

University of Massachusetts Boston  
Asian American Studies Program



Graduation Celebration  
2019-2020

May 2020

## **Asian American Studies Program Affiliated Faculty – May 2020**

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  
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, CEHD  
Marlene Kim, Professor, Economics  
Son Ca Lam, 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  
Chu Ly, Lecturer, Asian American Studies  
Rajini Srikanth, Professor, English; Founding Dean, Honors College  
Lakshmi Srinivas, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
Karen Sujemoto, Professor, Psychology & Asian American Studies  
Shirley Tang, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD  
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 2019-2020 Graduates in Asian American Studies

In this historically unprecedented year shaped by unforgiving health and economic losses as well as unforgiveable racist, xenophobic hate, one remarkable student, Tomás Leyton-Nolan graduates with honors after completing an individual major in Asian American Studies and a second major in Ethics, Social & Political Philosophy. He is the 22nd student since 1993 to design and successfully conclude an AsAmSt individual major. In addition, eight resilient undergraduates—Justin Shunta Budrow, Aimee Chan, Kinh Gia Hà, Katie Trinh Mai, Priya Sonal, Cindy Tao, Jiantao Wang, and Alice Zhou—persisted through all program-of-study requirements in Asian American Studies by taking at least six AsAmSt courses. With these fresh Class of 2020 graduates, a total of 125 have completed AsAmSt concentrations over the past two decades since we began counting in 2000. We further applaud Jocelyn Lee, who has completed her M.A. in Historical Archeology, focusing on the Chinese diaspora, while serving as a TA in Asian American Studies to support bilingual digital storytelling coproduction. Jocelyn is UMB's Barbara E Luedtke Book Award winner, and she will begin a PhD program in Anthropology (Archaeology track) at Stanford in Fall 2020. Finally, we offer congratulations and continuing care to all graduating students who have experienced Asian American Studies at UMB. We hope to celebrate everyone's accomplishments collectively in person when the right time comes.

*We send gratitude and good health wishes to our universe of AsAmSt students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, and donors, and to IAAS, AASSP, SGISD/CEHD, and our ANAPISI allies.*



Before transitioning to essential emptiness to protect from COVID-19, this image and two on the cover page document the final hour in the Asian American Studies Program office before the mandatory closing of the UMass Boston campus to all but designated personnel at noon on 13 March 2020. We have not yet returned.

# Individual Major in Asian American Studies

Tomás Eduardo Leyton-Nolan

Life is a beautiful and unpredictable journey, where ultimately everything happens exactly as it was meant to; there was no other way things could have occurred, for they are now history.

Never has this philosophy proved to be truer than in my undergraduate journey. A process that was never meant to be hard, yet proved to be extremely difficult. But here we are, on the brink of completing a degree that I abandoned multiple times and was ready to give up on altogether. It is not how I would have ever predicted things to happen, but I would have it no other way. This is exactly where I am meant to be.

The Asian American Studies Program at UMASS Boston was never a natural destination for this white Latino kid from Forest Hills, but it became the home I never knew I needed. This program changed my life in the greatest ways possible, and I would not be the man I am today without having travelled this path. This has everything to do with the people who make up this program, who give it life, who make it a home, and who accepted me for who I am.

There are so many people who I want to thank individually, but in an effort to not exclude anyone, just know that, if you are reading this, I am grateful for you and the impact you have had upon my life. I will do my part to make sure we stay connected forever. You are my family and I love you, yes you.

I want to touch upon two of the greatest impacts the Asian American Studies Program has had upon my life, not to celebrate myself, but to emphasize the power this special group has and the uncalculatable debt that I owe. One day I shall repay you, for everything.

First, I would like to share the personal impact this education had upon me.

I would never have predicted that in the Spring of 2018, at 23 years old, I would publicly declare myself to be an alcoholic. But I did. It was strange and uncomfortable at the time, but it is the most important thing I have done up to this point in my life. I am eternally grateful to the AsAmSt 370-course instructor, Digital Storytelling Team, and all of the classmates I had that semester. It has not been a straightforward road by any means, but I have found the space I need to recover, one day at a time. You all have helped save my life.

Next, I would like to highlight the professional influence of this program.

My passion for education had been destroyed long ago in my early teenage years. Tired of the pressures of an old-school, traditional, euro-centric education, I thought it was better to just not care. The Asian American Studies Program has changed that mentality and restored a passion for mental exploration and

growth. The focus this program has on reforming education and thinking about learning in a new way has completely reshaped my professional ambition. Being able to experience firsthand the power of representative teaching, on subject matter that is pushed out of the mainstream, impacted my soul.



I now know that my life will always be attached to education, as a student, teacher, and hopefully one day as a visionary. As I move forward in my career, I hope to use the pedagogies I have learned in this program to decolonize education, help empower the next generation, bring the unheard voices of our world to the forefront of the conversation, and contribute to creating the world we all deserve through quality education for all children. You all have helped shape my life.

There are so many more words I want to share, memories I want to relive, gratitude I want to give, and hugs I want to distribute. However, the circumstances of life have forced us to close this chapter in a particularly anticlimactic way. There are more important things to worry about at the moment than personal accolades or individual triumphs. Although this accomplishment is special to me, my family, my fellow graduates, and my community, it is but a moment in time, one that we can admire, but will not linger upon for too long—now the real work begins.

This is by no means a goodbye, it is simply a thank you! Thank you for accepting me, for guiding me, for loving me. The Asian American Studies Program at UMASS Boston was never a place I anticipated calling home, but now I do, and am honored by the significant role it has played in my growth as a Human.

This was how it was always meant to be, there was no other way for life to have played out, and now that it is history, we can say so definitively.

Again, thank you, for everything.

# Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies

Justin Shunta Budrow



I am a multiracial Japanese American from Boston, graduating with a major in Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, a minor in Political Science, and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I was raised in the neighborhood of Fields Corner, not far from UMass Boston, in a bilingual and multicultural household. Since I was an infant, I've lived my summers in Japan, surrounded by a family of elders and traditionalists. I am always vividly reminded of the sights, sounds, scents and tastes of home that remain close to me. Despite my upbringing, I never intentionally sought more about my identity, family history, or purpose. I yearned for clarity of something that was always a part of me, yet could never comfortably have a grasp of. After my formal introduction to Dr. Peter Kiang and the Asian American Studies Program, I felt a new and familiar sense of belonging, cultivation and encouragement.

What drew me closer to the program were its architects, mentors and protégés; their dedication to the creation, expansion, health and survival of the program has given me invaluable guidance and wisdom. They were instrumental in crafting empowering environments that I thrived in. They have allowed me to develop a critical eye and ear towards the injustices and disparities faced among Asian Americans. They have provided me with insights that I appreciate even more than when I received them. They have uncovered a voice I never thought I had and placed their confidence and trust in me to share a common message. There were many notable moments, among them the opportunity to be a teaching assistant for two classes, both of which I continue to view more of as mutual learning experiences. Classes including *Asian American Leadership and Social Change* (AsAmSt 250G) influenced my interdisciplinary direction towards politics; while classes such as *Teaching and Learning in Asian American Studies* (AsAmSt 497) were distinctly therapeutic, holding so many lessons for life and the importance of curriculum. My Asian American Studies professors consider the delicate complexities of multilingual and multiethnic realities, family histories, legacies and trauma of war and resettlement, and other factors when producing their courses. They have always looked out for immediate opportunities for growth, and the long-term potential of each and every student. They leave so much more than an academic grade and have played such a visibly significant role in my own growth.

My desire is to make meaningful and organic contributions to key policy areas including the economy, immigration, social welfare and foreign policy. My next step is to prioritize consistent financial stability before returning to higher education, studying public policy in graduate school. It will not be an easy feat, but I know that the lessons I learned from the last five years at UMass Boston have prepared me to take on my next essential challenge. I also hope to spend at least one year living abroad, perhaps in Asia. Grounded with a foundation in philosophy, policy and ethnic studies, I want the next five years of this journey to culminate in a realized vision of working alongside policymakers, advocacy organizations, and research institutions. I hope to meet and engage with more communities and populations, whether across America, or abroad. I also hope to gain insights from others working towards the political and economic realignment. Yet even with my own personal aspirations, I will never forget my Asian American Studies family. They have guided me towards a new and vital purpose: to lead, observe, empower and connect. Whether it be through education, leadership, research, media, community or any other medium, I hope to become an influential voice for expanding and protecting Asian American Studies.

## Aimee Chan

My name is Aimee, and I am a 2nd generation Chinese American woman. I have been a lifelong resident of Boston and am a product of the Boston Public Schools system. In these past four years at UMass Boston, I have been studying psychology as well as Asian American Studies. I first took an Asian American Psychology class during freshman year. To say that it was transformative is an understatement — within the semester, I had switched majors to psychology, and declared an AsAmSt program-of-study.



Asian American Psychology was incredibly impactful on a personal level because of the ways that it helped me put words to my experiences of cultural pulls, microaggressions, and the impacts of stereotypes for the first time. It also enabled me to understand that these experiences were not ones I was experiencing alone— that in fact, these were things that have serious impacts on an entire community.

Since Asian American Psychology, I have taken a number of other AsAmSt classes that have allowed me to further develop clarity and meaning in my identities. We exist in a society where the constructs of our social identities hold very real repercussions in the ways our experiences vary, and I am thankful to have had a place in Asian American Studies to begin to understand that. In the past year, I have been working on my thesis, which explores Asian American anxiety resulting from experiences of racism, and examines potential social influences that may play a role in this. This has been an incredibly empowering experience. I am thankful to my mentors for supporting me in writing my thesis, for their belief in me, and for supporting my growth in so many ways.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to learn so much about myself through my education, and I hope to be able to use the knowledge I have gained here in continuing to educate, learn, and be part of the cycle of growth. As we become empowered by knowledge, we must share and empower others as well.

I am forever thankful for the ways that my first AsAmSt class expanded my worldview into the possibilities of bridging mental health awareness and access within the Asian American community, which is something I am deeply passionate about, and that I hope to be able to work towards. My education within Asian American Studies is something I truly cherish, and I hope to be able to contribute to this cycle of awareness, education and empowerment.

## Kính Gia Hà



I am a 1.5 generation Vietnamese American born in Saigon, Vietnam. My dad's side of the family was originally from the North, but due to the War, they had to escape and flee to the South where he met my mom and they got married. My family was fortunate enough to immigrate to the United States in August of 2002 when I was five through an uncle's sponsorship, and Dorchester has been our home ever since. I attended school at the Mather Elementary, then the Murphy K-8, Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, and finally UMass Boston where my older sister is an alumna. I will graduate with a Bachelor of Art degree in social psychology, a program-of-study in Asian American Studies, and with honors in the Honors College.

Before I attended UMass Boston, I was exposed to Asian American Studies and social justice learning when I was a teen staff member at VSPY, a bi-cultural Vietnamese youth program located inside the VietAID community center in Fields Corner. It was there that I learned more about my cultural roots and history and the struggles that ethnic minorities face every day. Coming into UMass Boston, I tried to pursue a degree in environmental science and biology, but I realized that I was more attracted to the social sciences. Just when I had declared my major in social psychology—Cindy Tao, a friend whom I met at the youth program told me to enroll in an AsAmSt course. With her, I took Peter's Asians in the United States where I then signed up for the program-of-study soon after. Peter's class was the very first class in my whole academic career to have me engage with my Vietnamese background and history. My involvement with the Asian American Studies Program helped to push me beyond my comfort zone through my interactions with the staff and students, through making meaningful presentations and projects, and through the meticulous self-reflections. I was able to present myself as more than just a college student studying social psychology—rather I was able to express my Vietnamese American identity, my passion to do better in my community, and showcase my writing skills in the most challenging and yet meaningful ways. Asian American Studies showed me that my words, my works, and my thoughts have meaning. It showed me that I have impact and the ability to make and create change. It showed me that I matter.

I currently work as the Family Engagement Specialist at the Au Co Preschool located within VietAID. I work closely with families by providing social services and am deeply committed to working with the youth. I plan on doing this work while also getting my master's degree in social work so that I can better serve my community. I believe that what I have learned in Asian American Studies will benefit the ways in which I interact with families, how being aware of ethnic backgrounds and immigrant experiences will allow me to empathize and do what I can to help people. The VietAID community center is an extremely important public space for everyone to gather, to interact, and to utilize the services available to them. This place is the perfect spot for me to be involved with the Vietnamese community in Fields Corner. I do hope to continue working with ethnic minority youth in the far future; I want to be that person who opens doors and opportunities for them so that they can have an equal fighting chance in our society. They are the ones that matter, because they are our future. With the knowledge that I have learned from this program, I will be that person, exactly how someone else was there for me.

## Katie Trinh Mai

I am a 2nd-generation Vietnamese American. Raised in Malden, MA and still living there. I'm the oldest child, a daughter of war refugees, and the first of my immediate family to achieve a Bachelor's degree. I will be graduating with a Psychology (BS) and with a program-of-study in Asian American Studies.

I entered into college without a sense of who I was. At the time, I was lonely. I was lost. And I was struggling on how to cope with my father who was battling stomach cancer. I transferred to UMass Boston in my sophomore year with hopes of entering the Nursing Program. As the eldest child, there was an unspoken expectation that I had to get a career to support my family if the absolute worst happened.

When I was creating my schedule, I enrolled into Asian Women in the U.S. taught by Linda Thiem. I wasn't familiar with Asian American Studies, or knew it existed, so I came in not knowing what to expect. And in that single semester, I gained so much more than I could've imagined. It was the first time I was surrounded by mostly Asian and Asian American-identified women peers. I was learning about my history and exposed to the critical issues that concerned my community. I felt validated, supported, and loved. And I started to learn how to use my voice and understand the power behind it. When the course came to an end, I felt an urgency to do more and sought out another space to be alongside other Asian/Asian Americans.



I joined UMass Boston's Asian Student Center as part of its executive board and got connected with tons of on-campus student-led organizations and clubs. Additionally, I decided to apply for the Asian American Women's Political Initiative (AAWPI) and got accepted to join as a fellow of Cohort 8. There, I jumped head-first into the Massachusetts State House with a part-time legislative internship. It was a steep learning curve. It felt like I was learning how to run before I could even crawl. And even though it was difficult to navigate through such a white-dominated institution without knowing any of the government terminology and having little prior knowledge, the experience taught me the significance of why we need to be politically engaged and to know our history.

Asian Women in the U.S. marked the start of my personal and professional growth. It's like I walked into one door and all of a sudden, there were a million doors that were opened to me.

Currently, I'm trying to balance a few responsibilities. I'm transitioning out of my last year as coordinator for the Asian Student Center. I'm working as a Teaching Assistant for the AsAmSt 250G: Rise Up! Asian American Leadership and Social Change, and as a Research Assistant under the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and the Institute for Asian American Studies, thanks to the Asian American Student Success Program (AASSP).

It's been a roller coaster. My younger self would not believe this is the person she'd turn out to be. And I feel like I've been able to become who I am today because I've met people willing to give me a chance and provide me mentorship because they saw something in me that I didn't.

I pursued Psychology and Asian American Studies because at one point, I had aspirations to become a Mental Health Counselor for the Asian American community. Though now, I'm not so sure. While I'd like to serve and be a resource for my community and other communities of color, I want to do it in the capacity of Social Work and/or Higher Education Administration.

As I write all of this, I'm reminded of the time my Dad told me why he chose my name. The name *Katie* has Greek roots; it's an English name and means "good" or "pure." And he named that because he wanted me to grow up to be a good person. So, as I approach the end of my senior year, I think about how, at the core, I committed to Asian American Studies because I wanted to become closer to him now that he's gone. I want to keep him alive by honoring him in the work that I do—work that is meaningful, intentional, and to attest that his sacrifices for me did not go to waste.

May you continue to live through me.

Ba (9/30/1954 - 10/14/2016)

## Priya जीना Sonal

Hello, Namaste, I am Priya प्रिया, Xena जीना's Mom. I immigrated from India, and came to America in 2012. I'm born in Mumbai, and grew up in Western part of India (fun fact—lived in many cities of India), but my parents are from Northern India, Dharchula (a small town, near the India-Nepal border). I am fluent in Hindi but I can also understand a little bit Gujarati, and Marathi. My parents' mother tongue is Rung (it's a local dialect) which is spoken by the Indo-Nepal border community people. I had an arranged marriage, my husband is from Darchula, Nepal. The Kali River joins Dharchula, India and Darchula, Nepal.

I want to start talking about how I got connected with Asian American Studies in UMass Boston. I still remember my first Asian American Studies class, "Asian American Cultures and Health Practices", which introduced me to the Asian American Studies Program. As guest speakers came to our classes, I related and felt connected through their personal narrative stories, then I started reflecting, too. I also connected to AASSP (Asian American Student Success Program) where Ms. Sara Boxell became my advisor, and I felt listened to and supported, which I never felt with other advisors before. The whole staff of AASSP

was always there for me. This gave me hope and power to continue working towards my own education, and made me feel like maybe someday I can be more helpful and can advocate for others, too.

In Fall 2019, during the first week of our Boston's Asian American Communities class, when Professor Peter Kiang required us to read the article, "Endangered Language, Identity Crisis and the Vanishing Community: A Sociolinguistic Study of Darma," that brought such joy to me. I have never ever seen my community recognized in school as important to study or discuss or know about; not here, nor in India.

Through Asian American Studies, I got the opportunity to be a Teaching Assistant. It was such a cool experience to be a TA (also known in AASSP as facilitated study leader), working with students. I want to give a shout out to all students from Fall 2019 Asian Women in the US and Spring 2020 Introduction to Asian American Studies. I thank them for sharing themselves with us. I learned a lot from them.



I was almost a Homoeopathic doctor (in India), almost a nurse (in America), but now I feel I am a "Better Person than my former self" ... Education doesn't always make you feel satisfied (better), but real knowledge, knowing "self" makes you liberated. Getting along with others, knowing and supporting people-communities can bring meaning to your life.

I started 2020 with hopes and dreams, graduating and maybe have another baby, and all. But with the beginning of March 2020, things got very hard personally, and globally. Graduating in pandemic, having classes online, escalating anxiety and going through miscarriage grief took a bad toll on my overall health. I want to share this here, so maybe one day, I will go through these pages again, and will realize and remember how I get through, even in difficult times. And maybe, some of you can relate with something from this and share how we all have been and still are so resilient. I read somewhere, "Stigma is shame. Shame causes silence. Silence hurts us all." So, I am going to try to listen more, try to be a little less judgmental, and maybe I can share my story with others and vice-versa. Speaking the truth about ourselves can remove stigmas someday. I believe that "collective consciousness can bring changes"...

My whole journey with the Asian American Studies Program in UMass Boston gave me "space, voice and rights", and this is what I am going to keep working on... THANK YOU, all :)

## Cindy Tao

I am a second generation Vietnamese Chinese American, first generation college student, and an only daughter to refugees. I will be graduating with a major in psychology, minor in sociology, and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I was raised in Dorchester and have lived here all my life.

I decided to include a focus on Asian American Studies in my studies at UMass Boston because this was something I was longing for in high school. I was unable to find a community even through an Asian Students Association club I helped lead, because I was looking for something beyond just holding "cultural events". During this time, I was invited to be a visitor to one of Professor Kiang's classes because it was the college application process time. In his class, I can recall the images of a video we watched. I remember Vietnamese children crying with their burnt skin barely hanging, running and screaming as napalm bombs dropped, and a child who looked no more than seven holding onto their dead sibling. I sat and cried. It was at this moment where I felt so connected, yet so disconnected. But it shaped my education path, forever.

It was not until I took my first Introduction to Asian American Studies course in Spring 2017 where I felt that this is the type of education I was really hungry for. These classes have made me think about how our daily lives as Asian Americans are impacted by our histories. The AsAmSt Program has taught me to write our own stories rather than other entities thinking they should do it for us. No more to the small three-sentence paragraphs about the "Vietnam War" and the Chinese Exclusion Act that erased our people's voices and deemed them as replaceable in the textbooks of our United States History classes in primary and high school. Because of Asian American Studies, I would not have been able to unlearn and unpack the harmful narratives that the wider society created about our people.



Frankly, without Asian American Studies, I also do not think I would have been able to detect various problems in psychology. I would have not critically questioned who and what is missing from the studies, the trials, and the reports. It is because of the education I received here that I can confidently declare that I want to commit to working with Asian refugee and immigrant populations in the mental health field. Trauma is not just the DSM-5 standard definition of PTSD because that is not what it looks like to all our communities. It comes in different forms, different sizes, and different stories.

In Fall 2020, I will be attending Boston University's Master of Social Work Program in the clinical track. My future goals include becoming a therapist who can center clients' voices and help them heal in ways that are applicable and accessible for them. I am saddened by seeing our people only seeking therapy when things are at their ultimate worst. I am also saddened by the low retention rates in therapy, but also know that many systemic barriers play a role in these numbers. If I were to name a dream, it would be to open my own practice or clinic in Dorchester.

I am honored to have had the privilege to pursue an education in Asian American Studies at UMass Boston, where classrooms like these are difficult to find, and are created with immense purpose to center students' voices holistically. Thank you to everybody in the Asian American Studies Program who have always shown nothing less than genuine care, compassion, and kindness to me, as educators, mentors, and loving people. Thank you for giving me a reason to stay at UMass Boston and making me look forward to completing my degree. Lastly, thank you for helping me learn and understand that my parents are more than just victims of the war, that they are, have been, and always, will be, more.

## Jiantao Wang

I came from Guangdong, Zhongshan, China. I have been in Boston for eight years.



Having an Asian American Studies program-of-study as my minor was meaningful. I was always interested in history and enjoyed understanding more about the experiences of Asian American communities in the US. The Asian American Studies Program was a life changer for me in my college life. I was able to learn more about something I did not know about, such as the history of Asian Americans in the US, especially Chinese immigrants. All those courses that I have taken would help me understand how to make better decisions and how to make an impact on society later.

Education is the most powerful weapon in the world. All the knowledge that I have gained from Asian American Studies would help me better understand my culture. It also helps me understand the importance of my own experiences and how they could be used as research resources for the next generations. My experience could guide more youth on the right path toward success, and most importantly to inspire others.

我决定六月中旬返回家乡，重新出发。本来，成功大学本科毕业是一件见证我的成就而美好的事情。更多的是，让我告诉很多跟我有相同经历的学生和正在经历的学生建立着好的憧憬。因为聚集庆祝毕业典礼的时候会引起病毒传播的速度和具有极大的危险性。所以，我在大学最后一年的里草草的画上了句号。

I decided to go back to my homeplace in China in mid-June and start all over again. Originally the undergraduate graduation ceremony would have been a great way to celebrate my achievements. Even more so, the ceremony would have allowed me to share the message of hope and possibility with students who have similar experiences as mine. However, as gathering in large crowds for the graduation ceremony will create more hazards for the virus, my last year in the university will have to hastily end.

天下无不散之宴席，移民的生活和这八年在这里认识的 life-long friends 也要暂时分离了。但是在经历了这些事之后，我深深体会到，计划永远赶不上变化。希望世界各大国家能够团结，顺利战胜这一场战争。

All banquets must end, and I must also temporarily leave my immigrant life and the life-long friends I've met in these past eight years. But after experiencing all of this, I finally understand the saying that "Plans will never catch up to change." I hope all the nations in our world can unite and win this war.

## Alice Zhou

As a 1.5 generation Chinese American born in China, I embarked on a journey to study in the U.S. in 2012 at the age of 13. I had to leave my friends, family, and everything that I knew behind in order to obtain an education that my parents had always wanted for me, an opportunity that they were not able to have because they had obligations to support their families. The biggest accomplishment in my life thus far is completing a degree in Economics and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies at UMass Boston.

The reason I decided to include a focus on Asian American Studies is that I felt a connection with the people in the program which made me want to be more involved. After taking the Introduction to Asian American Studies with Prof. Peter Kiang in my freshman year, I continued to take more AsAmSt courses such as Cambodian American Culture and Community, Asian American Community Internship, Applied Research in Asian American Studies I & II, Boston's Asian American Communities, and Teaching & Learning II in Asian American Studies.



The AsAmSt Program has impacted my college experience in many ways; I am able to connect and engage with what I'm studying academically and emotionally. For the first time in my life, education was full of excitement for me. I feel very fortunate because I have many opportunities that I have not had in other academic courses, such as speaking in the 2019 APAHE (Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education) national conference in Oakland, California, interning at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC), and producing important research-based bilingual projects.

After graduation, I am planning to visit my parents in China and explore a few countries in Asia. Throughout my learning process in Asian American Studies, I have been able to discover and expand my identity, my role in the Asian American community, to help the Asian American community in the greater Boston area, and develop how I am able to use my bilingual knowledge to make change through my critical and emotional reflections now as well as in the future.

# Recognizing Graduate Student Contributions

Jocelyn Lee (李紫瑄), M.A., Historical Archaeology



I am a second generation Chinese American. My parents moved to the U.S. to pursue graduate education when they were in their 20's. They were part of the wave of Taiwanese immigrants that came to the U.S. in the 1980's and stayed to pursue the American Dream. I grew up hearing about their struggles in trying to afford graduate school through working various Chinese-related jobs such as working at Chinese restaurants or teaching at Chinese schools. From them, I learned the importance of Chinese communities in the U.S. and how they provided other means of survival for my parents. Because my parents had always been very conscious of moving us to places with a large Asian American population, Asian

American issues became very present in my childhood. When I was in high school, I joined a local Asian American youth organization with goals of encouraging Asian American youths to have a place to express their voices. We began to dive into topics of model minority, Asian stereotypes, cultural clashes and so on. It was then that I was introduced to Asian American Studies. Despite acknowledging that Asian American issues are always on my mind in some way, in college I decided to pursue my career passion—archaeology. I graduated from University of Maryland, Baltimore County with a double major of Asian Studies and Ancient Studies and had planned on pursuing a career in Chinese archaeology. In the last couple of years, during my time in Cultural Resource Management, I was introduced to Historical Archaeology, and specifically Chinese Diaspora archaeology. With people such as Kelly Fong, Laura Ng, and Koji Ozawa in the field, I realized that this was the perfect discipline for me to pursue archaeology while addressing Asian American issues.

I am a MA graduate student in the Historical Archaeology program in Anthropology. Prior to my arrival at UMB, I was recommended by alumna Laura Ng to contact the Asian American Studies Program because while she had also been here in Historical Archaeology, she had been able to find an additional home in this department. Though I could only become more active in AsAmSt during my final semester, I am grateful for all the opportunities they have provided me. Prior to this last semester, I occasionally popped into the office to ask Peter Kiang and Shirley Tang for suggestions and recommendations on my thesis. They were incredibly helpful and I very much appreciated their advice, recommendations, and especially their perspectives from Asian American Studies. As historical archaeology is inherently interdisciplinary, I know that to study Asian American archaeology, I must incorporate Asian American Studies. This is also why I am ecstatic to have Shirley on my thesis committee. In this last semester, I was also given the opportunity to TA for Shirley's AsAmSt 397 Chinese Bilingual Storytelling Class. Though the pandemic has caused the class to go in a slightly different direction, I am very grateful for the opportunity to hear the stories of individual Chinese American students. Working with Shirley and the Digital Storytelling team has taught me the importance of documenting your own stories, and the power that individual stories can provide. Peeling away the layers of a story in order to discover and understand the nuances of your own family and its history is part of a larger process in helping us make meaning of our stories. As an archaeology student, I have found a lot of parallels in the methods taught by my archaeology professors and by Shirley. These parallels and the lessons I have learned from Shirley (and will continue to learn), have made me become a better archaeologist and a better advocate for Asian Americans.

As of fall 2020, I will be an archaeology PhD student in Stanford's anthropology department. My research will continue to focus on Asian American archaeology and, therefore, I hope to continue to incorporate Asian American Studies work into my research. I hope to utilize all the different Asian American Studies-related opportunities provided at Stanford in order to further not only my research, but to also ensure that I am advocating for the broader Asian American community. Lastly, I will most definitely not forget all the lessons I have learned from the Asian American Studies Program here at UMB. I will continue to keep current Chinese American narratives in the forefront of my mind as I continue my career in Anthropology.

## AsAmSt Program Sampling from 2019-2020

“Whenever you can help others, you should help.” — Mr. Stanley Chen (1925–2020)



With great sadness, we carry forever memories of Mr. Stanley Chen, who passed away peacefully in his sleep, just as the lunar calendar completed its full cycle in late January. From 2010 to the present, Mr. Chen crafted a shared model of intentionally low-profile, high-impact investment for a robust network of 40+ AsAmSt students based on financial need, community-minded heart, pragmatic improvement, and collective commitments to help others in the future. Mr. Chen took great pride in seeing the UMB diplomas of SCCS students he had encouraged, and he provided rich, immigrant wisdom based on his own remarkable life experience and the legacy he literally built as the principal developer of Quincy Tower and South Cove Plaza, the first low-income elderly housing projects in Boston Chinatown in 1978 and 1982. Our AsAmSt SCCS gratitude to Mr. Chen and family is deeply personal and profound.

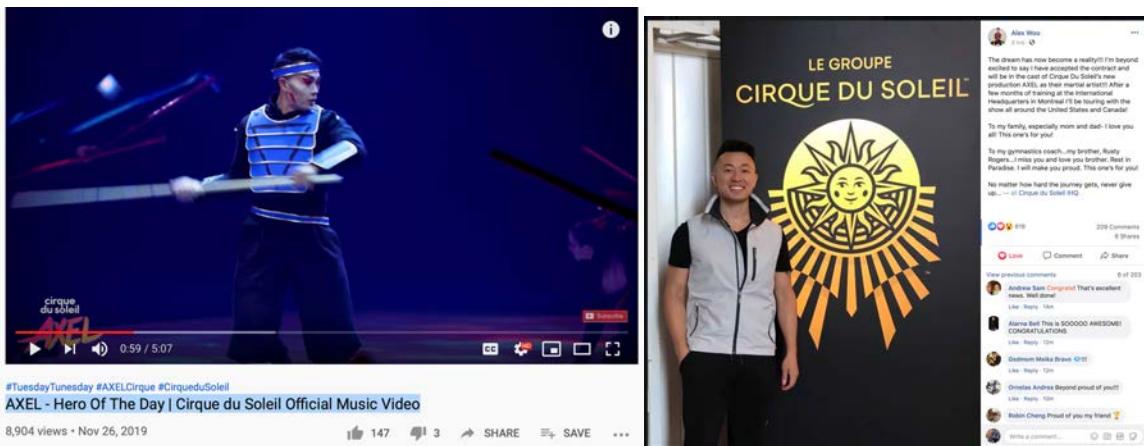


After two graduate degrees (GISD, TCCS/CECS) plus Optional Practical Training, so many video coproduction projects, and five years of daily, dedicated learning in AsAmSt—always while sharing precious Khmer cultural and historical knowledge—PenhSamnang Kan has completed this chapter of her life in the US, and returns to her beloved home and family in Phnom Penh, Cambodia after July 2020.

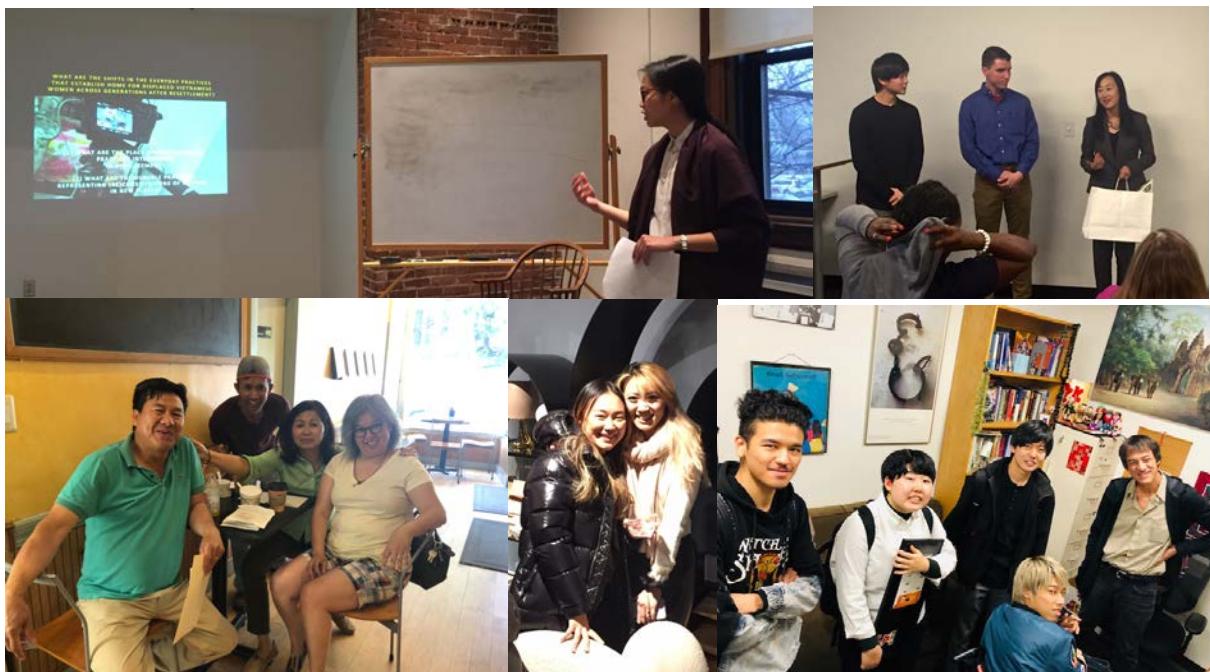


Though formal AY20 decisions are not yet announced, Lakshmi Srinivas is expected to join AsAmSt as a full-time senior faculty in SGISD/CEHD and Shirley Tang is expected to be awarded promotion to full professor rank. Special appreciation and honor go to Tri Quach for so many years of visionary practice and creative contribution.

## AsAmSt Alumni in Action



AsAmSt alumni achievement of the year... Alex Woo ('16), whose years of martial arts dedication and fall-down-seven-times-get-up-eight-times persistence culminated with his selection as a featured performer in Cirque du Soleil's international touring extravaganza on ice, AXEL, in 2019-2020—making a long-held dream come true.

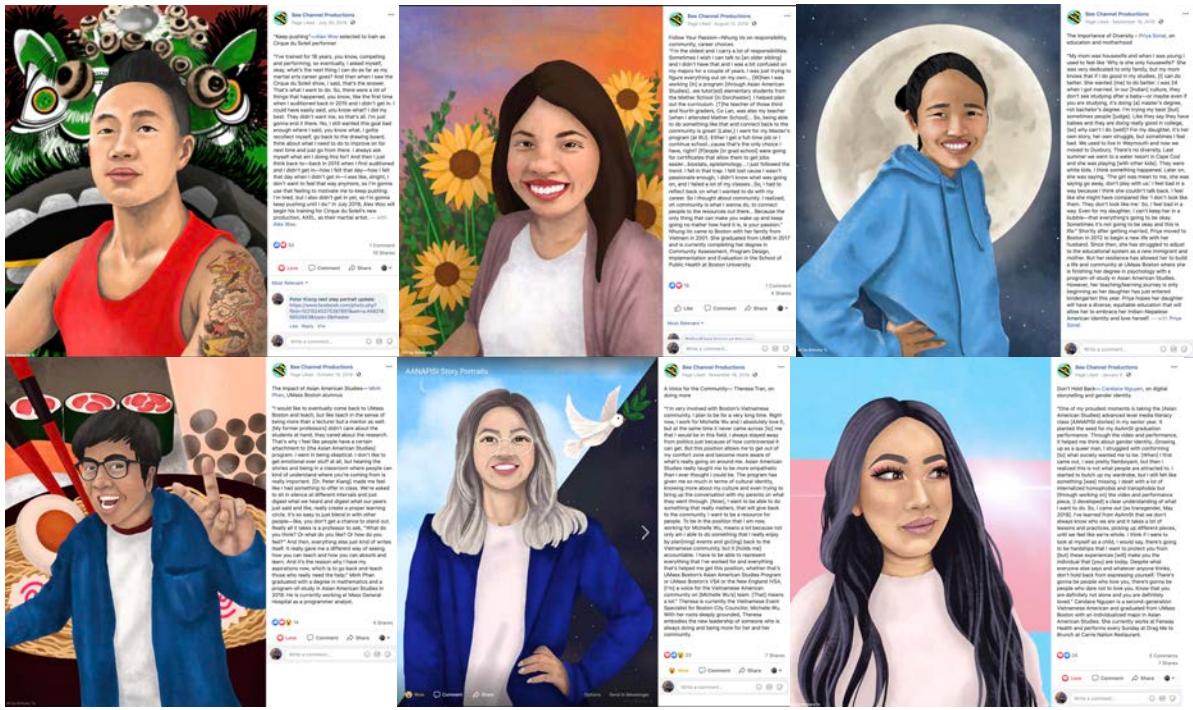


Son Ca Lam ('09; M.A., '13) defended her PhD dissertation, "Shifting Grounds: Embodied Geographies of Displacement and Home for Vietnamese Women Across Generations," at Clark University in February [upper left]. Classmates from the early days of AsAmSt, Hien Tran ('88), Phoumara Nuon ('93; '07); Kim-Dung Nguyen ('90), and Marylou Francisco ('19), shared a new year reunion at Mara's Wellesley Bakery, now in its 26th year [lower left]. ChuYu Huang ('11) joined the staff of MA 3rd Suffolk District Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair of the House Ways & Means Committee, in January [lower middle with HuiYan Huang ('15) at a Dec 2019 AsAmSt 398 exhibition]. During summer-fall 2019, Miwa Tanabe ('02) [upper right] once again co-led the Institute for Community Inclusion's Tomodachi Leadership Training Program, creating unique educational empowerment opportunities for young generation leaders from Japan with disability-centered awareness and advocacy commitments [lower right].

## AANAPISI Story Portraits and Productions

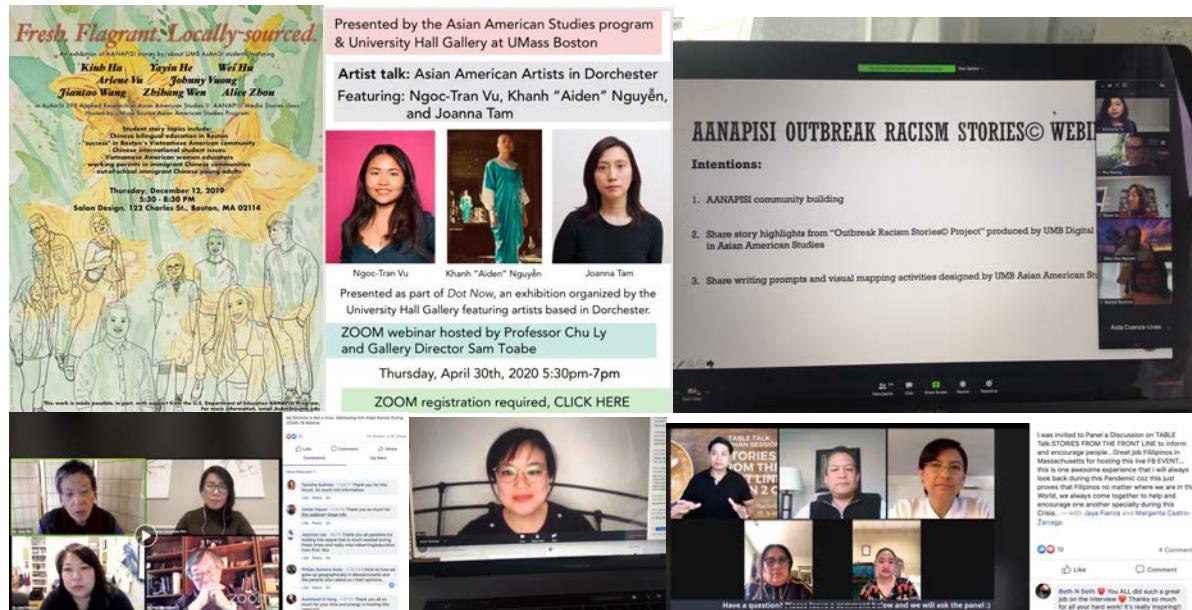


With AANAPISI funding support, Ammany Ty ('18) provided limitless leadership in multiple projects, from co-producing numerous multilingual digital stories to dramatically performing her own poetic narratives to creating and curating a series of original AANAPISI Story Portraits that profile recent AsAmSt alumni.



Ammany's digitally painted AANAPISI Story Portraits from 2019-2020 include: Alex Woo ('16), Nhung Vo ('17), Priya Sonal ('20), Minh Phan ('18), Theresa Tran ('19), and Candace Nguyen ('18). The series is hosted via the Digital Stories in Asian American Studies Team © Bee Channel Productions outlet (@AANAPISIstoryportraits on IG or [https://www.facebook.com/pg/beechannelproductions/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=692676874511589](https://www.facebook.com/pg/beechannelproductions/photos/?tab=album&album_id=692676874511589)).

## COVID-19 Contexts



In transitioning from a standing-room-only salon space featuring AsAmSt 398 student co-productions in December [upper-left] to our co-hosted March gallery talk with Dorchester Asian American artists that was canceled due to state restrictions on crowd size, but later held remotely with Chu Ly's AsAmSt 228 in April [middle] to a national AANAPISI online webinar sharing new COVID-19 real-life-real-stories from Shirley Tang's AsAmSt 397/370 students and the digital storytelling in AsAmSt team [upper right], our courses and program adjusted as best we could throughout Spring 2020. Individual faculty, alumni, and students further shared their own critical perspectives about racism, structural inequality, and front-line stress through webinars and panels, including Liza Talusan and Paul Watanabe [lower left], and Pinay nursing student leader Jaya Fianza [lower right].



Meanwhile, AsAmSt alumna Jenny Chiang ('13), executive director of the MA Asian American Commission, organized the final in-person anti-racism rally at the State House on March 12, just before quarantine orders—thereby yielding the iconic photo (AP/Steven Senne) that is still circulating worldwide—with Jenny at the center.

## A Joint Statement from Public Massachusetts AANAPISI Institutions - 2 April 2020

A Joint Statement from Public MA AANAPISI Institutions - University of Massachusetts Boston.pdf (page 2 of 2)

□ □ □ A Joint Statement from Public...

**We repudiate racism. We celebrate the unique cultural wealth and strengths of our Asian American communities.**

In the wake of the COVID-19 virus outbreak, Asian communities in the Greater Boston area and across the United States have experienced heightened xenophobic reactions. People perceived to be of Chinese or Asian descent have been targeted with discriminatory acts or endured general harassment.

Misinformation and politicization of this illness have caused anxiety and lasting economic harm to our Asian communities. As we watch the rampant course of COVID-19 through Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America/U.S., we know that it observes no national or ethnic boundaries. The fear of this destructive virus has magnified the divisiveness within our society and our nation. Only our care for one another can mitigate our fears; only our compassion for everyone safeguards our society.

As the Asian American Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) of Massachusetts public institutions—Bunker Hill Community College, Middlesex Community College, and the University of Massachusetts Boston—stand together to affirm our faith in the humanity of all people. We repudiate racism and all forms of discrimination. We celebrate the unique cultural wealth and strengths of our Asian American communities.

Please report any incident of discrimination to college or university officials or local law enforcement. Please keep one another safe through these turbulent times.

Pam Eddinger  
President  
Bunker Hill Community College

Jim Mabry  
President  
Middlesex Community College

Katherine Newman  
Interim Chancellor  
UMass Boston

The Asian American Studies Program recognizes with appreciation:

- all current and former AsAmSt students and their family members who have played *essential*/roles in providing care, security, sustenance, and support of all kinds at all hours in all conditions for all of us.
- all AsAmSt faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and students who have adjusted to mandatory modes of remote teaching & learning, while simultaneously addressing disparate impacts on health, mental health, economic survival, and daily threats of physical harm and racist attack against families and communities;
- Kinh Ha and Tomás Leyton-Nolan who each completed Honors College thesis projects in AsAmSt.
- MinJin Kim, former AsAmSt instructor and UMB Nursing PhD Program alumna, who begins a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in Nursing at the University of Cincinnati; Chu Ly, AsAmSt instructor and M.Ed. alumna, who completed her EdD in Literacy and Language at Boston University in September 2019 and begins a full-time Assistant Professor position at Framingham State University in Education.
- Son Ca Lam, AsAmSt instructor and alumna, who completed her PhD in Geography at Clark University in May 2020 and was accepted to Penn State University's 2020 Summer Institute on The Geographical Imagination of Global Asians; Kim Soun Ty, AsAmSt instructor and alumna, who was awarded a Henry Luce Foundation Scholarship for the 2020 Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute at U Wisconsin; Parmita Gurung, AsAmSt alumna, who returns to UMB for the 2020-21 Teach Next Year M.Ed. program.
- Thanh Nguyen, doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology program and former instructor of Asian American Psychology (AsAmSt/Psych 238L), who was accepted into the prestigious Minority Fellowship Program of the American Psychological Association from 2019 through degree completion;
- Janrey Javier & Jaely Pereira who were elected as undergraduate student government president and vice-president. Janrey is the first Filipinx student to hold this office. Both have taken AsAmSt classes.
- Cynthia Orellana, Director of UMB's Office of Community Partnerships, who received the Campus Compact network's 2020 Nadinne Cruz Award for Community Engagement Professional—named in honor of the beloved Pinay pioneer of community engaged learning in the United States;
- everyone involved with our US Department of Education-funded AANAPISI Program activities, including co-PIs Joan Becker, Peter Kiang, Paul Watanabe, and Shirley Tang; Asian American Student Success Program staff led by Sara Boxell with Pratna Kem, Frances Chow, Karen Chi, and Erica Lam and our sister AANAPISI leaders at Bunker Hill Community College, including President Pam Eddinger, Faculty Project Director, Maria Puente, and Activity Director, Aurora Bautista. Though widely unacknowledged, UMB's AANAPISI status directly generated additional CARES Act funding for student support in 2020.
- and finally, Dr. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco y Dra. Carola Suarez-Orozco, whose grounded visions and fresh, bilingual/bicultural leadership will guide the next chapter of UMass Boston, beginning in AY21.

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, and events, see: <http://www.facebook.com/UMB.AsAmSt>. And if able, please consider contributing to the Asian American Studies Program Capacity Fund: <http://www.alumni.umb.edu/AsAmSt30>. Thank you to our 2019-2020 donors for your generous support!.