

# E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

April 2021



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*(from Linda Devine, Editor)*

I hope everyone is beginning to enjoy nicer weather as we embark on spring. I also hope that with the Biden Administration's fortunate ahead-of-schedule rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program, OCAW members and their families are in the process of obtaining their much-welcomed vaccines. We all look forward to the beginning of a return to normal, and that includes a return to in-person gatherings and events. But kudos to those chapters and individual members who during this trying time have managed to carry on with activities and programs despite the challenges.

Thank you to those who submitted material for this e-newsletter. I am also grateful to my husband Ed for his efforts in preparing the many photos.

As always, I encourage OCAW members to write articles or submit information for the e-newsletter if there is something you think would be of interest to the membership. Publishing a wide variety of material is a continuing goal.

Please feel free to send me any suggestions or recommendations that you might have for any aspects of the e-newsletter. My email address is: [devinefive@comcast.net](mailto:devinefive@comcast.net)

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### **News from the Silicon Valley Chapter**

*(from Carol Yuan, President)*

#### **15th Annual Chinese Alzheimer's Forum**

On Saturday, March 27, 2021, the OCAW Silicon Valley Chapter, for the 5th year, co-sponsored the 15th Annual Chinese Alzheimer's Forum, along with 34 partners. The OCAW New Orleans and Maryland Chapters also co-sponsored the Forum. It was presented in Mandarin.

This year's event broke the record with 1017 individuals registered. There also might have been more than one user per registration who was participating.

Topics for this year's forum included:

- Network Level Approaches to Studying Alzheimer's Disease
- Complexity in Clinical Dementia – The Connection to Sleep Issues, Traumatic Brain Injury, Parkinson's Disease, and COVID-19
- Challenges in Providing Care for People with Late-Stage Alzheimer's Disease
- Family Dynamics and Collaboration to Care for Our Father

There was also a Pre-Forum Session:

- Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia

### **News from the Hawaii Chapter**

*(from Roberta Wong Leung, President)*

#### **2021 Chapter Officers**

*(from Rena Young Ochse, Vice President)*



#### **Dr. Roberta Wong Leung – President**

Roberta was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii in a family which created 20 restaurants. She graduated from the University of Hawaii, San Francisco University, and California State University and is married with two daughters.

Her career spans the International Hotel Industry as VP of Human Resources and as Professor and Dean of 16 Universities around the world. She has worked in Hong Kong, Singapore, China, and Australia as well as numerous international cities.

Some of the 20 organizations for which she volunteers include Iolani Palace, Kapiolani Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, Habitat for Humanity, Lions Club Honolulu Chinatown, Girl Scouts, Salvation Army, and Palolo Chinese Home Women's Auxiliary.

She has served as President of Associated Chinese University Women, Lions Club Honolulu Chinatown, State of Hawaii Business Professional Women, and Waikiki and Honolulu Business Professional Women. United Chinese Society chose her as their 2018 Model Mother of the Year. She first joined OCAW in 2000 and again in 2015.



### **Rena Young Ochse – Vice President**

Rena was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, and was educated at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Los Angeles City College, subsequently obtaining additional schooling in New York and London.

In Los Angeles, she worked at Western Airlines, British Airways, Beverly Hills Travel (Supervisor of Quality Control and Pricing Control and handled 3 corporate offices), etc. She returned to Hawaii in 1988 and continued work in the travel industry, and she currently is an independent agent with HNL Travel Associates.

She has served as President for American Business Women's Association twice (also chosen Chapter Woman of the Year and Top Ten Women of the Year candidate at their national convention), Business Professional Women twice, Chinese Women's Club of Honolulu, and Hawaii Chinese Civic Association.

Among many other positions are Kung Sheong Doo Society Chinese Secretary and Newsletter Editor, See Dai Doo Society Director, Chung Shan Association Director, and US-China People's Friendship Association Oahu Chapter Secretary.

Rena is a longtime OCAW member and has served as Hawaii Chapter President (three times) and Treasurer, and is currently Newsletter Editor, Communications Chair, and Vice President. She is married and loves hobbies like making jewelry.



### **Edwina Sui Ha Lee – Secretary**

Edwina joined OCAW in 2017. She was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii in a family with two younger brothers. She graduated with a B.A. degree in Chinese language from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Edwina can speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and Hakka.

She has held various leadership positions such as President of the Honolulu Chinese Jaycettes (now the Rising Phoenix Jaycees) and Community and Civic Chair for the Boy Scouts of America in the Kapiolani District. She earned the District Award of Merit and the Silver Beaver Award for her volunteer service.

She was also Membership Chair for the National Legal Secretaries Association and President of the Goo Association. Edwina currently is President of Associated Chinese University Women and 1st Vice President of the Tsung Tsin Association.

Edwina worked as a legal secretary/paralegal in various law firms (Goodsill Anderson Quinn & Stifel, Ashford & Wriston, Sterling & Tucker, etc.) and retired in 2017. She and her husband are now working for their own family real estate property management business. She is the mother of four and the grandmother of two.



**Gladys Kahn Lee – Treasurer**

Gladys was born in Kohala, Hawaii. She moved to Hilo during World War II and worked as a clerk typist for the U.S. Selective Service. When the war ended, she moved to Honolulu and attended Honolulu Business College. Following her completion of a stenographic course, she worked at the Juvenile Court of the 1st Circuit Court. After 7 years of employment, Gladys became Executive Secretary to the Director of Health for 30 years.

Gladys has been a member of Palolo Chinese Home Women's Auxiliary from 1964 to the present. She is currently the President of the Auxiliary which plans activities for the residents of Palolo Home. She and her Auxiliary members participate in creating crafts, celebrations, games, and entertainment.

In addition to OCAW, Gladys is also an active member of the Chinese Women's Club of Honolulu, US-China People's Friendship Association, and the Aloha Dance Club.

**February Meeting: Book Talk and Installation of Officers**

*(from Roberta Wong Leung and Queenie Mow Chee, Events Chair)*

On Sunday, February 21, 2021, the OCAW Hawaii Chapter had a large and successful Zoom meeting with renowned guest speaker Ms. Claire Chao, author of her biography, *Remembering Shanghai*, and for our Installation of new officers for 2021.

Before our session began, we were treated to a half hour of old nostalgic photos and the popular tunes of Shanghai from the 1920s and 1930s.

Claire then presented ***Remembering Shanghai: A Memoir of Socialites, Scholars and Scoundrels***, an award-winning memoir that she co-wrote with her mother Isabel Sun Chao. She spoke to us of her research and discoveries, and shared a video book trailer.

The story follows five generations from imperial China to modern-day Hong Kong, and is accompanied by evocative period illustrations and photographs. Isabel grows up in the wealthy Sun family in glamorous 1930s Shanghai. When Mao comes to power, she journeys to Hong Kong, unaware that she will never see her father again. She and daughter Claire return to Shanghai six decades later to confront their complex past – one they discover is filled with love and betrayal, kidnappers and concubines, glittering pleasure palaces and underworld crime bosses.

Claire was born and raised in Hong Kong. She spent a decade creating *Remembering Shanghai* after thirty years in luxury brand management. She graduated with highest honors from Princeton University and was named to *Avenue Magazine's* "500 Most Influential Asian Americans" and *Tatler Hong Kong's* "Who's Who in Hong Kong."



The book is a winner of over 20 literary and design awards, including the Rubery Book Prize BOOK OF THE YEAR.



Claire generously donated some *Remembering Shanghai* Audiobooks, as well as book-themed lovely bookmarks and elegant note cards as door prizes. A dozen lucky winners of the Audiobook version included Pat Ellzey, President of our OCAW New Orleans Chapter.

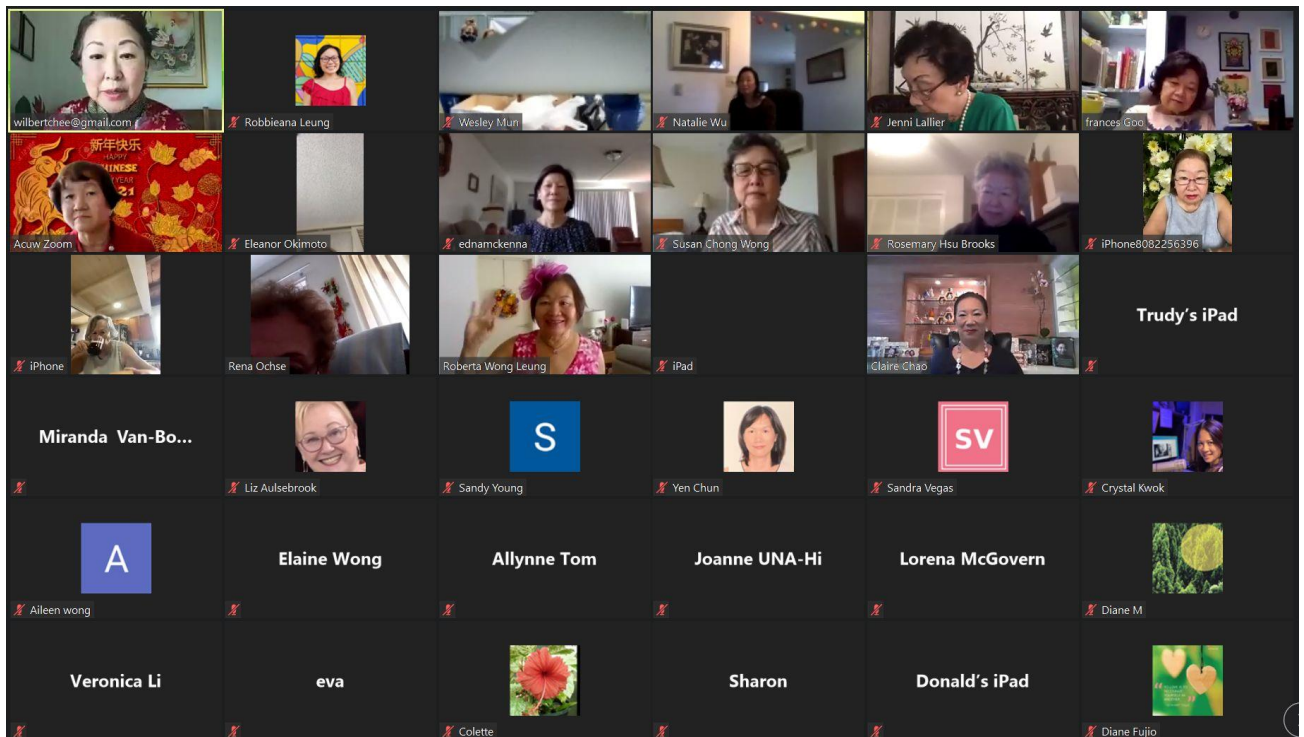
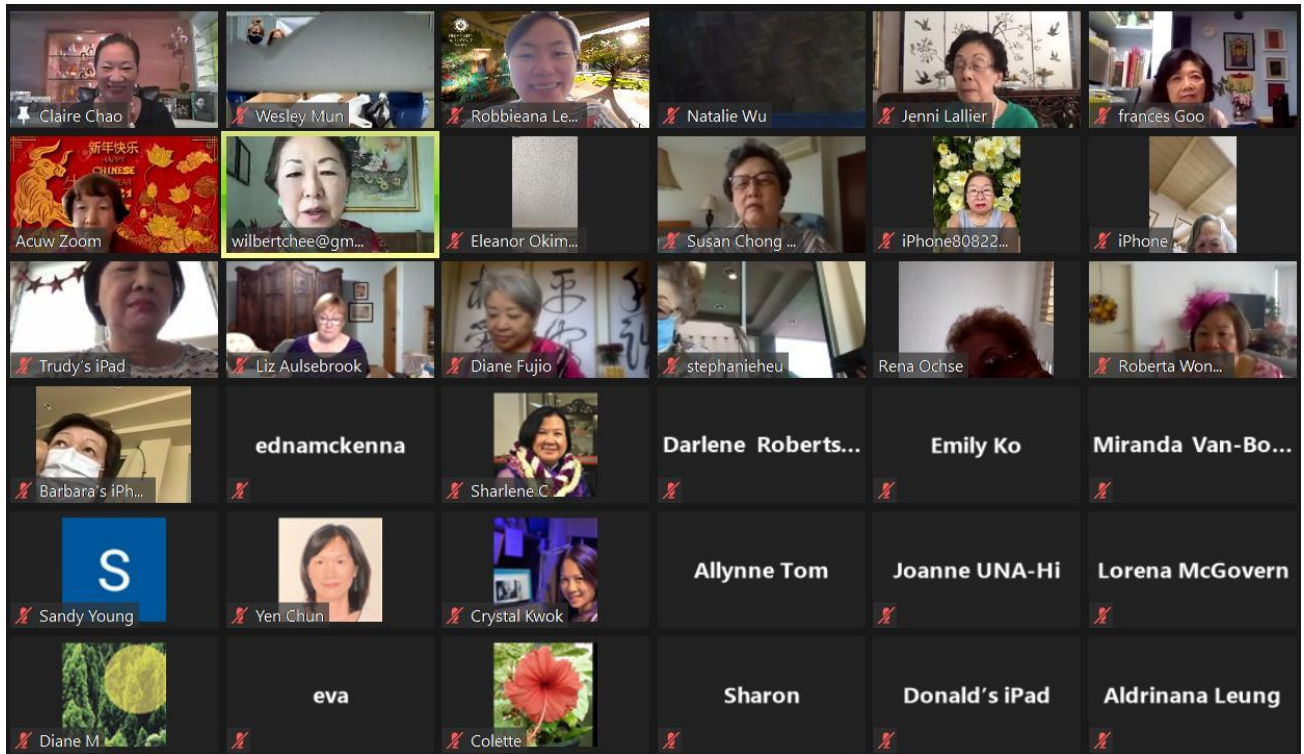
As of this writing, there are still a few more note cards and bookmarks available and waiting to be given out. Contact event organizer Queenie Chee to see what is required for you to receive one.

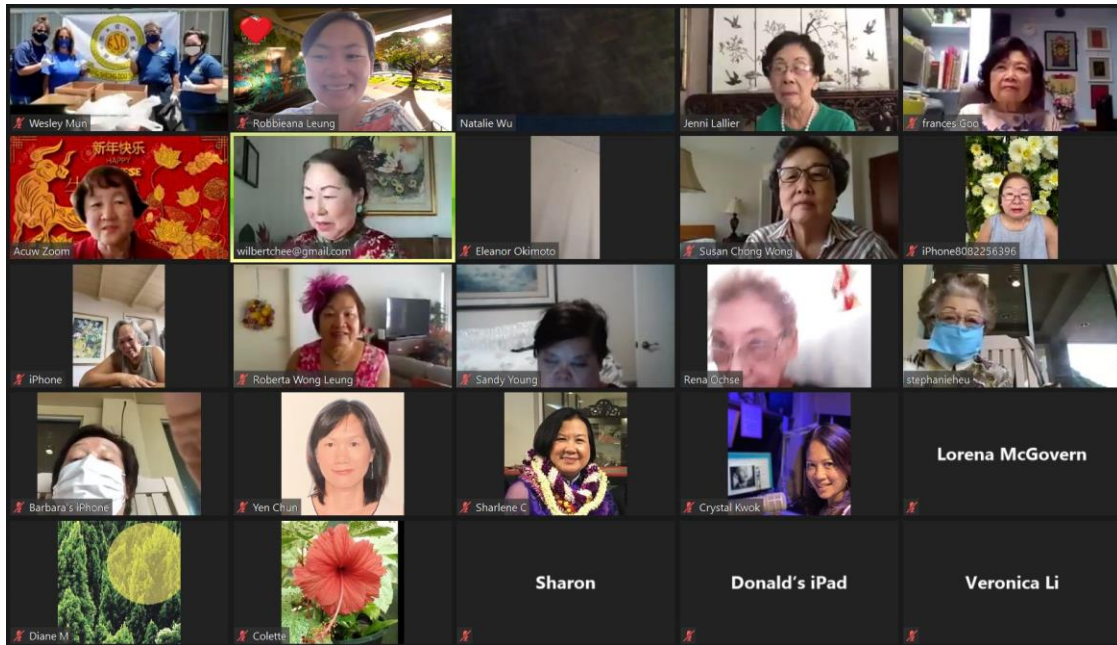


We had a wide representation of attendees from the community – the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, United Chinese Society, Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center, Chinese Women’s Club, Associated Chinese University Women, and the University of Hawaii – and from other OCAW chapters as well. Everyone was very impressed with Claire Chao’s presentation.

Pauline Young installed our new officers for the year and presented them with beautiful rose bouquets.







### Hawaii Chapter Board Lunch



Our OCAW Hawaii Board working hard over lunch at Oahu Country Club.  
Secretary Edwina Lee, President Roberta Wong Leung, Finance/Special Events Chair  
Queenie Mow Chee, and Vice President Rena Ochse.



### **Donations**

The OCAW Hawaii Chapter was pleased to donate money to the following worthy entities:

Mun Lun Chinese School  
The Legal Clinic  
Palolo Chinese Home  
Hawaii Public Radio – in honor of speaker Claire Chao who appreciated Hawaii Public Radio's  
inspiration over the years

### **Upcoming April Members Meeting**

*(from Queenie Mow Chee, Events Chair)*

At the next OCAW Hawaii Chapter Members Meeting on Sunday, May 23, 2021, our guest speaker will be one of our new members, Ms. Crystal Kwok.



Crystal's topic is so timely, with today's challenges of a rising number of attacks and discrimination against Asian and Pacific Islander Americans. This was fueled, sadly, by the rhetoric of the last previous U.S. President.

Crystal is in the process of completing the production of her documentary film, "Blurring the Color Line," which addresses the Chinese American situation of those living in the segregated South, namely in

Augusta, Georgia, from the 20th century. Crystal's grandmother grew up in Augusta with her parents and 10 siblings. In wanting to learn more of her family's history, she uncovered a curious blend of attitudes among the memories of her relatives there. This documentary film is integral to her dissertation as a Ph.D. student in Performance Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

If you think her name familiar, you may have seen her in movies in the late 1980s with Jackie Chan, Jet Li, or Maggie Cheung. Perhaps you may have tuned into her highly-rated TV talk shows or radio programs in Hong Kong. She was also a producer and director of film, bilingual edutainment videos, and theatrical productions. Her debut feature film, "The Mistress," won the Audience Choice Award at the Deauville Asiatic Film Festival in 1999.

Crystal was born in San Francisco, CA and is a UCLA graduate with a B.A. degree in Theater Arts. Having won the title of Miss Chinatown USA, opportunities presented themselves for her to enter the film industry with popular stars like Jackie Chan. Television and radio, even newspapers, gave her time and space to host or write on topics that stirred up many sensitive women's issues in Hong Kong that covered eastern and western cultures. She also earned a Master's Degree from Hong Kong University in Literary Studies.

Now living in Hawaii with her husband and three children, she is anticipating the completion of her latest film for her doctoral candidacy. Please support Crystal Kwok in her endeavors by tuning into her talk via Zoom at our next meeting on Sunday, May 23, 2021 at 1 p.m. Hawaii time. Read more about her and her work on her website: <https://www.crystalkwok.com>

**Note:** The Hawaii Chapter cordially invites all OCAW members to participate in this Zoom meeting. Please email your interest to Roberta Wong Leung at: [robertawongleung@gmail.com](mailto:robertawongleung@gmail.com)

### **Future Meetings for 2021**

We have wonderful programs planned for the rest of the year. Crystal Kwok, a famous Hong Kong TV hostess, will be speaking on Sunday, May 23 (*see above*).

Our knowledgeable Queenie Mow Chee will inform us of the background and history of OCAW at our August 8 meeting.

Our longtime member Mildred Wong, who just turned 90 years old, will be sharing her life at our November meeting.

Hawaii is now in Tier 3 with 10 people allowed to gather in restaurants. We hope to be able to move to Tier 4 with no restrictions and have face-to-face meetings, especially for our December Installation Christmas lunch at Oahu Country Club.

### **From and About Our Members**

#### **Birthday Lei**

Mimi Hom, OCAW Vice President for Programs and lifetime Maryland Chapter member, celebrated her 94th birthday on March 9, 2021. Much to her delight, she received in the mail a surprise birthday present from a



“secret pal” in the Hawaii Chapter: a beautiful, handcrafted red and yellow silk lei! Her “pal” assumed that it was likely that a real lei of fresh flowers would not make it intact across 5000 miles, particularly considering the recent significant delays in deliveries by the U.S. Postal Service. So the wonderful alternative? A lei that could last forever!

According to the giver, the colors have meaning in both Chinese and Hawaiian.

Red for the Chinese means richness, happiness, and good luck. Yellow was the exclusive color of the Emperor.

For the Hawaiians, the combined colors of yellow and red were reserved for Ali'i, or the Rulers of the land.

In ancient times, the precious yellow tufts of feathers from the o'o bird's wings were plucked and harvested to weave into a royal cloak. It took thousands of those feathers – years – to make a cape. The bird is basically black with just a few yellow feathers. It was caught and released, never killed.

Sample of a Red and Yellow Cloak of a Hawaiian Ruler





As Mimi's secret pal relates, Mimi receiving this gift is also a reminder that the U.S. reaches out across the Pacific with Hawaii as our 50th state. This is one of the traditional gestures of the Islands to celebrate someone special.

Mimi has been showing her lovely lei to friends, and she proudly wore it on her birthday so that family members stopping by to offer their well wishes could enjoy it as well. She was very touched to be remembered in this way, and she was truly appreciative of this Hawaii Chapter member's kindness and generosity.



Mimi Hom sporting her birthday lei as she begins a neighborhood walk

### **Maryland Lyric Opera House Welcomes a New Year**

*(from Karina Hou, Maryland Chapter President)*

The Maryland Lyric Opera House (MDLO) is a regional, nonprofit company that strives to make the highest level of classical opera productions accessible for all audiences.

Karina Hou, the President of the Chinese American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Washington (CACCGW), initiated a donation to the Maryland Lyric Opera House in order to help support their mission and platform for musicians and singers. Karina would like to share this important company with her OCAW sisters and urge the community to show their support by becoming familiar with the Maryland Lyric Opera House through their website, [www.mdlo.org](http://www.mdlo.org), and checking out their upcoming news and performances.

**To welcome the new year, the Metropolitan Opera and Washington National Opera successfully signed on Vocal Director Li Yi to facilitate a youth training program for Chinese singers Chen Yongxi, Wang Congcong, Shang Chunlai, Nina Duan, Wang Yang, and Deng Manli.**

MDLO takes pride in discovering and nurturing young talent while also providing a learning platform for singers. **In 2018 and 2019, the theater was able to invite seven music students from China to study and perform in the United States. Their efforts helped establish a bridge for Chinese youth to pursue their passion for professional opera singing.**



Although Maryland Lyric Opera is not currently performing on stage in their normal capacity due to COVID-19, they are charting their path forward and continue to make contributions in support of the community. The theater is grateful for all the donations they have received to help make their platform possible. MDLO wishes everyone a wonderful and prosperous Year of the Ox, and they hope that individuals will learn of their upcoming musical performances in case they might be interested in attending.







*(Editor's Note: Karina hopes to be able to interest some MDLO artists in joining OCAW.)*

### **Culture Corner**

#### **Commemorative Forever Stamp**

**Dr. Wu Chien-Shiung**  
**(1912 – 1997)**

**by Cathy Roberts**

*(Editor's Note: Cathy is National Vice President for Membership.)*

**On February 11, 2021, the United States Postal Service (USPS) held a virtual ceremony for issuing a commemorative forever stamp in honor of Professor Chien-Shiung Wu. She is one of only two individuals being honored with stamps this year, and in a year that the USPS is honoring Asian American achievement. The art for her stamp was done by Asian American painter Kam Mak.**

**Dr. Wu was a Chinese immigrant who became a nuclear physicist in an almost entirely male-dominated field in the 1950s. She was one of the most influential nuclear physicists of the 20th century. Dr. Wu taught physics at Smith College and at Princeton University. She was the first woman hired as faculty in the Physics Department at Princeton.**

In 1944, Dr. Wu accepted a position under the Division of War Research at Columbia University working on uranium and radiation detectors for the **Manhattan Project**. The Manhattan Project researchers were working toward the creation of the world's first atomic bomb. She made invaluable contributions to the

experimental process of splitting and harnessing the power of the uranium atom. After World War II, Dr. Wu continued on at Columbia University as a research professor, focusing her experimentation on beta decay. With ingenuity, she created a more precise spectrometer to finally explain beta decay, a problem that had plagued physicists in America and across Europe for decades.

In 1956, theoretical physicists Tsung-Dao Lee and Chen-Ning Yang approached Dr. Wu for help in developing a theory that disproved the foundational principle of conservation of parity. She created a thoughtful and intricate experiment to test the theory. The purpose was to test their theory that the conservation of parity did not apply during beta decay. The experiment, known as the Wu Experiment, is named for her. The experiment indicated that in weak interactions, parity is not conserved – a finding that overturned a decades-old intrinsic element of quantum mechanics which earned the lead physicists Lee and Yang the Nobel Prize in Physics. Like the contributions of many women in science at the time, Dr. Wu's work was not acknowledged.

**Although Dr. Wu did not share in the Nobel Prize that Lee and Yang received for this work, she received numerous awards for her work, including eight honorary degrees, the National Medal of Science (1975), the first Wolf Prize in Physics awarded by the State of Israel (1978), the first Research Corporation Award given to a woman (1959), and the first Comstock Award given to a woman from the National Academy of Sciences (1964). She was elected as a member of the National Academy of Sciences in 1958, and in 1990, Dr. Wu became the first living scientist with an asteroid named after her.**

**She continued to be a leader in the field of physics, and her work even crossed over to biology and medicine. Some of her research included looking at the molecular changes in red blood cells that cause sickle cell disease. As one of the world's foremost nuclear physicists, her work was instrumental in shaping modern physical theory and blazing a trail for women in science.**

Dr. Wu remained an influential member of the physics community until her retirement from Columbia in 1981. **Her 1965 book, *Beta Decay*, is still a standard reference text, and in 1975, she became the first female president of the American Physical Society.**

### **Anti-Asian American Hate and Violence**

Anti-Asian hate and violence has increased dramatically over the past year. Unfortunately, with the onset of the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the former President of the United States continually referred to the virus in speeches and tweets as variously the “China virus,” “Wuhan virus,” and “Kung Flu,” creating huge anti-Asian sentiment across our nation. Asian Americans have long experienced discrimination historically, but such recent racist words have significantly increased hate and violence against them. The former President used the phrase “China virus” as recently as late March when he appeared on *Fox News*. Such rhetoric from him or others must be censored or called out, or acts of violence will continue to increase.

It is believed that the number of hate crimes is actually higher than currently cited, because Asian Americans are often reluctant to report such incidents to the police. As it stands, the estimates of the increase in violence are anywhere from 150% to over 200%.

In response to such hate speech and incidents, many organizations and groups have spoken out against such language and actions, and have organized rallies to bring attention to this important matter. Some of our OCAW members and families have participated in these rallies.

## Washington, D.C.

*(from Cathy Roberts, National Vice President for Membership)*

### **DC Rally for Collective Safety: Protect Asian/AAPI Communities**

Hundreds of people and guest speakers gathered in McPherson Square in downtown D.C. on the afternoon of Sunday, March 21, 2021, to show their support against the recent display of hatred in the United States. Among the participants was Stephen Roberts, son of Cathy and Dick Roberts. Many different signs were brought by demonstrators to express their concern about the rising violence and racist acts directed at the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. The rally was jointly organized by the Coalition of Human Needs, OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates, and the Progressive Vietnamese American Organization.

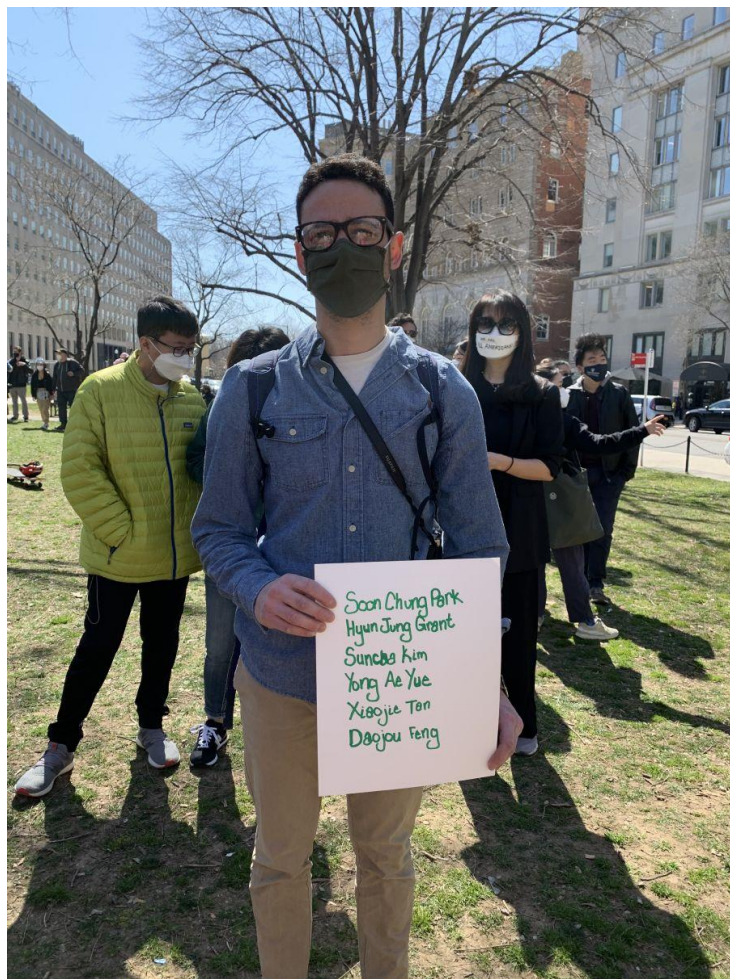




Racist, criminal behavior targeting Asian Americans has skyrocketed during the pandemic. Over 3,800 hate crimes against the AAPI community have been reported since the start of the pandemic in the U.S. On March 21, thousands of people took part in protests across the country to raise awareness about the racial discrimination that the AAPI community has experienced for decades. The organizers demanded legislative action to combat the issue.

A recent survey showed that more than three out of four Asian Americans worry about experiencing hate crimes, harassment, and discrimination because of COVID-19. These findings may be unsurprising in light of the shocking video footage of anti-Asian violence that has recently gone viral. Viewers of these videos witnessed perpetrators shoving elderly men and women to the ground, hitting Asian American men and women in the face, and stabbing an Asian American man in the back with an 8-inch knife. Asian-owned businesses, already under financial stress because of the pandemic, are also struggling to keep their employees safe. The spate of unprovoked attacks elicited a rallying cry that something must be done.

On March 16, eight people were shot in Atlanta, and six of them were Asian. The suspect claimed responsibility for the shootings and faces four counts of murder with malice, one count of attempted murder, one count of aggravated assault, and five counts of using a firearm while committing a felony. But local law enforcement has yet to call it a hate crime.



A rally participant exhibits the names of the Asian victims of the Atlanta mass shooting.



Media outlets are ramping up their coverage of anti-Asian violence following the Atlanta shootings, but many Asian American journalists feel the issue has been ignored for far too long. “We have been miserably late,” said journalist Connie Chung. “We are insignificant, and it’s so apparent to all of us who are Asian.” Anti-Asian hate crimes have more than doubled during the pandemic, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.



In response to the shootings, the Asian American Journalists Association released a list of journalistic guidelines. “Newsrooms were describing the Atlanta shooting as not racially motivated,” the organization’s president and *Washington Post* reporter Michelle Ye Hee Lee said. Newsrooms across the country are relying on Asian American journalists to tell the stories of anti-Asian hate as they unfold. “We are very much invisible in the newsroom and underrepresented especially in leadership,” Lee said.

In an effort to support Asian American journalists, journalist Sonia Weiser partnered with AAJA and launched a therapy relief fund on GoFundMe. The fund was created to secure AAPI journalists with funding for mental wellness resources needed to process trauma.

CNBC’s “Race & Opportunity in America: The Asian American Experience” was aired live on Wednesday, March 31. Against a backdrop of rising anti-Asian violence, the one-hour program took a closer look at the economic and social challenges facing the Asian American community. The special also examined the myth of the “model minority” and how it has played into anti-Asian sentiment.



Most recent horrendous attacks in New York City were shown in two videos: In broad daylight in Midtown Manhattan, a 65-year-old woman was kicked to the ground and stomped on by a man who police say made "anti-Asian statements." Bystanders did nothing to help the woman. The very same day, police said they were investigating another incident after an Asian man was left unconscious during an attack in the subway.



Anti-Asian violence has increased drastically. Please be aware of your surroundings and stay safe. Group together when you go out if possible.

*(Photos taken by Stephen Roberts)*

### **Cheverly, Maryland**

*(from Christina Chang, National President)*

The numbers of racism and hate incidents increase all over our country. We cannot keep silent and need to have our voices heard.

On Saturday, March 27, 2021, Christina Chang and her husband Steve attended the “Stop Asian Hate Vigil and Rally” at Cheverly Legion Park in Prince George’s County, MD. Amy Fry, a member of the Cheverly Town Council and also a Korean American, organized this event in a short week, and over 100 people of different diversity show up.

During the rally, we shared one message, ‘Stop Anti-Asian Hate,’ while also acknowledging the pain the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are feeling, and have felt for years.

We need to be careful and be aware of our surroundings. Stay vigilant and report any hate crime right away.

Maryland State has two numbers to report incidents:

Emergency number: 911

Non-emergency number: 301-279-8000

Both numbers will reach the same office, but the emergency number will take priority.

**Note:** WUSA9, a local CBS affiliate, aired a story about the protest. In it, one can see Christina from the back. She is wearing a blue t-shirt and dark brown vest.

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/prince-georges-county-anti-asian-racism-rally-and-vigil/65-6b6fa103-5a9d-48be-a02d-a764c5530ccf>

### **Honolulu, Hawaii**

*(from Roberta Wong Leung, Hawaii Chapter President)*

Roberta Wong Leung and her daughter Robbieana attended the Saturday, March 27, 2021 “Stop Anti Asian Hate” Rally at the Hawaii State Capitol from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event was planned in light of the Atlanta, Georgia mass shooting against Asians and the increasing number of hate crimes aimed at Asians.

There were speakers from the State Legislature and various organizations, as well as a march around the financial district to Chinatown and back to the Capitol. There was wide representation from various minority and racial groups. Several hundred supporters carried all kinds of creative signs.

One of the goals was to support legislation that punishes hate crimes against minorities and women at the local and national levels. The Hawaii Legislature has passed such legislation.



It was a very successful rally, well-organized and peaceful. Similar rallies were held across the U.S. We cannot be silent and have to stand up and speak out.

### **New Orleans, Louisiana**

*(from Patricia Ellzey, New Orleans Chapter President)*

An Anti-Asian Hate Rally sponsored by the New Orleans Chinese Association was held on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021 at the main entrance of the New Orleans Museum of Art in the New Orleans City Park.

Many local civic leaders and lawmakers as well as the Presidents of several local Asian associations were invited to speak to support solidarity with all citizens and to speak out against racism. OCAW New Orleans Chapter President Patricia Hew Ellzey was asked to make remarks as a 4th-generation Chinese American to support this vital and important effort.

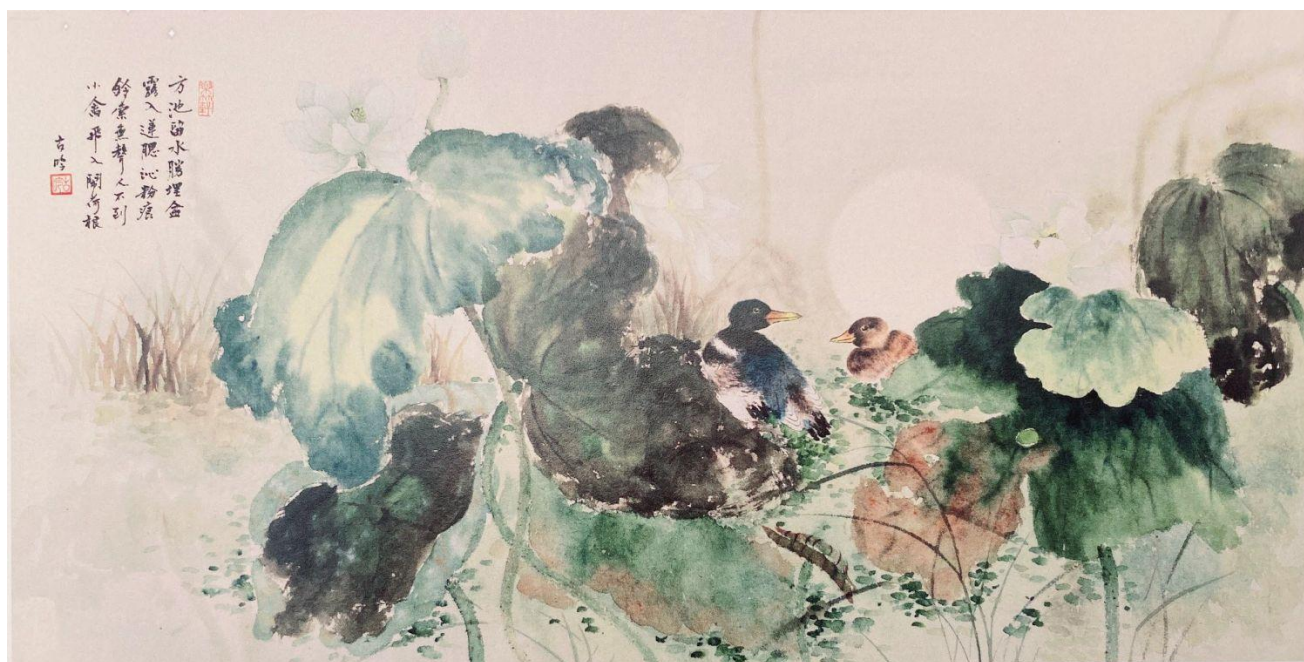
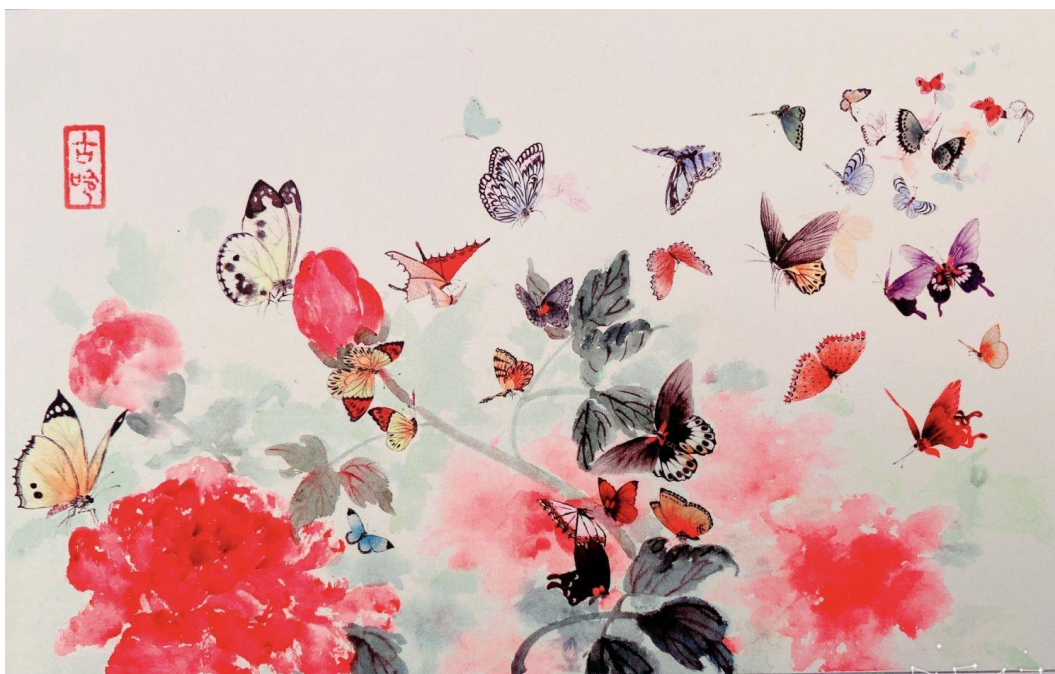
This rally was certainly a “First” for New Orleans!!

*(Editor’s Note: As this rally occurred as this e-newsletter was being finalized for publication, basic information was included above. However, Pat will be supplying more details for the next issue.)*

## The Artwork of Karina Hou (Part II)

*(Editor's Note: Karina is the President of the Maryland Chapter. In the last issue of the OCAW e-newsletter, Karina's lovely artwork was featured. Below is the second installment of her work.)*

*Karina's paintings are based on the principles of nature, reality, and balance. See the February issue to read more about Karina's art and to see other works by her.)*











## **The Evolving Persona of a Chinese American Woman**

**by Queenie Mow Chee**

*(Editor's Note: Queenie is the Events Chair of the Hawaii Chapter, and former President.)*

Preface written March 21, 2021

In light of the recent Atlanta, Georgia murders of eight people, six of whom were Asian women, there has been an outcry of all of the past and present discrimination and attacks on Asians and Asian women in the United States. Discussions abound on the image and stereotypes of the Asian Woman. This gave me pause to look again at what I wrote below.

My conclusion: We will not be intimidated or 'crawl under a rock.' We cannot and must not retreat from the progress we have made over the decades. The pageants I discuss below have evolved from 'beauty contests' to cultural pageants, with emphasis on discovering ancestral traditions and culture. It has become a platform to project a stronger and more confident image for us. It has opened up opportunities to participants to develop their interpersonal skills, public speaking, dealing with media, and being role models to the young ones to show that they also can do better. No 'quiet and submissive' females here!

\* \* \* \* \*

In the early 1970s, Feminism was the new movement for my generation. In 1920, women in America had won the right to vote. It was one step forward. Then 50 years went by and women wanted equal rights in many other ways, and were becoming more vocal about it. There were rights that men had that were still denied to the female gender – equal work for equal pay was just a starter. How a woman was perceived and stereotyped, and the generally accepted expectations, were insulting to the growing number of the better-educated. The pendulum was swinging from right to left. "Burn the bra!" was one the mantras shouted on college campuses across the U.S.

How deeply was this felt by the average Chinese American girl? At this point, some of us were just beginning to realize that we were no longer in China. We longed to break the barrier and be a 'normal red-blooded American female.' To remain within a tight protective circle of other Chinese Americans, and clinging onto forefathers' dialects and ways, was stifling.

For almost 150 years in Hawaii, too often, Chinese women were viewed as 'properly kept at home,' to be domestic and subservient. *Pake* girls were generally thought of as being slow or stupid, and plain in appearance to actually ugly. Look through those old high school yearbooks and notice that the cheerleaders and popular girls were not of Chinese ancestry. There were a few rare exceptions.

A growing number of Chinese fathers and mothers in the U.S. wanted to see their daughters have a better life, and encouraged them to seek higher education. At first it was allowing them to graduate from high school, and then college, where proper young ladies majored in acceptable female fields like Home Economics, Teaching, or Nursing. Some may have thought college was the means to find a good husband!

My dad was not so sure of all this. The local university seemed good enough, and never mind the scholarship offers from those fancy mainland colleges. "No stress!" But it was at the University of Hawaii, one day, that a recruiter for the Chinese Narcissus Festival Queen Contest showed up at our cafeteria while we were gathered around for lunchtime. My best friend from middle school through high school and now college was



invited to participate. She turned and asked me if I would ‘sign up, too’ and talked up winning scholarships and trips to the U.S. Mainland, Canada, and a multitude of countries. And best of all, there was no ‘swimsuit phase,’ and contestants were carefully chaperoned. The organizers provided a stipend to pay for our cheongsam and provided a ‘charm school’ course to teach us poise, posture, and makeup application and encourage self-confidence.

Coming home that day, I boldly announced to my parents that I had signed up for this ‘beauty contest.’ It was not well received. They did show up for the contest, but gave no financial support and left it to my own personal means to get things done. There was one exception: dad helped me with my talent phase presentation by composing a Chinese couplet for me to introduce a song that was sung in Hawaiian. He practiced with me to be sure I pronounced and recited the lines correctly and in the proper traditional style. This may have helped me gain points from the judges!

This wasn’t my first act of serious ‘going against the traditional good Chinese daughter thing.’ In the 5th grade, I broke ground by getting my way to take kungfu, to which I was devoted through high school.

As a college junior, I scared them so much by signing up for a summer as an Officer Candidate with the Women’s Army Corps in Alabama. I came back alive although shaken by my first encounter of outright racial discrimination. It was not so much on base, but beyond Fort McClellan. I had been so sheltered, and had so much to learn!

As someone who was a tomboy, with no older sister to guide me, this was quite a turn. I looked to the local Chinese girls from the 1950s for inspiration.



Queenie Mary Mow  
The goofy tomboy 1958

The first Hawaii-born Miss Chinatown USA won in 1959. A tall University of Hawaii Chinese sorority girl who was gifted with poise, hutzpah, and intelligence, Leona Lee had placed as a finalist in the Narcissus Festival Queen Contest. Thus, she was sponsored to participate in the USA pageant in San Francisco, California.



1959 Miss Chinatown USA

As the story was told to me, she ran into challenges while in San Francisco: she ‘lost’ her pageant gown, chipped a front tooth, and did not have that many Hawaii supporters in town. But she was a ‘trouper’ and won the hearts of the judges and the community that contest night. When asked to name a person she looked up to and admired most, the expected answer which was the most common during those times was “Abraham Lincoln” or “George Washington.” She simply and clearly answered, “my Mother.”

Of course, she had no inkling that a goofy, ten-year-old Chinese grocery store kid back in Honolulu would be so impressed. I was just this little thing among all those other far more important people. Her style and win made headline news in San Francisco Chinatown, and other Chinese communities across the United States and even Canada.

Perhaps being raised in Hawaii, where Asians were not a minority, the Hawaii Chinese girls seemed more confident, poised, and relaxed. To top that off, Leona projected a strong basic Chinese value of filial piety and respect by recognizing her mother as her model.

Now here is a fun aside, and a sweet connection that happened back then. One of Leona’s Court members, Miss Chinatown Chicago, was a young lady with Hawaii connections from her dad, and thus, Leona Lee and

Patricia Hew struck up a lifetime friendship. Today, we at OCAW know Patricia Hew Ellzey as our New Orleans Chapter President! There is much more to tell about Pat, but we must save that for another day.



Patricia Hew  
2nd Princess, 1959 Miss Chinatown USA Pageant

In 2021, the OCAW Hawaii Chapter also gained a former Miss Chinatown USA, Crystal Kwok. She is the featured speaker at our May 23, 2021 Members Meeting via Zoom. Her subject, so timely and appropriate, is her Ph.D. dissertation film project, which examines the Chinese situation in the segregated South during the 20th century.

Of course, beauty pageants had their detractors, and there were questions of “why subject yourself to be put on display and be gazed at by who knows whom, and be judged?” Some participants were willing, and many were almost forced to go for it by their clubs or sororities and sponsors.

But somewhere in this was an important opportunity for the participant to discover and attain a more positive self-image.

Here was a chance to project your best image and then learn that there is more to it than just appearance. Recognize who and what you are and accept it and then try to do better. Inspire others to also try to do better. Build confidence and courage. Find your voice. Let the world know that you are a Chinese AMERICAN Woman. With this confidence, you have a chance of attaining things once closed to women, and especially to women of color.

Being in the public eye, you learn to ‘tread water, swim, or sink.’ It can make you hard or teach you diplomacy. Can you develop a ‘thick skin’ to all the criticism as well as all the praise? And still recognize sincerity and truth and have heart?

Viola Davis, actor and woman of color, said in the AARP January 2021 issue interview, “It’s those little seeds



that give you an inkling of who you could become...” and “when someone loves you, and sees more in you than you see in yourself, you cannot put a price on that.”

In 1989, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw coined the term INTERSECTIONAL. It defines what many of us were, and perhaps still are, but could not sum up in one word. To be marginalized by race, class, gender, body-type, abilities, sexuality, nationality, and more – that is intersectionality. Many of us may have experienced this and could never quite put it together.

These so-called ‘pageants,’ I believe, serve as our lily pads from which to leap out of our little worlds and into mainstream America. There is a blended pride of our old cultures and traditions with a realization that there is much more out there and we can venture out if we so choose.

Today, many former pageant participants are not just the respected and more traditional homemakers, teachers, or nurses. There are successful individuals in the performing arts, with a growing number of girls who became accountants, attorneys, doctors, engineers, scientists – the non-traditional occupations for females in the past. One queen, Cheryl Lau, was Secretary of State for the state of Nevada. Proudly, we have our share of prominent business leaders, too. Perhaps even now, a little Chinese American ten-year-old looks to them with awe, and is inspired.

As for that gal-pal who pulled me into a local ‘beauty contest’? I cried when they announced me as the winner that night at the 21st Narcissus Festival Pageant at the Honolulu Concert Hall. It was not because I had won. It was bitter tears of frustration and sadness because my friend did not even make the court. I got lucky, not just with winning so unexpectedly, but because Susan and I are still best friends today.



Queenie Mow  
1971 Narcissus Festival Queen



Queenie Mow Chee – present day

**So I came back with all these photos – now what?**

**by Janet Biermann**

*(Editor's Note: Janet is a lifetime Maryland Chapter member. When she was asked, she stepped up to be OCAW's National Executive Director during the organization's transition period ten-plus years ago.*

*Based on her training and travels, I had asked her in the past if she would submit an article for the e-newsletter, and I am pleased that she agreed to do this for this issue. Janet was the artist in our family. Art history was her major field in both undergraduate and graduate school, resulting in a Master's Degree. Additionally she studied at the prestigious Courtauld Institute of Art in London. She has traveled extensively for several decades, both in the U.S. and abroad.)*

My sister, known to you as the dedicated editor of the OCAW E-Newsletter, Linda Devine, encourages members and chapters to submit articles for the newsletter, and I am no exception to her 'prodding.' One of her suggestions has been for me to submit some photographs of my travels which I have shared with her over the years.

I have enjoyed reading about the travels of OCAW members such as Audrey Lee's fascinating article on her trip to Nepal (see *September 2020 OCAW E-Newsletter*). Likewise, I'm certain that there are very talented photographers among you. What then could I contribute that wouldn't seem mundane to travelers to exotic locales or could stand up to skilled photographers? So I thought I would share what I do with some of my photos to create something interesting to keep and also to share with people, beyond just filing them away on my laptop.



I like to create montages of my trips. Sometimes I will make more than one of a trip. The montages may be organized around favorite sights; feature a particular theme such as markets, food, art and architecture (like azulejo tiles on Portuguese buildings and Hector Guimard balconies); or capture the essence of the people. They enable me to relive a myriad of experiences in one fell swoop. Here are three such:



The people of Aix-en-Provence, France – showcasing various professions (market vendors, waiters, public workers), and those going about daily life in cafes or just catching a smoke on a windowsill





# The Many Faces of China

People-watching in China





Paris in monochromatic tones to evoke a timeless image of the city

This montage was framed and given as a gift to a friend. I have also given 'posters' of my montages to friends as souvenir remembrances of their travels with us.

It's also fun to create whimsical 'color pop' photos, turning ordinary scenes into something more playful or interesting. Here are a few examples:



The tube station near my bedsitter (rented room) in London



Knightsbridge's iconic department store (London)





The Minster School students (York, England)



Sailing a boat at the Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris



Les bouquinistes in Paris

I have used my old Photoshop Elements 11 software for years, but there are new apps and software being developed all the time to make it easy to share, edit, and be creative with photos. If you're so inclined, I would encourage you to give it a try. You can make your photographs fun and interesting, capturing more than just a memory of a special moment in time. Happy picture-taking!

*(Photos taken by Janet Biermann)*