

E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

June 2026



P. O. Box 3443, Oakton, VA 22124
Email: ocawwomen@aol.com
Website: www.ocawwomen.org
501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

(from Linda Devine, Editor)

As always, I would like to thank everyone who contributed material for this e-newsletter. I also wish to commend authors for some thoughtfully written articles, particularly for this issue.

Additionally, I appreciate my husband Ed's work on preparing all of the photos, which were many. I received well over a hundred pictures, and I am grateful for the large number, but I regret that I was not able to include them all. As is evident, the issue was going to be quite lengthy as is. I hope the submitters understand.

I continue to encourage OCAW members to write articles or submit information if there is something you think would be of interest to the membership.

Please also feel free to send me any suggestions that you might have for the e-newsletter at:
devinefive@comcast.net

Whether you are traveling or just relaxing at home, have a wonderful summer, and see you in the fall!

Table of Contents

	Page
Opera International's Charitable Giving.....	2
News from the Maryland Chapter.....	8
News from the Virginia Chapter.....	15
News from the New Orleans Chapter.....	16
News from the Silicon Valley Chapter.....	28
News from the Hawaii Chapter.....	41
From and About Our Members.....	44
A Different Kind of Travel.....	49
Asian Art Symposium and Visit to the Princeton Art Museum.....	53
Library of Congress Asian American Association Celebrates America's 250th Anniversary.....	55
1882: A Gold Mountain Odyssey.....	58

Opera International's Charitable Giving

(from Linda Devine)

This spring, Opera International continued disbursing its remaining funds to charities and worthy nonprofit organizations. As mentioned previously, we reached out to long-term significant donors to learn if they had any special preferences as to charities that they favored, and we honored their requests. In this vein, one such benefactor cited an organization that she found worthy: the **Chinese Community Church of Washington, D.C.**



The CCC was the church home of Opera International Founder/Director Muriel Hom for many years, and Mimi, her husband Ernest, and their children were very active in church activities. The CCC was founded in 1935, and for the past 90 years it has faithfully served residents of the Washington Metropolitan area with services in both Chinese and English, as well as providing care and fellowship for all who seek it.

Although Mimi was not active with the church in her later years, church members, including thoughtful young people, periodically visited her at her senior home until her passing last year. Some OCAW Maryland and Virginia members might have met CCC members at Mimi's Celebration of Life last September. Mimi was very active in music at the church, so a contribution has recently been made to the CCC with a request that the funds be put toward its music program.

Opera International aims to benefit organizations in the communities of the five OCAW chapters. In May, a contribution was made to the **International Young Artist Piano Competition**, an organization that encourages young pianists to excel by exhibiting their talent in annual competitions. These aim to foster cultural exchange between the East and West, and to promote the music of Chinese composers. Mimi felt that this was a very worthy organization. She was involved with it for many years, including being a longtime board member, and consistently made donations to it over the years.

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG ARTIST PIANO COMPETITION (IYAPC)

Promoting Music from the East and the West

As the word "international" suggests, IYAPC encourages participation from all over, and last year's 2025

season included a young artist from China. It also drew contestants from the Eastern Seaboard, such as Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina. However, as the organization is headquartered in Maryland, the participants were predominantly from Maryland and Virginia.

We received the following **thank-you letter from IYAPC's Executive Director:**



I am writing to express our sincere gratitude for this special donation to the International Young Artist Piano Competition 2026 from the Organization of Chinese American Women and Opera International. We are absolutely thrilled to receive a very encouraging letter from President Maria Yang and OCAW's generous donation. It means so much to all of us on the IYAPC Committee to honor a longtime board member, Muriel Hom, whom we so admire and respect.

We plan to put the award as first prize for the College/Young Professional group (age 20- 32) which will make a big difference for those young musicians on the edge of working toward a budding career. You are all cordially invited to attend the Sunday, June 28, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Award Ceremony and winners concert at Ward Recital Hall, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Thank you again for your time, your support, and for making this competition such a great experience. This recognition motivates us to continue working hard to promote young artists and share talents with the community, as Mimi had enjoyed doing for decades.

Thank you once again for your generosity and support.

Sincerely,

Li-Ly Chang
Executive Director
International Young Artist Piano Competition

In keeping with a focus on OCAW chapter communities, last year, contributions were made to the **Feiyang Dance Team** and the **New Orleans Skylark Performing Arts Troupe**, both of which include members of the OCAW New Orleans Chapter. Both groups were exceptional in promoting cultural awareness, as well as

giving joy to the communities in which they served. In addition to performing at community and school events, they brought particular happiness to senior citizens at homes in the area.

For this reason, Opera International wanted to contribute more funds to them for 2026, in the hope that the financial assistance could help them carry on the wonderful work that they have been doing. Donations are in the process of being made to both groups.



Feiyang Dance Team

(Photo taken by Allen Wu)



New Orleans Skylark Performing Arts Troupe

Further contributions are planned in the near future to benefit the Hawaii and Silicon Valley Chapters' communities.

* * * * *

In the meantime, Opera International continues to encourage applications for Muriel Hom Music Grants.

Muriel Hom Music Grants

Grants of \$500 continue to be available, and it is hoped that talented instrumentalists and vocalists who could benefit from some additional funds to further their studies and activities, will apply.

The grant application form has been sent to each chapter president. ***If any OCAW member knows of an individual who is serious about pursuing their music studies and might be able to use some financial assistance, please either contact your chapter president, or send an email to me: devinefive@comcast.net, and we will be more than happy to email you an application which you can then forward to your musician.***

The Prism Project of Greater New Orleans

by Claire Tibbetts

(Editor's Note: A Muriel Hom Music Grant was awarded to the Autism Society of Greater New Orleans in March 2026. Claire Tibbetts is the Executive Director of ASGNO, and on behalf of the organization, she expressed their deep gratitude for the grant and said that it really meant a lot to them. She has written an article detailing their work and the use of the grant.)



The Prism Project of Greater New Orleans (Prism) is a Program of the Autism Society of Greater New Orleans (ASGNO). A collaborative effort between ASGNO and Love's Music Therapy (LMT), Prism has been closing a gap in Greater New Orleans by providing music-performance-arts recreation services, offering inclusive and specialized accommodated programming for youth with disabilities and neurotypical youth since 2013.

Prism proudly answers a previously unmet need here in New Orleans, delivering inclusive afterschool recreational programming in the performing arts for youth with disabilities and their neurotypical peers. Prism's mission is to provide affordable, high-quality, accommodated performance-arts workshops to disabled youth aged between 6 and 24 years. Prism was awarded the Muriel Hom Music Grant in March 2026 to support our performance at the ASGNO Autism Festival on Saturday, April 18, 2026, and the organization and the performers deeply appreciate the generosity of OCAW and Opera International.



(Photo taken by Lily Wu)

We had 16 performers in attendance at the Festival, and they participated in a one-hour group performance with a set of multiple songs. The performers prepared for the performance through two in-person rehearsals and time spent practicing at home. They were accompanied by a professional band from the Second-Line Arts Collective and supported by a number of volunteers and paid behavior staff, as well as our Program Director Jeremy Love and creative assistant Guilina. Participants had the opportunity to sing, play percussion instruments, and dance with the music during the performance, and the joy and engagement from the participants was contagious across the venue. Many attendees at the festival stopped to enjoy the event. In addition to providing a supported, public performance opportunity for the participants, Prism also provides paid work for local professional musicians who support and accompany the performers, creating a truly unique and high-quality experience for the participants and the audience as well.





(Photos provided by the Autism Society of Greater New Orleans)

Prism’s work would not be possible without the support of our funders, and we truly appreciate everyone who contributed in any way to make this performance possible. We look forward to resuming our full 10-week programming in 2027.

Claire Tibbetts
Executive Director
Autism Society of Greater New Orleans

* * * * *

In May 2026, a Muriel Hom Music Grant was made to a **young man from New Orleans** who is in the Autism spectrum. Although he is challenged in reading and writing, he says that music is his strength. He started playing the keyboard when he was four years old, and he has taken piano and voice lessons for many years. His love of music inspired his family to get involved with it as well, and they play and sing together. In his music class at school, he plays the piano while his classmates sing, and he also plays in school concerts.

He was very thoughtful and grateful, and wrote us the following **thank-you letter**:

Dear Muriel Hom Music Grant Committee,

Thank you for the \$500! This is the first grant I have ever received. I am very, very happy.

I am going to use the money for my piano lessons, voice lessons, and music books. I practice hard because I hope I can play music in concerts, churches, and choirs one day.

Thank you for helping me with my music.

Love,

[the young student]

Opera International is very pleased to be able to support young musicians such as this recipient.

News from the Maryland Chapter

(from Patricia Fenn, President)

37th U.S. National Arboretum Garden Fair and Plant Sale

Members of OCAW Maryland attended the 37th Annual Garden Fair and Plant Sale at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, April 25, 2026. Thousands from the metro D.C.-Maryland-Virginia community were there to visit the 25-plus local vendors and Friends of the National Arboretum plant sale tent, and enjoy food and drink and free family activities.





Bonsai grower Peter Chan from Gaithersburg, MD had a booth visited by OCAW-MD President Patricia Fenn. Pat bought a small bonsai for a family member.



State Proclamation Issued by Maryland Governor in Honor of AANHPI Month

(from Patricia Fenn)

Maryland Governor Wes Moore signed and sent out a proclamation on May 1, 2026 in honor of AANHPI Month, noting their large percentage (7%) makeup of Marylanders of the state’s residents. He also listed his cabinet, noting Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, Secretary of State Susan Lee, Secretary of Labor Portia Wu, Secretary of General Services Atif T. Chaudry, and Secretary of Health Meena Seshamani, M.D.



Proclamation

From the Governor of the State of Maryland

**ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH
MAY 2026**

- WHEREAS, *Each May, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is recognized nationally to honor the rich history, culture, and achievements of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, who have contributed significantly to our country’s economic, social, and cultural advancement; and*
- WHEREAS, *The State of Maryland is deeply enriched by the diversity of its residents, and seeks to further promote tolerance, acceptance, and equality of opportunities for all; and*
- WHEREAS, *Maryland has one of the highest concentrations of Asian Americans in the United States, with nearly seven percent of the population identifying as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; and*
- WHEREAS, *The Moore-Miller Administration is proud to have built the most diverse Cabinet in State of Maryland history, including Asian Americans Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, the first Asian American elected to statewide office in Maryland; Susan Lee, Maryland’s first Asian American Secretary of State; Secretary of Labor Portia Wu; Secretary of the Department of General Services Atif Chaudry; and Secretary of Health, Dr. Meena Seshamani; and*
- WHEREAS, *Asian Pacific American Heritage Month was first celebrated in May 1996 to commemorate the arrival of Japanese immigrants to the United States in May 1843, and to honor the contributions of Chinese Americans in building the Transcontinental Railroad, which was completed on May 10, 1869; and*
- WHEREAS, *Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders continue to make impressive and lasting contributions to every facet of society in our state, from technology to medicine to civic life; and*
- WHEREAS, *During Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, the State of Maryland honors those contributions and reaffirms its commitment to building a state that leaves no one behind.*

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WES MOORE, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, do hereby proclaim MAY 2026 as ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH in Maryland, and do commend this observation to all of our citizens.



*Given Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland,
this 1st day of May
Two Thousand and twenty-six*

*Wes Moore
Governor*
*Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor*
*Susan C. Lee
Secretary of State*

Of Moore’s 30 Cabinet positions, 60% are women, and 17% are AANHPI, second only to the Governor’s Cabinet in the state of Hawaii, which are nearly 75% AANHPI.

Governor Moore commended the rich diversity of AANHPI Marylanders who contribute to the state's progress and achievements.

The historical background of this affinity month is as follows. In 1978 Congress passed a joint resolution requesting that President Jimmy Carter proclaim the first week of May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. In 1990 Congress passed legislation (Public Law 101-283) that expanded the celebration from a single week to the entire month of May for that year. And in 1992 Congress passed Public Law 102-450, which permanently designated May of each year as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month.

May was specifically chosen because it commemorates two major historical milestones: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the U.S. (May 7, 1843) and the completion of the transcontinental railroad, largely built by Chinese laborers (May 10, 1869).

Finally, birthright citizenship arises from a SCOTUS decision in 1898, ruling on behalf of plaintiff Wong Kim Ark (and the Fourteenth Amendment of 1868).

Listening Session: National Asian Pacific American Museum Commission

(from Kitty Hsu Dana, Vice President, and Christina Wong Poy, Advisor (former Chapter President))

The National Asian Pacific American Museum Commission convened a Listening Session in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. We had the chance to hear from notable Asian American figures from the museum world, politics, academia, and a variety of Asian American community, cultural, and social justice organizations. This was one of more than 20 such convenings that have taken place across the U.S., with dozens more in the upcoming months.

Established by Congress in June 2022, the National Asian Pacific American Museum (NAPAM) Commission is charged with delivering a plan of action to lay the groundwork for Congressional authorization of a national museum dedicated to honoring the achievements, progress, and lasting impact of Asian Pacific Americans. The Commission is hosting regional convenings and listening sessions to gain the perspectives of communities across the country. It will deliver a final report to the President and Congress by October 2026.

Award-winning journalist, filmmaker, and author Richard Lui moderated the event. Three NAPAM Commissioners provided an overview of the Commission's work. Co-Vice Chair Tina Wei Smith noted Asian American history as one of courage, sacrifice, and hope, and that our community has always shaped the fabric of our nation. Co-Vice Chair Joanne Kwong described the 18-month process since April 2025 of listening and shaping the plan, leading to the delivery of the report this coming October. Commissioner Rodney Davis emphasized that the past year has laid the groundwork for raising capital, building organizational capacity, exploring potential sites, and meeting with Members of Congress. We also heard from Krystal Ka'ai Hetherington, Executive Director of the Commission.



Richard Lui, Krystal Ka'ai Hetherington, Joanne Kwong, The Honorable Rodney Davis, and Tina Wei Smith

Significant Asian American political figures provided further context. U.S. Representative Grace Meng (NY-6), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, had introduced the bill to study a NAPAMC. It passed unanimously in both chambers in 2022. U.S. Representative Judy Chu (CA-28) noted that the museum will honor our past, celebrate our present, and inspire future generations. And The Honorable Elaine Chao provided warm remarks of vision and reality-setting – all off the record.



U.S. Representative Judy Chu



The Honorable Elaine Chao

Leaders from more than two dozen stakeholder organizations contributed their hopes and aspirations for the Museum. The overwhelming desire is for it to be sited in the Nation’s Capital, preferably on the National Mall on par with other Smithsonian museums. Multiple testimonies stressed the importance of honoring the diversity of Asian Americans and the active participation of groups that are smaller and whose voices are not as often heard (e.g., Polynesian and Micronesian Americans) within the multi-racial society we’re still striving to build. As well, many spoke of building an interactive living museum that integrates what technology can make possible in the visitors’ experience, with attention to what today’s younger generations would want to look forward to.



Listening session, audience, and Dr. Karthick Ramakrishnan providing remarks

This will be a long process. The Museum of African American History and Culture took 16 years from inception to completion. Also, already in process before us are the National Museum of the American Latino and the American Women's History Museum.

The NAPAM Commission welcomes the public to submit comments and check upcoming regional convenings by going to their website: <https://nationalapamuseum.org>
You can learn more about the Commission, the Commissioners, the Timeline, and their work ahead.

(Note: From her work as Administrative Director of the Governor's Office on Community Initiatives, Christina Wong Poy was involved with NAPAM's outreach to Maryland's AANHPI government officials, as well as leaders in academia, business, and the nonprofits. She was invited to the convening and attended with several of her commissioners. OCAW Maryland Chapter Vice President Kitty Hsu Dana also joined the convening, courtesy of Christina.)

(Photos taken by Kitty Hsu Dana)

Upcoming events

(from Kitty Hsu Dana, Vice President)

We are delighted to offer two events this month for OCAW Maryland and Virginia members. We hope that you can join us and look forward to seeing you! Please note RSVP dates for each program so that we can prepare sufficient refreshments at the library and for WAMU to have a head count for lunch.

Book Talk: Judy Ikels on *Death in Wartime China*

Join us for a Book Talk and Book Signing with author Judy Ikels, the daughter of a B-24 Liberator bomber who perished in China during WWII. The book explores her father William H. Wallace Jr.'s sacrifice and her journey to reconnect with his legacy.

Date/Time: Saturday, June 13, 2026 – 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Place: Little Falls Library, 5501 Massachusetts Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20816 (Meeting Room on lower level)

Schedule: author remarks and Q&A/conversation with audience, followed by book signing

Access: There is abundant parking in the open parking lot in front of the library.

RSVP by June 10 to Kitty Hsu Dana, Vice President, OCAW Maryland, at: kdana@rcn.com

WAMU Station Tour and Lunch with OCAW Members

WAMU, our public radio station for the Washington region, invites OCAW members to a station tour, live airing of *The Politics Hour with Kojo Nnambi*, and lunch with the host and producers of the program.

Date/Time: Friday, June 26, 2026 – 11:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Place: WAMU 88.5 – 4401 Connecticut Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008

Schedule: Arrive 11:45 a.m. The station tour will start promptly at 12 noon and include time in the control room to watch a segment of the live airing of *The Politics Hour with Kojo Nnambi*. WAMU will then host OCAW members for lunch at the station. Joining us for lunch and conversation will be the star of the show, Kojo Nnambi (and photo opportunity with our group); Matt Blitz, Producer of *The Politics Hour*; and Senior Producer/Guest Host, Kayla Hewitt.

Access: WAMU is one block from the Metro Red Line stop, UDC/Van Ness. Public parking is available at the Giant, located half-a-block from WAMU. WAMU has kindly extended Handicapped parking in their building for OCAW members with accessibility needs.

RSVP by June 18 to Kitty Hsu Dana, Vice President, OCAW Maryland, at: kdana@rcn.com (please note if you need Handicapped parking)

* *WAMU can accommodate a maximum of 20 people for the station tour.* Respond at your earliest convenience to reserve a spot. We will open a waiting list if demand exceeds 20 to fill potential cancellations.

News from the Virginia Chapter

(from Barbara York, President)

It was a quiet quarter for the Virginia Chapter, but activities are in the works for the near future. We are participating with the Maryland Chapter at their planned book talk on Saturday, June 13, 2026, with author Judy Ikels, the daughter of a B-24 Liberator bomber who perished in China during WWII. The book, *Death in Wartime China: A Daughter's Discovery*, explores her father William H. Wallace Jr.'s sacrifice in China and her journey to reconnect with his legacy.

Virginia Chapter members will also be attending the Maryland Chapter's tour and lunch at our local DMV public radio station, WAMU, on Saturday, June 26.

Chapter Officers

Noreen Hom has kindly agreed to reprise her role as Secretary of the Virginia Chapter. Cathy Roberts will continue serving as Treasurer. Sincere thanks to both of them.

Upcoming event

Mid-Autumn Festival Potluck Dinner and Moon Viewing

Please note that our chapter's annual Mid-Autumn event is scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. until after we view the moon. Lifetime member and perennial host Amy Lee has once again extended her hospitality and booked her condo's party room for our event.

News from the New Orleans Chapter

(Yong Yi, President)

OCAW New Orleans Participates in APAS Asian Pacific American Heritage Festival

(from Lily Wu, Vice President)

On Saturday, May 16, 2026, the OCAW New Orleans Chapter proudly participated in the Asian Pacific American Society's Asian Pacific American Heritage Festival, celebrating the rich traditions and cultural diversity of the Asian Pacific American community through music, dance, fashion, and community outreach. It was held in Lafreniere Park in Metairie, LA.



OCAW New Orleans
performers and volunteers



One of the highlights of the festival was the Chinese Traditional Clothing Fashion Show presented by OCAW New Orleans. Audience members experienced the beauty and elegance of Chinese attire spanning from 400 BC to the 1900s.

The showcase featured Hanfu, Qipao, everyday clothing, ceremonial garments, court attire, and movie-inspired costumes. Through fabrics, embroidery, hair ornaments, belts, and accessories, the program demonstrated the artistry, craftsmanship, and cultural significance of traditional Chinese clothing across different dynasties and historical periods.











The event also featured vibrant performances by the Feiyang Dance Team and the New Orleans Skylark Performing Arts Troupe.

We sincerely appreciate the Opera International donations, which helped support the cost of renting rehearsal and practice space for our performances.

The Feiyang Dance Team presented:

- Female Solo Dance: *The Tears of Plum Blossom*
- Classical Chinese Dance: *Peach Blossoms*
- Dance Performance: *Let's Dance*



Peach Blossoms



Let's Dance

The Skylark Performing Arts Troupe performed:

- Soprano Solo: *Qing Yu An – Yuanxi, Lantern Festival Night*, performed by Lily Yang
- Mezzo-Soprano Solo: *Ode to the Yangzi River*, performed by Wenyi Shan
- Soprano Solo: *Beautiful Mood*, performed by Nicole Landry
- Jiaodong Yangge Dance: *Moonlight Over My Hometown*
- *Dance of the Yi Tribe*
- Chinese Classical Dance: *Falling*
- Qipao Show: *Ink and Mist*





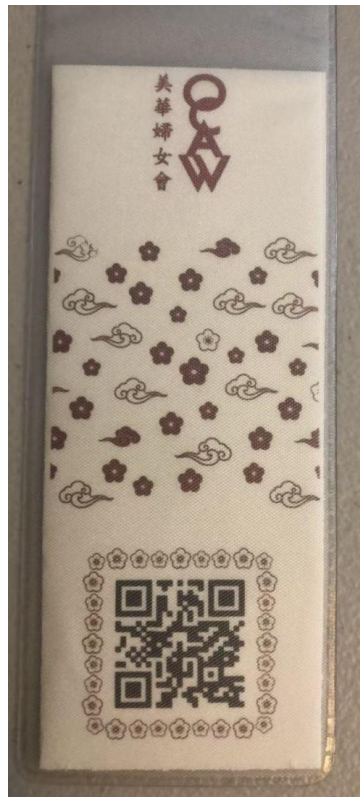
In addition to the performances, OCAW New Orleans also hosted a community information table to introduce the organization and its activities.

The New Orleans Chinese School and the Chinese Presbyterian Church joined the table and helped share information about local Chinese cultural and educational programs.

Volunteers of OCAW members and local school students worked together at the community table, introducing Chinese culture and engaging with festival attendees throughout the event.



Visitors enjoyed interactive cultural displays and activities. A calligraphy artist, Mr. Leipin He, wrote visitors' names in Chinese characters on bookmarks, which became a very popular activity throughout the festival. Mahjong tiles and sets were displayed to introduce traditional Chinese games and culture. Handmade Hanfu-inspired bookmarks, generously donated by lifetime member Sophie Lin, and Chinese culture bookmarks donated by immediate past president Patricia Ellzey, were distributed as take-home gifts for attendees.



The performances and community activities were warmly received by festival attendees and showcased the beauty of Chinese culture and heritage. OCAW New Orleans was honored to participate in this celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and to share Chinese traditions with the broader community.



The video of our transition clothes fashion show can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/7vRITrXFYY?feature=shared>

More performances from the Skylark Performing Arts Troupe can be found at:

<https://m.youtube.com/@lilysaitta1259>

(Photos taken by OCAW members, family, and friends)

Additional comments about the Festival

(from Patricia Ellzey, Immediate Past President)

Kudos to the Dance Team and Performing Arts Troupe for working so hard, especially throughout the month of May, culminating in doing 11 performances at the Festival from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.! They really had China shine!!!

It was a beautiful day in the park, and about a thousand people came to participate.

I also was asked to talk about OCAW, and I discussed our origins, purpose, and activities. Thus we were able to receive more publicity.

Additionally, in Lily's report, she referred to Leipin He. He is an accomplished China-born calligraphy artist and member of the Chinese Presbyterian Church, and I have been able to recruit him to volunteer at the OCAW table every year. He writes people's names in Chinese characters on bookmarks, to the delight of attendees!

News from the Silicon Valley Chapter

(Yufan Lu, President)

South Bay Community Leaders Prayer Breakfast Gathering

(from Isabelle Guh, Vice President)

The Silicon Valley Chapter of OCAW was honored to participate in the 2025 South Bay Community Leaders Prayer Breakfast Gathering held on Friday, December 19, 2025, at the Saratoga Country Club, Saratoga, CA. Representing OCAW-SVC as a member of the organizing committee, Isabelle Guh joined community leaders in supporting this meaningful event, which promoted dialogue, collaboration, and unity across the South Bay region.

The breakfast gathering brought together an impressive and diverse group of leaders from the political, business, educational, civic, and faith communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Participating cities included Saratoga, San Jose, Santa Clara, Milpitas, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Fremont, Union City, Dublin, Campbell, and Gilroy, as well as Santa Clara County. More than 100 attendees participated, representing a broad range of organizations and faith communities, such as nine religious organizations and churches like the Muslim Association and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with business representatives such as TSMC and ASUS.



Pamela Wu, Chief of Staff in the Office of Supervisor Otto Lee at the County of Santa Clara, introduced each guest during the event program.

(Photo taken by Malcom Chen)

Distinguished participants included U.S. Congressman Sam Liccardo, representing California's 16th Congressional District, who provided a recorded video message. Matt Mahan, Mayor of the City of San Jose, served as a featured speaker, alongside numerous state, county, and local elected officials. A representative from the office of Senator Dave Cortese (California State Senate, District 15) was in attendance. Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens (District 26) and Jennifer Taylor-Mendoza, President of West Valley College, joined the gathering. David Wu, Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in San Francisco, attended in person and emphasized the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation among local leaders and communities.



Faith leaders from different religious communities stood in the front of the room and led a collective prayer.

(Photo taken by Isabelle Guh)

During the program, Mayor Matt Mahan shared the City of San Jose's strategies for addressing homelessness through prevention-focused initiatives, including short-term rental assistance, case management, and temporary housing programs. He highlighted measurable progress made by the city in reducing unsheltered homelessness and expanding indoor housing opportunities.

In addition, Dr. Gerry Liu, Chairman of the River of Life Foundation, presented the foundation's accomplishments in community service and charitable outreach over the past year, underscoring the important role of nonprofit and civic organizations in supporting local communities.

The gathering demonstrated strong interfaith understanding, cross-sector collaboration, and regional unity, and highlighted the importance of sustained cooperation among civic, educational, business, and faith communities in strengthening and serving the South Bay community.



A beautifully arranged breakfast table featured an inviting selection of fresh pastries, seasonal fruits, coffee, and tea.

(Photo taken by Isabelle Guh)



Isabelle Guh and Lily Mei, a member of OCAW-SVC and former Mayor of the City of Fremont

(Photo taken by Julie Chan)

U-Channel TV Chinese-Language News Clip covering the event (with automatic dubbing available to generate English audio translation) can be found at:

https://youtu.be/1fsq_gGpWgo?si=3yuKnxxjoUs--8sr

Remembering Iris Chang at Iris Chang Park

(from Helen Chiang, Historian)

I first met Iris Chang in May 2003, when I joined a group of OCAW-SVC friends to attend her book signing for *The Chinese in America* at the Oakland library. By then, she was already world-renowned for her groundbreaking 1997 book, *The Rape of Nanking*. The venue was filled to capacity with readers and admirers. Tall and slender, she stood out in the crowd with composed, understated elegance. Her gaze was intense, revealing a depth of intelligence and seriousness that left a lasting impression on me.

It wasn't until last year that I learned of the Iris Chang Park in San Jose. After exploring its website, I knew I had to pay it a visit. Dedicated on November 9, 2019 – the 15th anniversary of Iris Chang's passing – the park pays tribute to her enduring legacy as a writer and humanitarian. Nestled beside a residential complex in the heart of Silicon Valley, the 2.6-acre park offers a tranquil retreat from the surrounding bustle. It was designed by American sculptor Richard Deutsch in collaboration with landscape architects, PlaceWorks. The space unfolds like a Zen garden, where a gently curving path guides visitors past thoughtfully placed sculptures that reflect Deutsch's deep understanding of Chang's vision as a historian and humanitarian. The Coyote Creek Trail, largely paved with fine crushed stones, winds along nearby, offering open, scenic views of the creek. When we began planning our 2026 OCAW-SVC activities, I proposed a visit and hike there, and the idea was met with strong support.

On an overcast spring morning on Sunday, April 26, 2026, thirteen OCAW-SVC members and friends gathered at the entrance to Iris Chang Park to pay tribute to Chang, whose life was tragically cut short by her struggle with depression, ending a future that held even greater promise. We were especially fortunate that, through Cynthia Chang's connection, Ying-Ying Chang, Iris's mother, was able to join us. She graciously accompanied us through the park, sharing the story behind its creation and answering our questions about Iris.

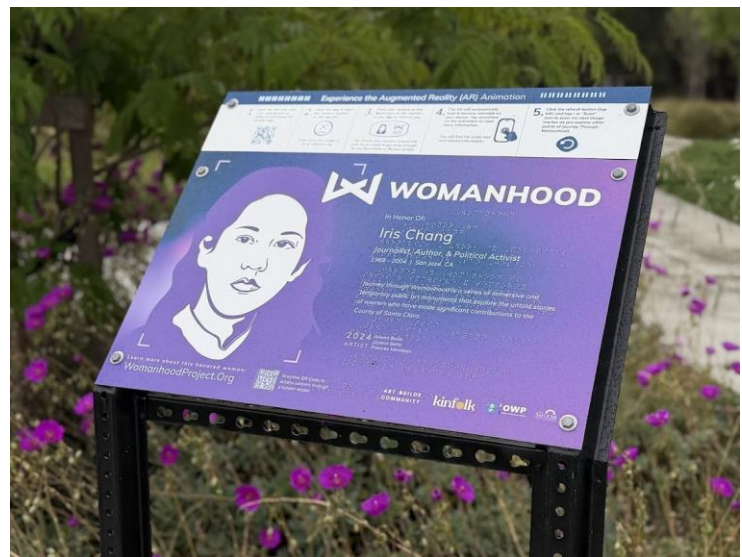


In front of the Entry Stone, engraved with a paragraph honoring Iris Chang's legacy, Cynthia Chang presented Ying-Ying with a bouquet of irises.



Ying-Ying told us that Iris and her husband had lived nearby. When the Essex Apartments on Epic Way were being built, the City of San Jose required new multifamily developments to include dedicated open space. The area might otherwise have been named Epic Way Park. Kansan Chu, a Taiwanese American politician and then a member of the San Jose City Council, was actively involved with the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia and the Rape of Nanking Redress Coalition. He approached Mr. and Mrs. Chang and suggested that they apply to name the park in honor of Iris, a San Jose resident. The San Jose City Council unanimously approved the proposal. With that approval, the project moved into the selection and design phases. It underscored the importance of having political support.

The sculptor Richard Deutsch, Ying-Ying said, had been overwhelmingly voted for as the park's designer from a group of candidates. He carefully read Iris's book, and the "Power of One" was his idea chosen as the central theme. A quote of Iris was engraved on the bottom half of the Entry Stone. "Please believe in THE POWER OF ONE. One person can make an enormous difference in the world... One discovery can cure a disease or spark new technology to benefit or annihilate the human race. You, as ONE individual, can change millions of lives. Think big. Do not limit your vision and do not ever compromise your dreams or ideals." Deutsch also traveled to Nanjing, where he was presented with a 300-year-old Chinese grinding mill. He stacked the two round millstones upright and named the sculpture *History Stone*, as it had born witness to history over the years. Ying-Ying strongly believes that the mill embodies an unceasing life force, having sustained generations of people in Nanjing.



As we walked toward the hardscaped theater area in the center of the park, *Touch Stone* came into view atop the higher ground behind the semi-circular retaining wall. It consists of two conical-shaped basalt stones that barely touch, symbolizing humanity's interconnectedness and our reliance on one another, as interpreted by Deutsch. Another quote by Iris Chang, "Words are the only way to preserve the essence of the soul," is displayed on the retaining wall. Chang reckoned that words are more than merely a tool of communication; they keep the human spirit eternal.



Toward the far end of the park stands a large, commanding stone marker – *Stele*. Its polished surface is engraved with Iris Chang’s words, “Power Of One.” Our group gathered in front of it for a photo commemorating the visit. Ying-Ying reminisced that she and Mr. Chang, who passed away last year, often came to the park and sat on the bench beside the *Stele*, quietly taking in the surroundings. Around the corner, they planted bearded irises. On the second Sunday morning of each month, volunteers come to help with weeding and maintain the park’s vegetation.



Ying-Ying continued, with passion, to answer our questions about what young Iris was like and how she first became interested in exploring the subject of the Nanjing Massacre. Ying-Ying remembered Iris as a child full of curiosity, and she had a keen sense of justice. Family mealtimes were often filled with lively discussions on a wide range of subjects, and Iris got to know her Chinese heritage and developed an early awareness of her parents' journey – from China to Taiwan, and then to the United States.

When Iris visited a Nanjing Massacre Photo exhibition in Cupertino, CA, presented by the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia, the images of the atrocities committed by the Japanese Army against Chinese civilians and disarmed soldiers during those dark weeks in December 1937 seared into her mind. She posed a question to Ying-Ying that she could not understand why such a significant history remained largely unknown in the Western world. Compelled to act and write about the subject, she embarked on a journey to China with the intent to interview the remaining survivors of the Nanjing Massacre and document their firsthand stories. Yet the path was not easy. In the beginning, she had no idea how to locate them before others stepped in to help. Burdened as well with the financial realities of a young writer, she nevertheless pressed forward. The result was *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, a book that would resonate with readers worldwide when it was published in 1997 and became a best seller.

Ted Leonsis, former Vice Chairman of AOL, as Ying-Ying told us, was vacationing in the Caribbean on his yacht when he read Iris Chang's obituary in *The New York Times* on November 12, 2004. Having previously known nothing about this history, he later read *The Rape of Nanking* and was profoundly moved. He wanted to bring the story to the screen, with a social purpose rather than a profit motive. He requested filmmaker Bill Guttentag to direct. The documentary, *Nanking*, was released in 2007. Ying-Ying later recounted the extraordinary journey behind the film in an article published in *Sing Tao Daily* on November 5, 2023. Looking back, the thread that connects these efforts feels almost mystical – as if history itself sought a voice and found one.

After Iris's death, Ying-Ying Chang channeled her grief into writing a memoir, *The Woman Who Could Not Forget*, about her daughter's life and death. Mother and daughter shared a deep and enduring bond. From our interaction, I see in Ying-Ying, a mother who cannot forget. She has kept Iris close to her heart. Over the years, she traveled widely and gave numerous talks, continuing to honor Iris's legacy and advocate for the causes she championed.

As we left the park and approached the Coyote Creek Trail, it became clear that the drizzle had no intention of letting up. We decided to cut our hike short and head out for an early lunch. We were glad that Ying-Ying joined us, giving us more time to get to know her. She mentioned that Iris was honored as 1998 Woman of the Year by the **Organization of Chinese American Women** in Washington, D.C. In the end, Ying-Ying, along with three other participants, signed up to join OCAW-SVC.



May we carry forward Iris’s spirit by continuing to seek understanding, preserve and learn from history, and honor human dignity.

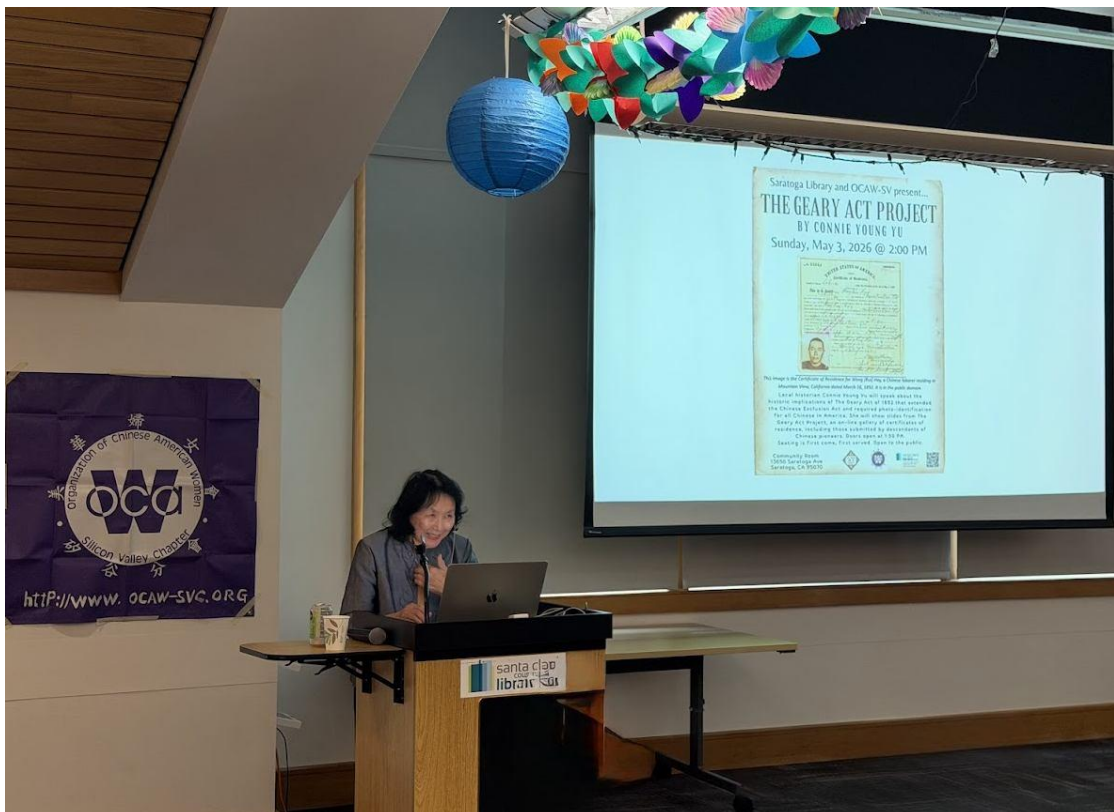
(Photos taken by Sophia Yang)

“The Geary Act Project” Presentation

(from Cynthia Chang, Public Relationship)

As part of the celebration of Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Month (of May) as well as to promote greater public understanding of the history of Chinese immigrants, a history-themed presentation titled “**The Geary Act Project**” was held on Sunday, May 3, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. at the Saratoga Library in Saratoga, CA. It aimed to revisit this often-overlooked chapter of history and encourage reflection on its significance today.

This talk was presented by renowned Chinese American historian **Connie Young Yu**, who has long specialized in the study of Chinese American history, particularly the discriminatory policies imposed on Chinese laborers in the early years. Through historical documents, photographs, and other archival materials, the exhibition examines the impact of the Geary Act on the Chinese community and its broader implications for civil rights and immigration policy in the United States. It also highlights the resilience of Chinese immigrants and their struggle for justice and dignity.





The **Geary Act of 1892**, which extended and strengthened the provisions of the **Chinese Exclusion Act**, required Chinese residents in the United States to carry residency certificates at all times. Those who failed to do so faced detention and deportation. The law became one of the most significant examples of race-based restrictions in American legal history.

The talk began with the Geary Act and featured reproductions of identification documents carried by Chinese immigrants at the time, along with related historical records. These materials not only revealed the discrimination and surveillance Chinese immigrants endured under the law, but also demonstrated how ordinary individuals responded to these challenges.



(Photo taken by Sinyee Guh)

The event was presented by Connie Young Yu and co-sponsored by the Organization of Chinese American Women, Silicon Valley Chapter (OCAW-SVC) and the Santa Clara County Library District. Below is a brief description of Ms. Yu.

Connie Young Yu is a prominent Chinese American historian, author, and activist best known for her work in recovering and preserving the history of the Chinese immigrants who built the Transcontinental Railroad. As a great-granddaughter of a Central Pacific Railroad foreman, she has dedicated decades to ensuring that these laborers receive proper historical recognition.

The presentation was well received by the audience of about thirty people, followed by a lively Q&A about Connie's efforts of ensuring the recognition of Chinese railroad workers who built the Transcontinental Railroad.



Cynthia Chang and Connie Young Yu

OCAW-SVC continues to participate in community affairs and support projects related to preserving Chinese history, culture, and the contribution of Chinese immigrants to our country. Understanding history helps people better comprehend contemporary social issues and promotes greater mutual understanding across races and generations.

The video of the event can be found at the links below.

The introduction:

<https://youtu.be/HYjaOZA6IP8?si=QRBRbro4nCAzmTQh>

The presentation:

https://youtu.be/Hn7HKi9bZQ?si=sDr_UR36E6QPHgig



(Photos taken by Sophia Yang unless noted otherwise)

News from the Hawaii Chapter

(from Sharlene Chun, President)

Second General Membership Meeting

On Sunday, May 3, 2026, the Hawaii Chapter held its second General Membership Meeting of the year. It was held at Assaggio in Honolulu.

Our speaker was Brandon Ho. Attendees learned about the tradition of the Chinese Lion Dance through his presentation. The story began when the 'Nian' came down from the mountains and pillaged the villages below. To scare it away, villagers beat drums and clanged cymbals loudly. Later it was fireworks leaving the burnt red paper covering the ground, looking like blood.

The Chinese Lion symbolized strength to bring good luck and Blessings to the villagers. Thus the Lion appears at special happy occasions and will bring Blessings to all who attend. The Lion enters the event and first must Bless the honorees. The Lions will do three Bows – Heaven, Man, and Earth. The Lions are fed green leaves hanging from a bamboo pole – the bamboo symbolizing strength, and the green leaves representing prosperity which the Lion shakes off the pole, spreading the leaves all over the guests. A li-see is attached for good luck. The Lions will then go around the room, receiving li-see gifts and blessing each person with good luck.



This tradition of the Lion Dance continues today, starting an event to bring blessings and good luck to all who attend. The Chinese Lion is an amalgam of animals in Chinese folklore. The eyes symbolize birds. The snout, a dragon. The mouth, a tiger. The ears, a rabbit. The back of the head is a turtle symbolizing Longevity. The body stripes are of a tiger. The feet which are earthbound are pig's feet. Next time you see a Chinese Lion, examine its body.

Martial Arts are taught to performers to be able to move nimbly through events such as the pole-jumping performance. There are two people under the Lion's costume who maneuver the Lion's head and tail. Traditionally this Lion Dance was performed only by males. Women were not allowed, being considered dirty. It was opened up to females when Brandon started his own Asian Dance Team to allow his sister who followed him everywhere to join.

In Hawaii there are 19 Lion Dance organizations. Today all over the world this tradition continues to Bring Good Luck and Prosperity. I gave each guest a Chinese Lion Dance pin to commemorate our Lion Dance speaker.



Brandon Ho and Sharlene Chun



From and About Our Members

From Concert Hall to Bay to Breakers

(from Jen Tsao, Immediate Past President)

The first half of 2026 has been both busy and exciting for me.

In February, during COSMO Silicon Valley's annual choir concert, a last-minute program change led me to participate in two dance performances instead of the usual one. One was *Molihua (Jasmine Flower)*, a traditional Chinese folk song, and the other was the popular *APT*. My two sisters and my husband joined me on stage for the latter performance. I felt truly honored and delighted to share the stage with my family.



Lan-Yu Hsieh, Jen Tsao, and Yu Chen with COSMO Silicon Valley (chorus)



Tiffany Hsiao, Jean Shih (Jen's older sister), Jen Tsao, Jodie Nie (Jen's younger sister), and Alex Tsao (Jen's husband)

In May, I took part in the Bay to Breakers race in San Francisco. Founded in 1912, this iconic event runs from the San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean and is known for its colorful costumes, festive atmosphere, and strong community spirit. The 2026 race marked the 114th running of this beloved city tradition.

I joined my sister-in-law and my niece's family, and together we dressed up as characters from *Zootopia*.



(above) Participants gather at the start line





Jen and sister-in-law Yuh Ni



Drum troupe by the roadside



Bay to Breakers participants pass through Golden Gate Park.



Zootopia family

The creativity and energy of the participants made the event feel more like a citywide celebration than a race. Rather than running, I walked the entire 12K (7.5-mile) course, taking in the sights and festivities along the way, and completed it in two-and-a-half hours. It was a wonderful experience to share with my family.

Chinese American School Desegregation article

(from Carolyn Wong, OCAW Virginia lifetime member)

Carolyn wanted to share an article she read that she thought might be of interest to OCAW members. It is titled, *The 8-Year-Old Chinese American Girl Who Helped Desegregate Schools – in 1885*.

Decades before the landmark United States Supreme Court decision, *Brown v Board of Education*, about African American school desegregation, Mamie Tape and her parents did the same for Chinese American students in San Francisco.

The following is the link:

<https://www.history.com/articles/chinese-american-segregation-san-francisco-mamie-tape-case>

A Different Kind of Travel

by Pu-Chin Waide

(Editor's Note: Pu-Chin is a Virginia Chapter lifetime member.)

My dear OCAW Sisters,

This is not a travelogue – just a wee personal experience of an old traveler in a difficult but wonderful country, to share with you.

An introduction:

I know that most of you have been Chinese Americans for a very long time, perhaps even generations, so it may surprise you to learn that there are some of us ‘newbies’ who emigrated from India in my generation. I am 100% Chinese but having lived in India between the ages of 6 and 18, I consider India to be my adopted Fatherland, thus I must return to it every few years. So I went there recently just in time to miss the first bombing of Abu Dhabi by one day, February 23, 2026! My English friend and I were picked up from Indira Gandhi Airport in New Delhi by the daughter of an old friend. Within a few minutes out of the clean modern airport, I was thrown back into the India melee. Though we were on a dual carriageway, for several miles, cars were parked along the outer wall hugging the airport grounds. I asked the driver, “Are the cars allowed to be parked there?”

“No. These are just taxis waiting to pick up passengers. They want to be first in line when the passengers exit the airport,” he answered.

“But there are large NO PARKING signs all along the wall.”

The driver shrugged. “It’s too much trouble for the police to do anything.”

I was 'home.' This is truly the land of the free and the brave. Yes, one must be brave to drive on these roads because one must be absolutely vigilant and pay attention every minute when one's hands are on the steering wheel. There are traffic lines on the new major highways, and most of the time the drivers are in their respective lanes. BUT, there are no signs on them saying NO PEDESTRIANS, and here you are, going at 100 kph (kilometers per hour), and all of a sudden you see a guy climbing over the barriers and running across the road in front of you. Well, why not – the fruit stall is just across there... Our driver simply moved our car slightly to allow the man to reach his fruit stall. Even though these new 'superhighways' are strictly limited to motorized vehicles, one still sees buffalo-carts, human bicycles, and three-wheelers trundling along blithely.

"Ah, so smooth and easier for our buffaloes," when confronted. "We are sticking to the edge so we will not get in the way of those fast cars. We promise!"

My English friend, who has never been to India, was on the edge of the passenger seat, gripping his knees and turning alarmingly pale. He did not know whether to shut his eyes and let come a certain crash, or keep his eyes wide open and be prepared to dive under the dash. Meanwhile my friend and I kept on talking without listening to each other to catch up on news of the last fifteen years.

As we neared the city, the roads took on a crowded skating rink-like atmosphere, where instead of skaters, masses of cars weaved in and out, left and right, back and forth in a never-ending kind of dance, each car within terrifying inches of each other. Even the side mirrors of many of the vehicles were turned inward to avoid being hit by careless drivers. My English friend was amazed at the colorfully painted trucks, and the advice, such as "Please HONK," or "Educate your daughters!" "BE PATIENT, GOD IS WATCHING." "RAM, RAM, HERE I RAM!" "Do not be Cheating each other" and "goodbye, tata!" etc.

Fortunately for us, my Indian friend lived outside the city center in a rather privileged 'urban farm enclave,' where mansions are hidden behind high walls, manned by guards at the gates. Once inside, all the confusion, dirt, noise, and poverty were left outside. Her two acres were manicured, and her long driveway swept of any debris from falling leaves and twigs by two 'malis' (gardeners). A small round table with a tea service was waiting for us in the garden. After a quick wash, we were seated at the table and were served aromatic tea and small Indian vegetarian delicacies. My friend is a Brahmin and therefore pure vegetarian, even sans eggs. All the days we stayed with her, everything we ate had no meat of any kind, but the flavors were exquisite; never for a moment did I miss meat.

Next morning, I awoke refreshed and ready to face the cacophony of India outside the gates. The maid brought me 'bed-tea' on an ivory inlaid teak tray – a small glass teapot with steaming Darjeeling tea, which she poured into a delicate teacup with a dash of milk. Alongside were two biscuits (cookies) and a glass of freshly made tropical fruit juice doctored with the most delicious herbs and spices – "good to start the day with," said the cook. I did not recognize the names of the spices he used. Then I saw a large shadow outside on my verandah. Curious, I drew the curtain. There, at the edge of my verandah, was a large brown cow, her udders full. She stared at me, nodded, then continued to munch at the grass around the verandah.

At breakfast, I said to my friend, "There was a large cow outside my verandah this morning."

"Ah yes, I forgot to tell you; I have three cows and a calf, and three dogs. They all live with me." And your four servants and a driver, I thought to myself.

"So, you have your own milk!" I asked.

"And our own yogurt and cream, fresh every day." I was jealous.

A description of a few of the ancient monuments of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur, you can easily find on Wikipedia with infinitely better descriptions and photos I can ever muster. We did the rounds of visiting the Taj Mahal, City Palace of Jaipur, The Qutub Minar, Humanyan's Tomb, and several ancient sites in and around Delhi. I can write part II of my trip to India for a later newsletter, if anyone is interested. This time, my main *raison d'être* was to visit His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and my pottery guru and his entourage in the artists' village in the Western Himalayas.

So, skip forward a fortnight. My English friend and I are on a flight in a small plane heading for the Himalayas, not literally, to a small village called Andretta. European name? Long ago, an Irish maiden's lover died, and left her all his property. When she died shortly thereafter, she willed the entire property of many acres, to artists who depended on their arts to live. Painters, potters, writers, performing artists, and builders of houses made of straw-bails and clay, were allowed to own land and live there. My own pottery guru owned two such properties, one for himself and one for his son who is also a potter. Before 'Daddyji', which is what we all called him, passed away at the grand old age of 99 years and 8 months, he had willed his property to Mini, his son, with the stipulation that a museum for local village potters be built. His wish has come true, and the museum was to be dedicated in May of 2026.

In addition, His Holiness lived in Dharamsala which is only a couple of hours away on another Himalaya spur. Mr. Englishman and I were settled in, he in Mini's house, and I in my guru's house, across the uneven dirt road. All gathered together, and there was much hugging and slapping of backs, and everyone talking at the same time – in India everyone talks, no one listens. This went on for about an hour. Suddenly someone realized here were two visitors, who in spite of the ongoing war, were actually among them. So the topic turned to the situation in the Middle East. Again, everyone had opinions which were aired loudly. Finally, the cook and his helper announced, "Dinner. Clear the table." Everyone immediately set to work, and we were seated, fork in hand, ready for the meal. Mini's wife, though having lived in India for more than 60 years, was still every bit an 'English-memsahib'; she still spoke Hindi with an English accent and produced an amazing double-layered cream sponge cake! My friend, Mr. Englishman was delighted and immediately took it upon himself to cut the cake and serve it.

Andretta is about 4000' surrounded by the Dauladhar Range of about 13,000' to 15,000' – short by Himalayan standards. This range was snow-covered most of the year. I awoke to cold refreshing air and stunning blue sky. We were surrounded by tall bamboos which shushed and whistled when kissed by the mountain breezes. Daddyji had left a lovely garden full of vibrant purple bougainvillea, huge Easter lilies, and impossibly crimson roses, and a myriad of ferns and other plants I could not identify. A rushing streamlet from a mountain spring tingled past the house. I could imagine how cold all this beauty can be during the Winter months, without central heating and running hot water.

I made my way to Mini's main house and found everyone had already gathered and were ready for breakfast – easy-over fried eggs with the largest and darkest yellow yolks I hadn't seen for a long time, Indian flat bread, Ghee (Indian clarified butter), homemade marmalade, local mixed fruit jam, and rich spicy aromatic Indian tea! Heaven. Again, everyone talked at the same time and were very animated and ready for adventure. We were going to visit His Holiness. His younger sister, an old schoolmate and friend of mine, had arranged an audience with His Holiness for us.

Dharamsala is about two hours from Andretta, on another spur of the mountain. It is the largest town in that region of Himachal Pradesh, and the seat of the Dalai Lama's monastery and residential complex, donated by the Indian government when His Holiness escaped from Tibet and the Chinese Government in 1959. This has been his home since then and is still. The drive to Dharamsala was quite uneventful, but the town was bustling and vibrant. The streets were crowded with pedestrians, small cars, and scooters. Shoppers and tourists vied for every inch of the narrow streets. It seemed people had money to spend now, and were doing

so with gusto. Alas, we had a destination, so shopping, no matter how tempting – ah, those silver ornaments, the miniature prayer wheels, the good luck dorji (thunder bolt) pendants; and oh, those beautiful little brocade bags and purses. Vendors approached the traffic-jammed cars to tempt the riders with the most desirable trinkets and snacks.

“Later,” we promised, “we have to go and see HH first.” It was hard for our driver to negotiate, but again, there were no ‘denting and bending’ hits and misses. The sounds and crush of humanity were almost unbearable for us foreigners, but our driver pressed on without losing his cool or patience.

Finally, after one turn, all became quiet. We were approaching the Monastery Complex. Our driver slowed down and came to a stop at a large gate, and someone in Tibetan national dress approached us. My schoolmate was recognized and the gate opened, and we were directed to a certain parking area. After all the cacophony of the town below, it seemed oddly strange that everyone seemed to be whispering all the time. At another gate, we were stopped and a young Monk pushed a wheelchair towards me. “This is for you,” said His Holiness’s sister. “They prepared it for you.”

“Thank you. How thoughtful and kind of them,” I said.

“Many people who come here are handicapped and old, so we are prepared, because sometimes the lines are very long, and it can be very tiring for them to stand and shuffle for so long.”

As we entered the main compound, we saw the line. At the same time, there was a strangely satisfying feeling of peace and serenity. There were several buildings which I imagine must have been classrooms and retreat rooms. The entire compound was well swept and had an open, welcoming feeling. My school friend stayed behind, as I was pushed to the front of the line, which embarrassed me, because there was no telling how long the others had been waiting.

Within minutes, I was approaching His Holiness. He welcomed me with smiling eyes, to which I could not but respond. As I neared him, He opened His arms, and then patted me on the head with a grin. I was in the wheelchair and he on a low dais. He bent over and gave me a hug; I responded with my own. Then he patted my head again, almost laughed and murmured something. The joy I felt was inexpressible. I felt as if I was a child and had just been given a wonderful gift. I did not know what it was, but I knew it was something very precious. I was given an envelope, and a monk handed me a thick red silken thread which had been blessed by His Holiness. I lowered my head again, and then I was wheeled away, back down to the gate where His sister was waiting for me. There was no need for words.

We returned to Andretta to our waiting friends. No one said or asked me anything. The table was laden with locally grown veggies, freshly made paneer (cheese), and a fresh goat curry still simmering in one of Mini’s stewpots. As we sat down, hot nan from the tandoor were brought out, almost too hot to hold. And, especially for my English friend, a shepherd’s pie made with meat from a local shepherd’s lamb.

As I said, this was an unusual experience, one which I cannot repeat, but it is one I will never forget.

Asian Art Symposium and Visit to the Princeton Art Museum

by Kitty Hsu Dana

(Editor's Note: Kitty is Maryland Chapter Vice President.)

In early April several OCAW members made a road trip to attend *Asian Art at Princeton, Celebrating Collecting and Scholarship*, a special celebration of the Tang Center for East Asian Art and the Princeton University Art Museum. The three-day international symposium, April 9-11, 2026, was the impetus for a visit to Princeton during a lovely time in the spring and offered the opportunity to visit the university's newly renovated Art Museum as well.

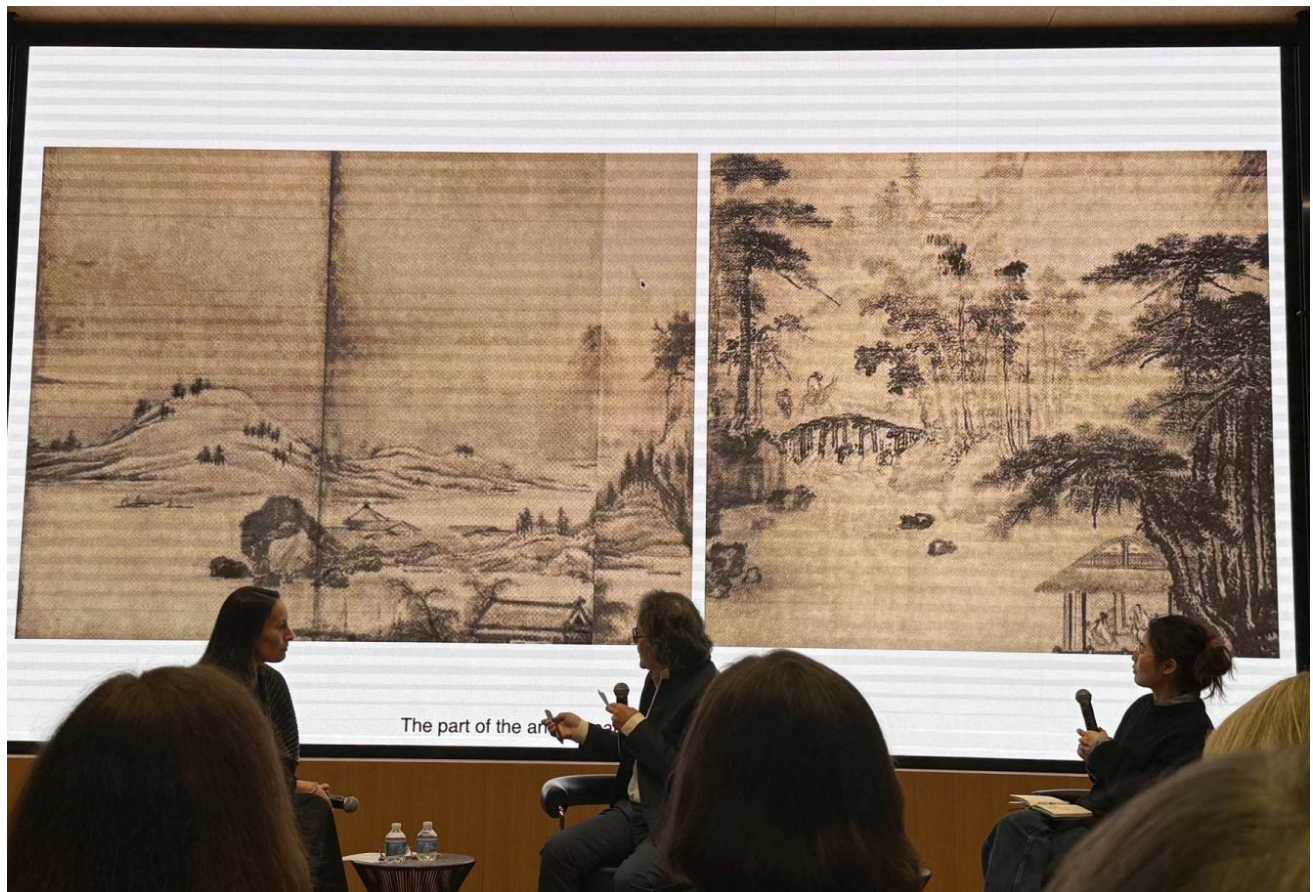
Participating OCAW members were National President Maria Yang and her husband Bill; Maryland Chapter Vice President Kitty Hsu Dana; Camilla Ng, former OCAW Maryland President and docent at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Asian Art; and Camilla's fellow docent Christina Lee. Kitty's close friend and fellow Princeton Alumnus Nancy Lin extended warm hospitality and accompanied us during much of our time on site.

The special 25th Anniversary program opened with a conversation with the world-renowned Chinese artist Xu Bing and Zoe Kwok, Senior Curator of Asian Art at the Princeton Art Museum.



Artist Xu Bing (*center*) in conversation with Zoe Kwok (*left*), Senior Curator of Asian Art at the Princeton Art Museum; interpreter for Xu Bing (*right*)

Xu spoke of his childhood growing up in China, relocation to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution, and subsequent pursuit of his art degree and his great passion for teaching at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. Widely recognized as a leading conceptual artist, Xu has exhibited extensively in the United States and Europe and has won many awards. OCAW members had brief chats with Xu and found him to be open, kind, and unassuming.



The Symposium brought together experts in Asian Art from major institutions around the world. They spoke of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongol, and South Asian art in a rich program that touched on historical, societal, cultural, and environmental contexts. Topics covered included Song Dynasty place paintings, Yuan art from the Mongol Empire, Chinese calligraphy studies at Princeton, cave relief sculptures in medieval China, the impact of Korean craftsmen on Japanese ceramics, 19th century Japanese paintings, and South Asian textiles and medieval chancery documents. We also heard about the contemporary art scene in Hong Kong and broader conditions that affect artistic expression there, and the challenges and opportunities of making space for and with contemporary Asian Art in the field today.

It is impossible to cover this rich program in a brief article. If you desire to learn more, you can obtain a taste of Symposium presentations via the **Abstracts** here: <https://asianart.tang.princeton.edu/abstracts> and click to **Speaker Bios** from this page: <https://asianart.tang.princeton.edu/speakers>

The trip was a welcome opportunity for OCAW members to hear about Asian Art, to get to know each other more, and to enjoy learning together. In addition to the Symposium, we found time to visit the newly-renovated Princeton University Art Museum and its new Asian art galleries, strolled the town of Princeton, and shared many meals over the course of three days.



Kitty Hsu Dana, Nancy Lin, Xu Bing, and Maria Yang

(Photos taken by Kitty Hsu Dana)

**Library of Congress Asian American Association Celebrates
America's 250th Anniversary**

by Maria Yang

(Editor's Note: Maria is OCAW National President.)

I had the pleasure of attending the celebration of America's 250th Anniversary and AAPI Heritage Month on Wednesday, May 27, 2026. The event was organized by the Asian American Association and held at the Library of Congress.

The gathering took place in the Whittall Pavilion, a bright and welcoming space inside the Thomas Jefferson Building. With its comfortable, living room-like atmosphere, the pavilion provides an ideal setting for cultural programs, lectures, author talks, and community events. Located next to the historic Coolidge Auditorium, it is frequently used for special programs associated with the Library's public outreach and cultural initiatives.

The one-hour program featured a beautiful piano solo, an inspiring keynote address by Khadro Crystal Chu Rinpoche, and a wonderful performance by the National Taiwan University Alumni Chorus of the District of Columbia.



Khadro Crystal Chu Rinpoche

Khadro Crystal Chu Rinpoche, a longtime friend of OCAW, was invited by the Library of Congress for the third time to deliver a speech. Her presentation, titled “Embracing the 250th Anniversary of the United States: The Spiritual Responsibility of the Individual,” was both thoughtful and inspiring. She encouraged us to appreciate the opportunities and freedoms this country provides and reminded us of our responsibility to contribute positively to our communities, our nation, and the world. She also shared a simple practice for uplifting our minds, spirits, and energy, helping us cultivate a more positive outlook and greater inner strength.

The Taiwan University Alumni Chorus performed two songs with marvelous voices for the audience. Following the program, we gathered for a group photo in the magnificent Great Hall. To conclude the celebration, the Alumni Chorus delighted visitors with a flash mob performance of *America, the Beautiful*. Their uplifting singing attracted many visitors, who stopped to listen and enjoy the special moment together.



The National Taiwan University Alumni Chorus



(center) Khadro Crystal Chu Rinpoche and Maria Yang

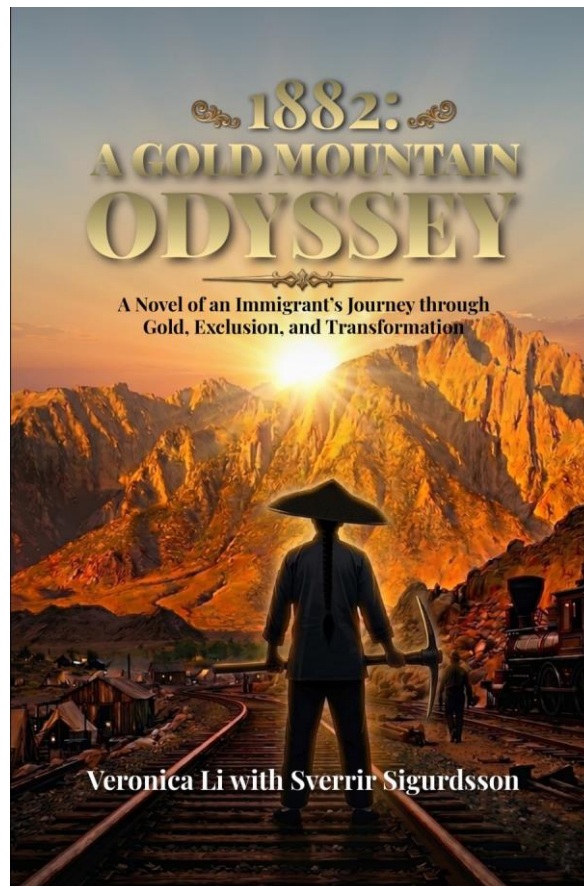
1882: A Gold Mountain Odyssey

by Veronica Li

(Editor's Note: Veronica is a former OCAW Virginia Chapter Acting President and author.)

“Write what you know best” is the motto that has guided my writings. Which is why my books have been mostly about family, such as *Journey Across the Four Seas* about my mother’s life, and *Confucius Says*, a novel about caring for elderly parents. My latest book, however, is on a subject I knew nothing about. The title is *1882: A Gold Mountain Odyssey*. It’s a work of historical fiction about a Chinese immigrant’s journey in America in the 1800s. From gold mining to railroad construction to exclusion, he passed through many stages of metamorphosis and was ultimately transformed.

I, too, was transformed. The research into Chinese American history, what my people endured and overcame, filled me with pride and understanding of who I am.



The idea for writing this novel originated during the COVID-19 pandemic. When terms such as “Chinese virus” and “kung flu” took off, so did attacks on Asians in America. “Go back to China where you came from!” was the war cry. Unfortunately, Thai, Vietnamese, Filipino, and other Asians were all lumped into the same category.

I immigrated to this country in the 1960s as a teenager. The U.S. is my home and has been for sixty years. I've heard of the label "perpetual foreigner" used on Asian Americans, but living in my cocoon of friends, both American- and foreign-born, I never thought it applied to me. COVID changed my mind. The reports of attacks I read and heard about, along with the subtle hostility directed at me in public places, made me ponder. Is Chinese immigration so recent that we're still not considered American? Perhaps we haven't contributed enough to American society? When exactly did the Chinese immigrate to America?

I started digging into Chinese American history. The plethora of history books on the subject surprised me. They were written mostly in the past forty years. Why hadn't I heard about them? Many of my Chinese friends hadn't either. Then I realized that I usually read for entertainment, as did most people. The best-selling genres were romance, thriller, fantasy, and historical fiction. Thus, my next writing project beckoned: a historical novel to both entertain and educate.

A review by Sue Lee, longtime Executive Director of the Chinese Historical Society of America, says, "This book is just right for the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding. It celebrates the contribution of immigrants to the development of the United States. The author takes you on a journey of one immigrant, a Chinese railroad worker. He overcomes the obstacles placed in his path, adapts, and changes. From a Chinese in America, he becomes a Chinese American."

I'm also most grateful to Claire Chao, an OCAW Hawaii Chapter member and author of the remarkable *Remembering Shanghai*, winner of twenty-some awards. She reviewed my manuscript and wrote a beautiful blurb for my book cover: "1882 vividly brings to life the journey of a Chinese immigrant drawn by the romantic promise of the California gold rush, only to endure backbreaking railroad labor and a struggle to belong in an unwelcoming land. Worse still, he must face the discrimination of the Chinese Exclusion Act – the unjust and ironic demonization of those who have suffered the harshest conditions to help unite the nation by rail. This inspiring story of courage and resilience reveals how arduous the road to freedom is, and how elusive true belonging – privileges that should never be taken for granted."

My coauthor and husband, Sverrir Sigurdsson, tapped into his expertise in architecture to help me write about railroad construction and other scenes requiring technical know-how. Without him, I couldn't have blasted railroad tunnels through the granite mountains of the Sierra Nevada.

Note from Barbara York, OCAW Virginia Chapter President: I am in the throes of reading Veronica's book, *1882: A Gold Mountain Odyssey*. "Throes" is a good word because the story is an emotional workout. I know you will enjoy it. And for the Virginia and Maryland Chapter members, we will be hosting an author talk with Veronica in October. Please look for the notice. Meanwhile, big time congratulations to Veronica on this book; and all good luck and safe travels to her on her upcoming book tour in Las Vegas and Silicon Valley!

(Editor's Note: Please feel free to contact Veronica for more information, including about book availability, at: veronicali@aol.com)