct service, including Laurence Louie & Rubato, Mongkol Horburapa & Just Thai Kitchen, QJ Shi & Asian Business Empowerment Council, George Huynh & VietAID, Carolyn Chou & AARW, Janet Vo & Asian Outreach Center, Mary Chin & AACA, Phoumara Nuon & Wellesley Bakery, Hon. Tram Nguyen, Darren Le, Mia Wenjen, and others.
- AsAmSt alumna, Ammany Ty, and CECS alumnus, Asa Peters—both members of the AsAmSt Digital Storytelling Team—who advanced their staffing roles and responsibilities in April to become Co-Production and Archives Program Coordinators. Additionally, AsAmSt alumna Nia Duong, also a core member of the Digital Storytelling Team, begins a Master's Program at Lesley University in Expressive Arts Therapy in July 2023—achieving a fresh milestone in her journey as an educator-artist-healer. The continuing progress and ever-expansive capacities of our AsAmSt core staff will show inspiring impact in 2023-2024.
- AsAmSt alumnae, Ivy Bui and Parmita Gurung: Ivy has returned part-time to the Digital Storytelling in Asian American Studies Team to assist with coproduction of students' AsAmSt 370 video projects during Spring 2023 and beyond. In turn, Parmita has transitioned from the Digital Storytelling Team after having contributed to many co-produced personal narrative videos and community documentaries as well as the DST's co-authored multilingual children's storybook, *Hira Makes a Sound*, and related journal articles and educational posters.
- the key leadership for our US Department of Education AANAPISI-funded grant activities, including co-PIs Peter Kiang, Paul Watanabe, and Shirley Tang; Vice Provost Liya Escalera; current AARO staff led by Sara Hoang with Karen Chi, Sokpagna Chuon, and Helen Ngo; and our sister AANAPISI faculty leaders at Bunker Hill Community College, faithfully led by Profs. Maria Puente and Aurora Bautista with President Pam Eddinger.

Please visit UMB's Asian American Studies Program at [www.umb.edu/asamst](http://www.umb.edu/asamst). For updates of local community news, resources, events, and new content creation, see: <http://www.facebook.com/UMB.AsAmSt> and <https://www.instagram.com/plantjustseeds/>. Please consider contributing to the Asian American Studies Program Capacity Fund: <http://www.alumni.umb.edu/AsAmSt30>.