

# E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

June 2020



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*(from Linda Devine, Editor)*

Since the last OCAW e-newsletter, stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to be mandated in most parts of the country. These necessary policies to restrict the spread of the disease have continued to hamper normal activities and events by OCAW chapters. Nevertheless, members have found ways to be active safely, in spite of these restrictions, and I am pleased to detail these efforts in this issue.

Thank you to those individuals who submitted material for this e-newsletter, and as always, my gratitude to my husband Ed for his work on preparing the photos and on creating video screen captures.

I continue to encourage OCAW members to write articles or submit information for the publication if there is something you think would be of interest to the membership. My ongoing aim is to publish a wide variety of material.

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)

## **Table of Contents**

	Page
News from the Maryland Chapter.....	1
News from the Virginia Chapter.....	3
News from the New Orleans Chapter.....	4
News from the Silicon Valley Chapter.....	7
News from the Hawaii Chapter.....	9
The Hawaii Chinese Community Comes Together: COVID-19 Relief Efforts.....	10
From and About Our Members.....	16
“Breaking Barriers – Chinese American Women Pioneers” Exhibit.....	18
Reflecting on our Heritage Month.....	20

## **News from the Maryland Chapter**

### **New Maryland Chapter Officers**

Thanks to the efforts of our Treasurer, Christina Poy, the Maryland Chapter now has two new officers!

Karina Hou and Anny Lai graciously consented to be nominated for the positions of President and Secretary, respectively, and Maryland members are happy to welcome them into their new roles.

*(from Karina Hou, President)*

My name is Karina Hou and I am pleased and honored to be nominated to serve on the OCAW Maryland Chapter's Board as President. I have been living in Maryland for over 30 years now. Being the Chairman of the Montgomery International Film Festival (MIFF) and a devoted educator at the United Elite Education Association for the past few years has given me valuable opportunities to both serve and lead.

I hope to continue helping our community through meaningful organizations such as OCAW and plan on using all of my experience in helping nonprofit organizations grow and expand by working with the other chapters and organizing new and exciting events together. In this fast-paced and constantly changing world, I have always been fascinated by people's stories and their backgrounds. It is my deepest desire to do what I can to the best of my ability for our community. I look forward to being a part of the OCAW-Maryland family and wish you all safety and good health!

Warmest Regards,  
Karina Hou

*(from Anny Lai, Secretary)*

My name is Anny Lai and I am excited to volunteer for the Board as Secretary. It was a great opportunity for me to meet Christina Poy and learn about OCAW's mission. I hope to make a contribution and see this wonderful platform for Asian American women continue to grow.

A bit about me: I was raised in Maryland and graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2014. As an artist and designer, I am especially passionate about how we can utilize art and our culture to bring people together and tell a story. I am looking forward to being a part of this community and having the opportunity to serve with you all.

With gratitude,  
Anny

**The Maryland Chapter would like to extend its heartfelt appreciation to Chi-Hua Yang**, who served as Acting Maryland President in 2019 and 2020. Chi-Hua already was serving as Virginia Chapter President and OCAW National's Treasurer, but she graciously stepped up and took on the additional responsibility of Acting President when Maryland was in need of a leader. Thank you, Chi-Hua!

The position of Chapter Vice President is still unfilled, and we would welcome an individual willing to be nominated for that position.

As always, we welcome your ideas for programs. In addition, if you would like to volunteer to lead one, we would be grateful for your initiative and efforts!

### **COVID-19 Relief Efforts**

Inspired by the initiative of Veronica Li, OCAW-VA Chapter member and former Secretary, the Maryland Chapter has begun fundraising to benefit COVID-19 relief efforts. Emails have been sent out to members with details.

Although it is a joint project of the Virginia and Maryland Chapters, Virginia donations will go toward recipient organizations in Virginia, and Maryland donations will go toward recipient organizations in Maryland. Veronica has detailed Virginia's efforts thus far in an article in "*News from the Virginia Chapter*."

The Maryland Chapter is currently considering organizations which have been brought to our attention that have been doing fine work in this time of crisis. If we receive a sufficient amount of money from members, we hope to be able to give to more than one organization.

If Maryland members would like to contribute and have not yet done so, please make your check payable to 'OCAW' and mail it to: OCAW, P O Box 3443, Oakton, VA 22124. Please indicate that your check is for the COVID fundraiser and mark it for the Maryland fund. Also, please feel free to encourage family and friends who might want to contribute to this worthy cause.

### **News from the Virginia Chapter**

#### **COVID-19 Relief Efforts**

*(from Veronica Li, former Secretary)*

The OCAW Virginia Chapter is participating in a meals-for-heroes drive June 2-4, 2020. This campaign, organized by 29 Diner, aims to provide 3,000 free meals for healthcare workers battling COVID-19 in Northern Virginia.

As one of a series of donations, OCAW-VA is contributing \$500 for fifty meals to the COVID unit of INOVA Fairfax Hospital on June 3. A local church is contributing matching funds, thus doubling the impact. Fairfax County is the hardest hit of all the counties in the state, with more than 10,000 cases to date.

When the pandemic first broke out, OCAW members donated as individuals to national and international charities such as the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and so on. But as the virus hit closer to home, sparking clusters in Virginia, D.C., and Maryland, the organization decided to combat the crisis as a group.

"We can and should do something to demonstrate our concern as community members," said Christina Chang, OCAW's national president. "This will represent us as Chinese Americans who are with them in this struggle."

Once the Virginia Chapter agreed to hold a fundraiser, the discussion shifted to identifying the beneficiaries. Members expressed overwhelming appreciation for healthcare workers who fought to save lives while risking their own. Being a women's club, their instinct as mothers and caregivers gave rise to a strong desire to feed these courageous medical workers. Since INOVA Fairfax Hospital is in the forefront of the COVID-19 battle, their workers have become the target of the group's support.

"We all know the uplifting effect of food on the body and soul. Even on a bad day, a good meal can do wonders for your morale," said Veronica Li, an organizer of the fundraiser.

This campaign has the added benefit of keeping restaurants afloat. John Wood, owner of 29 Diner, said, “When the lockdown happened, my workers were very worried. They thought they would be laid off. And then I thought about how we could help in this crisis. I reached out to the public, and the response was wonderful.” His workers have been busier than ever, preparing thousands of meals for frontline workers of all types.

In a separate donation, OCAW-VA supplied bottles of hand sanitizer to a senior apartment facility, Wah Luck House in Chinatown, D.C. After reporting two cases of COVID-19 (involving a couple, one of whom died at the hospital), the director appealed to the public for hand sanitizer. Virginia Chapter member Puchin Waide located a supplier, and she and another member purchased twelve 8 oz. bottles of hand sanitizer for the donation.

*(Editor’s Note: Photos of the upcoming June donations will be taken and will appear in the next e-newsletter.)*

### **News from the New Orleans Chapter**

*(from Patricia Ellzey, President)*

#### **In Memoriam: Jeanette Yip Hew, New Orleans Chapter Secretary**



Jeanette Yip Hew was born on August 23, 1948 in San Francisco, California, and passed away on April 10, 2020, at the age of 71. She is survived by Maurice Hew, her husband of 54 years; daughters Jennifer and Jessica and son Maurice, Jr.; three sisters and a brother; three grandchildren; a great-grandson; and many other family members.

One of her sisters is New Orleans Chapter member Nellie Underwood, and her sisters-in-law include New Orleans Chapter President Pat Ellzey and chapter member Mayling Hew.

Jeanette was a church elder and Sunday school teacher at the Chinese Presbyterian Church. In addition to being Secretary of OCAW’s New Orleans Chapter, she was involved in several other community organizations: Bright Tennis Club; former Start the Adventure in Reading (STAIR) volunteer for over 20 years; former board member of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA); former board member of Westminster Towers; volunteer for Special Olympics Louisiana; and Lakeside Shopping Mall Walkers.

*(Editor's Note: OCAW extends its sincere condolences to Jeanette's family and friends at this sad time. Many of us had the pleasure of meeting her when she and other members of the New Orleans Chapter came to the Washington Metropolitan area in the spring of 2017 for OCAW's 40th Anniversary Conference and Celebration. We are very sorry that we have lost one of our OCAW sisters.)*

### **COVID-19 Relief Efforts**

In accordance with the OCAW National Board's proposal made at its last quarterly meeting conference call, the New Orleans Chapter decided to assist in the current COVID-19 pandemic in our area by showing appreciation for the local First Responders' gallant efforts in allaying the ravages of the present viral disease which has caused much suffering, pain, and too many deaths in our beloved home area. Our Chapter decided to raise funds from donations from our membership and treasury to honor our late Secretary, Jeanette Hew.

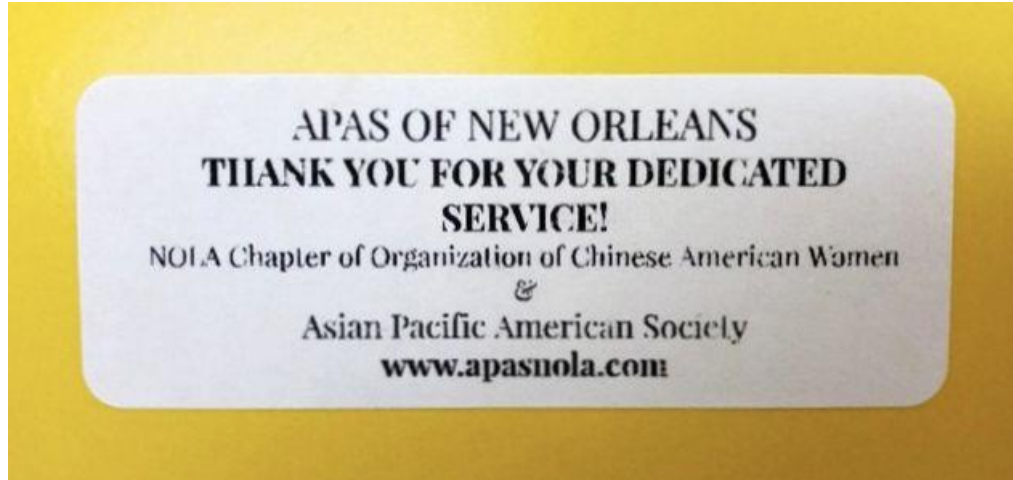
**The Jeanette Hew Memorial Fund** has so far collected \$940 and will partner with the local Asian Pacific American Society (APAS) in securing meals and distributing them to various medical personnel at hospitals, firefighters, police officers, and other First Line Responders. Our chapter's representative to APAS, Nellie Underwood (Jeanette's sister), will assist in this project.



Nellie Underwood, New Orleans Chapter member and representative to the Asian Pacific American Society



The fund's first donation provided 50 appreciation meals to the First Responders in the Telemetry Department at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, LA.



Label applied to each donated meal



Lisa Nguyen, Chair of APAS, and Nellie Underwood



Ochsner Medical Center Telemetry Department Techs with Nellie Underwood

Jeanette was not only a dutiful and faithful member of our chapter but she was a role model for us all. She was a very caring, generous, and selfless person who participated in society and contributed all her natural gifts in making our world a better place. She practiced her Christian beliefs and encouraged and led others to be at peace with themselves as well as with others. Jeanette was a vivacious and very active personality, always giving hugs and smiles to everyone. She knew no stranger and made everyone feel comfortable around her. She took interest in and cared for everyone, and sought to bring a bit of joy to all she met. All of her family and friends as well as our OCAW sisters will sorely miss her. The world is a sadder place without her.

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

*(from Wendy Chang, President)*

#### **Alzheimer's Association's 14th Annual Chinese Alzheimer's Forum**

On Saturday, March 28, 2020, OCAW-SVC along with other associations (Joint Alumni Association of Chinese Universities and Colleges in Northern California, Alumni Association of Taipei First Girls' High School-Northern California, Woman's Workshop, Chinese Bioscience Association, Bliss & Wisdom Foundation of America-Northern California, Chiao Tung University Alumni Association of Northern California, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation-Northern California) helped sponsor the Alzheimer's Association's 14th Annual Chinese Alzheimer's Forum.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, a webinar was used for this year's forum. There were 540 participants logged into the forum. Attendees joined from all over the world: the U.S. (CA, IL, MA, MD, MO, NJ, NY, PA, TX), Canada, Australia, Taiwan, and Czechia.

This year's forum covered topics on learning about Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, advancement in research, stories from a caregiver, and community resources. Speakers for this year were as follows:

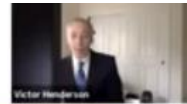
- Dr. Victor Henderson, Director, Stanford Alzheimer's Disease Research Center; Professor of Epidemiology & Population Health and of Neurology & Neurological Sciences; Co-director, Master of Science Program in Epidemiology & Clinical Research

## **Learning Objectives**

**This presentation will inform you about the neurologist's approach to the evaluation and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease**

- **Dementia and Alzheimer's disease**
- **Who should be evaluated for dementia**
- **The medical history and neurological examination**
- **Common laboratory tests for suspected dementia**
- **Treatment of Alzheimer's disease**

**Declarations:**  
NIH grant support  
No conflicts of interest



Dr. Victor Henderson, in the small upper right screen, presenting his talk as his slides were being shown

- Dr. Yadong Huang, Director, Gladstone Center for Translational Advancement; Senior Investigator, Gladstone Institute of Neurological Disease; Professor of Neurology and Pathology, University of California, San Francisco
- Dr. Sharon Sha, Medical Director of the Stanford Neuroscience Clinical Trials Group; Co-Director of the Huntington's Disease Center of Excellence and Ataxia Clinic; Co-Director of the Lewy Body Disease Association Research Center of Excellence; Clinical Core Co-Leader of the Stanford Alzheimer's Disease Research Center; Director of the Behavioral Neurology Fellowship





Dr. Sharon Sha

- Mr. Yoursheng Chen, Caregiver

The forum received many positive comments and good feedback.

Below is the link to this year's forum. It was in Chinese; Dr. Henderson's and Dr. Sha's talks were in English (there was an interpreter).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBbeObV14BE&list=PLPCouWCyT2yyWTiYQURN0Fh2B-VlkvFVj&index=38&t=6786s>

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

*(from Tina Au, President)*

#### **Meeting Schedule**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Hawaii Governor David Ige extended the state's "safer-at-home" order and Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell extended the city's "stay-at-home" order through June 30, 2020. As a result of this, the Hawaii Chapter cancelled its second General Membership Meeting, originally scheduled for Sunday, June 14. This follows on the heels of having to cancel its first meeting that had been planned for Sunday, March 22.

The original meeting schedule included:

Sunday, August 16, 2020 – General Membership Meeting

Sunday, October 18, 2020 – Meeting and Election of 2021 Officers

Sunday, December 6, 2020 – Christmas Event/Installation of Officers

Flexibility will have to be maintained because of the ever-changing situation, and the chapters's Executive Board will make decisions on what to do moving forward.

### **The Hawaii Chinese Community Comes Together: COVID-19 Relief Efforts**

**by Tina Au**

*(Editor's Note: Tina is the President of the Hawaii Chapter.)*

The world is in the midst of what is likely the most drastic change we will experience in our lifetimes. During this overwhelming and difficult time, I hope that you and your loved ones remain in good physical and emotional health. In the movie "Castaway," Tom Hanks's character remarked, "I know what I have to do now. I've got to keep breathing because tomorrow the sun will rise. Who knows what the tide could bring?"

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways. My heart goes out to all of the people who have experienced direct personal loss because of this disease. In order to protect the health of the broader community and help "flatten the curve," governments worldwide have mandated business and school closures as well as cancelled planned events.

Our situation in Hawaii follows those in other parts of the world. Since late March, almost all events and activities have been cancelled, at least through the end of June. Due to the "shelter at home" order coupled with a severe decline in tourism, the whole of Honolulu, including Chinatown, is all but deserted except for those who have been designated essential for government, health, and business operations.

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to stay healthy, have had the opportunity to slow down, spend time with immediate family, and enjoy the simpler things in life. Many in our community have also expressed a strong desire to help others at greater risk of adverse impact.

This show of support started before COVID-19 even hit our shores. In early January 2020, when news broke of the Wuhan outbreak, the Hawaii Mainland Chinese Overseas Association, of which I am the immediate past president and have actively served for 4 years, started fundraising to help. Within 3 weeks, we raised over \$20,000 which funded medical supplies and protective equipment for three hospitals in Wuhan.

By March 2020, COVID-19's impact had spread beyond China to span the entire world. Many people in the Chinese community came together once again to donate and raise money to fund medical supplies and protective equipment for hospitals, senior care homes, clinics, and all other people in need of care and protection.

Hundreds of individuals and households have donated to this cause. Due to past partnerships with government and manufacturers in China, the Hawaii Chinese community was able to get protective

equipment delivered to individual households in Honolulu. 35,450 SM (safety masks), 170 N95 masks, 10 goggles, and 8 medical protective clothing outfits were collected. This equipment was then disseminated to 40 local organizations and agencies:

1. Kaiser Permanente Hospital (Moanalua) – SM 2,300, N95 110, Goggles 10, Medical protective clothing outfits 8
2. Kaiser Permanente Hospital (Honolulu) – SM 800
3. Kapiolani Medical Center – SM 800
4. St. Francis Hospice – SM 600
5. St. Francis Hospital – SM 600
6. The Queen’s Medical Center – SM 2,850
7. The Queen’s Medical Center (West Oahu) – SM 600
8. Straub Hospital – SM 800, N95 40
9. Shriners Hospitals for Children – SM 400
10. Castle Hospital – SM 600
11. Kuakini Hospital – SM 600
12. Wahiawa General Hospital – SM 600
13. Kalihi Palama Health Center – SM 600
14. Leahi Hospital – SM 600
15. Liliha Healthcare Center – SM 200
16. Visiting Angels Caregivers – SM 200
17. Hawaii Pacific Health – SM 2,000
18. Hawaii Nurses’ Association – SM 2,000
19. Craigside Doctor of Waikiki – SM 300
20. Waikiki Health Clinic – SM 200
21. Maunalani Nursing and Rehabilitation Center – SM 600
22. Paleolithic Chinese Home – SM 400
23. Kalakaua Garden – SM 200
24. The Plaza – SM 200
25. Hawaii Kai Kai Holiday – SM 200
26. Kahala Nui – SM 400
27. 15 Craigsides – SM 200
28. Community Empowerment Resources – SM 200
29. Waikiki Fire Station – SM 200
30. Kaimuki Fire Station – SM 100
31. Waikiki Police Station – SM 1,000
32. Chinatown Police Station – SM 1,000
33. Wahiawa Police Station – SM 400
34. Corrections facility – SM 800
35. The Bus – SM 600
36. Foodland – SM 600
37. University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine – SM 600
38. Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center – SM 200
39. Pearl City Urgent Care – SM 600
40. Honolulu City and County – SM 9,100, N95 20

On Sunday, April 19, we also distributed over 5,000 free face masks at Kapolei Commons to the public. (*See the following photos taken at this event.*) Another 10,000 masks were given to homeless shelters, supermarkets, and senior/nursing homes.



Tina Au (4th from the left)





Tina handing out face masks









Over the past two months, Honolulu paramedics and emergency medical services (EMS) have adapted to changes COVID-19 has brought to the rest of the city. Since the height of the outbreak in late March, these agencies have received around 200 calls daily. About three weeks ago, I received an emergency call from EMS for N95 masks, so I placed numbers of calls to see if any agency had N95 masks to donate. Over the past few days, 400 N95 that the See Yup Society ordered in March finally arrived, so we were able to donate about 100 N95 to EMS with the rest going to other frontline workers.

Like other states in the U.S., Hawaii has just started to reopen businesses. On Friday, May 15, shopping malls and beaches opened to the public. In early June, restaurants will be allowed to provide dine-in service, rather than just takeout.

I am hopeful that thoughtful decision-making about reopening businesses and activities, coupled with improved health procedures by both individuals and organizations, will lead to safer interactions as we come together in the “new-normal” that is our changed world.

Please continue to wash your hands often, wear a mask when in public, and keep social distancing. Stay safe!

*(Editor’s Note: Kudos to the Hawaii Chinese Community for their incredible efforts!)*



## **From and About Our Members**

### **Chinese American Heroes**

*(from Rena Young Ochse, Hawaii Chapter Treasurer and Newsletter Editor)*

In view of May being Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, a time to honor and celebrate the rich history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in America, Rena wanted to share some wonderful videos that she came across. She thought that they were well done and would be of interest to OCAW members.

They are part of PBS' American Masters "Unsung Women Who Changed America" series, and they were voiced by Lisa Ling.

About Tye Leung Schulze, the first Chinese American Woman to Vote in the U.S.:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=viCq9LfKVwU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viCq9LfKVwU)

About Anna May Wong, the first Asian American Movie Star:  
<https://youtu.be/0vuVTpsDfXg>

*(Editor's Note: Coincidentally, bios of these two Chinese American women were featured in the February 2020 issue of the OCAW E-Newsletter. Camilla Ng submitted shortened versions of their bios that were part of an exhibit that she viewed at the Chinese American Museum DC last fall.*

*I recommend that if you are interested, you also look up the write-ups in the February e-newsletter.)*

### **From Rena Young Ochse**

*(Editor's Note: While Rena was in COVID lockdown for over two months, she was cleaning out her closets, cabinets, and shelves, and had some thoughts about using special dishes and clothing.)*

As I was cleaning out my cabinets – Wow, so many covers, etc.

We all know someone who keeps plastic covers on his or her couch in order to protect it. The irony is that many of these people may live their lives without ever having actually made contact with their own furniture! This is a poignant and somewhat humorous example of the human tendency to try to save things for special occasions, as if everyday life weren't special enough to warrant the use of nice things. Many of us have had the experience of never wearing a particular piece of clothing in order to keep it nice, only to have it go out of style in the meanwhile.

It's interesting to think of what it would mean to us if we let ourselves wear our nicest clothes and eat off the good china on a daily basis. We might be sending ourselves the message that every day we are alive is a special day and a cause for celebration, and that we are worth it. There is something uplifting about treating ourselves to the finest of what we have. It is as if we rise to the occasion when we wear our best clothes and set the table beautifully, as if for a very special guest. We are more mindful of where we place things, what we are eating, and who is with us. Using the good china, eating in the dining room, and taking the plastic off the sofa might be an invitation to be more conscious of the beauty and grace inherent in our everyday lives.



If there are things you've stashed away for a special occasion – a bottle of special wine, a gorgeous pair of shoes, an antique lace tablecloth – consider taking them out of their hiding places and putting them to use tonight, just because you are alive now to enjoy them, and that's a great cause for a celebration.

### **Bayou Lacadee**

*(from Betty Butz, former New Orleans Chapter President)*

*(Editor's Note: Betty has been continuing a project which she calls "Bayou Lacadee." She is assembling an album consisting of 10 poems which she is writing, accompanied by some illustrating photos which she has taken. Her poems have been published in the November 2019, February 2020, and April 2020 OCAW E-Newsletters. Here is another.)*

#### **Serious Secret**

By the gibbous moon's silvery light,  
Beams cast upon creatures of the night.  
When quiet thoughts swelter truly bright,  
A rain garden reveals a secret delight.

Luna moth, cloaked in powdery green,  
Glides on its magic wings like a stream.  
In a slow drift sensuously serene,  
It breathes fancy, sprite-like dreams.

Most blossoms wake to the sun's embrace,  
After waiting darkly in the shade.  
The cereus quivers under the moon, quite  
In the wee early hours of the night.

A ruffraff cactus, no barbs contrived,  
Sends its essence through tender dendrites  
That stretch eagerly to reach full height,  
Yearning for the sky with all their might.

An airy blossom, stately and rare,  
Veiled in fragrance none can compare,  
Basks in vague glory with pride to spare.  
Golden pollen, soft petals elegant and fair.

Lulled by the glow of the moon-washed night,  
Drunk on cypress vapor breathlessly tight,  
Fairy moth will come again, dancing alight,  
To seek its perfume in the white of night.



Night blooming cereus

*(Photo taken by Pauline Chen, Melbourne, Australia)*

### **“Breaking Barriers – Chinese American Women Pioneers” Exhibit**

**by Camilla Ng**

*(Editor’s Note: Camilla is a former Maryland Chapter President. In the February 2020 OCAW E-Newsletter, she wrote an article on exhibits that she had toured at the new Chinese American Museum DC, including one on notable Chinese American women. Summaries of four of these exemplary individuals were published in that issue. Two more were printed in the April 2020 e-newsletter. Below are the final three summaries.*

*The information below is credited to the CAMDC.)*

“This exhibit celebrates the success of a number of Chinese American women who excelled in their careers and lives, who triumphed over hardship and overcame a myriad of obstacles... these women never let their status deter them from pursuing their passions... their lives representing stories of triumph and trailblazing.”

**Dr. Grace Lee Boggs – Author, Social Activist**  
(1915-2015)

Grace Lee Boggs was born in Providence, Rhode Island, above her father's restaurant. She grew up in Jackson Heights, Queens, where her mother's feminist ideologies would later influence Boggs' social activism.

At age 16, Boggs studied philosophy at Barnard College, and in 1940, earned a PhD in philosophy from Bryn Mawr College. She moved to Chicago to work at the University of Chicago's Philosophy Library. It was there that she took her first steps toward social activism for workers' civil rights.

Boggs became involved in promoting tenants' rights. She joined the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party. In 1953, she married James Boggs, a black radical activist, and they moved to Detroit. The Boggses became prime advocates of the civil rights movement and centered their activism work around African Americans, women, and youth.

Initially, the Boggses adhered to ideologies and practices of the Black Power Movement, but eventually, they embraced the non-violent strategies inspired by Martin Luther King's work. Instead of outright violent confrontation, Boggs sought to fight inequality and discrimination through community service and civic reform.

Boggs established food cooperatives, elderly support groups, a charter school, and youth programs that engaged the younger generation to actively take part in tasks to better the community. In 1990, the Boggs Center was founded, which served as a vehicle for social activism and community engagement. Boggs authored several books, the last being published in 2011. She left behind a revolutionary legacy of social reform.

**Maggie Gee – First Chinese American Pilot in WASP**  
(1923-2013)

Maggie Gee was raised in Berkeley, California. She attended the University of California, Berkeley, but as the U.S. entered WWII, Gee dropped out and began work at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard as a draftsman and welder. After working for some time she moved to Minden, Nevada to attend flight school and began to pursue her dream of becoming a pilot.

Gee, along with Hazel Ying Lee, were the first Chinese American women to participate in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Gee helped train male pilots and co-piloted B-17 planes, since female pilots were not allowed to serve in combat alone.

In December 1944, the WASP program was disbanded and Gee returned to UC Berkeley to finish her college education and pursue physics in the graduate program. Post-graduation, Gee worked at UC's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Her professional tenure at the lab included working on the designs for nuclear warheads and the Poseidon missile. She worked at the lab until 1988, when she retired. In 2010, Gee and her fellow WASP members received the Congressional Gold Medal.

**Dr. March Fong Eu – First Chinese American State Official**  
(1922-2017)

March Fong Eu was born in Oakdale, California. She was raised behind her family's laundry shop. She

aspired to become a scientist in high school, but her guidance counselor explained that it would be difficult for a Chinese woman.

Eu stated that in her youth, many people “had no perception of [her] possibilities.” She graduated from UC Berkeley, and earned a master’s degree from Mills College and a doctorate in education from Stanford University’s Graduate School of Education.

From 1960 to 1966, Eu served on the Alameda County Board of Education. In 1966, she was elected to the California State Assembly as the first Asian woman to hold a legislative seat. Serving four terms, Eu’s keystone contribution was the ban on pay toilets in public buildings. In 1974, Eu was elected to be California Secretary of State. She was the first woman to hold the position and the first Chinese American to be elected to a statewide office anywhere in the U.S. Eu piloted changes to voter registration by allowing voter registration by mail, adding candidate statements to the ballot, and widening the use of absentee voting. In 1976, when Governor Jerry Brown was out of state, Eu stepped in as acting Governor of California, making her the first Asian American and first woman to hold this office.

In 1988, Eu campaigned for the Democratic nomination to the U.S. Senate. She backed out of the race when her second husband refused to release their family’s financial information. In 1994, Eu was appointed as the Ambassador to Micronesia by President Bill Clinton.

### **Reflecting on our Heritage Month**

**by Audrey Lee**

*(Editor’s Note: Audrey is a former Maryland Chapter Board Member.)*

May 2020, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 31 days to reflect on the myriad contributions Asian and Pacific Islander Americans have made. In the midst of the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home, I reflected on how a year earlier, I attended the OCAW New Orleans Chapter’s 30th anniversary celebration. As their guest, I was given VIP treatment. I met so many wonderful sisters and learned much more about our early history rooted in the former New Orleans Chinatown and of the young Chinese woman who made her way from California to settle in New Orleans via Colorado. Her story recalled my grandmother’s solo journey from China, across the Pacific by boat to Angel Island’s immigration center in California, then cross-country on the Transcontinental over train tracks completed in 1869 by Chinese laborers.

My grandmother arrived in Philadelphia in the early 1920s. She entered the U.S. on a student visa at a time when the only act in U.S. history banning a specific ethnic group from becoming U.S. citizens was in full force: the nefarious and protracted Chinese Exclusion Act (May 6, 1882-1943). She met and married my grandfather who had also entered the U.S. as a student a few years earlier. They had four children; the eldest was my father. Following his sophomore year at the University of Pennsylvania, my father enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on active duty between 1944 and 1946.

The 1943 Magnuson Act, passed in recognition of China’s alliance during WWII, effectively repealed the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act by allowing Chinese residents, including my grandparents, to become naturalized citizens. Concurrently, in a horrific twist of fate, U.S. citizens of Japanese descent were incarcerated in camps (February 19, 1942-March 20, 1946) under Executive Order 9066. In 1988, the long overdue Civil Liberties Act offered a formal apology and compensation to these incarcerated citizens. And,





this year, on behalf of my now deceased father, I will be accepting the long overdue Congressional Gold Medal conferred on all Chinese American WWII Veterans.

Unfortunately, the May 2020 Public Broadcasting System (PBS) *"Asian Americans"* five-hour series only glossed over our contributions and challenges – many of the same stories retold yet missing many of the incredible accomplishments and devastating hardships. The series failed to mention the contributions of many inventors, photographers, designers, architects, artists, doctors, engineers. PBS also failed to acknowledge the Asian settlers who fought in the Civil War or arrived on North American shores before the Europeans. The result was a greatly condensed chronicle lumping all immigrants from Asia into one storyline of settlers tenaciously striving to overcome adversity and carve out a new life, culminating in the "Breaking Through" final episode. As PBS notably mentioned, without political standing in the U.S., Chinese settlers fought legal battles through the highest court in the land, resulting in landmark cases decades before the Civil Rights Movement. Chinese laborers organized strikes for better pay comparable to the higher wages being paid to non-Asians. They were lynched and hung by their queues, ridiculed and harassed while suffering treatment worse than indentured servants at the lowest wages, enduring living and weather conditions that no other humans would tolerate.

Our heritage runs deep and far as an enduring legacy. Every American of Asian descent with whom I have talked has a unique story. PBS could broadcast a documentary every night for a year and still not adequately cover our remarkable narrative.