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**IMAGE**   
Spring/Summer 2018 **ADVOCATE**



## About OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates

OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates is a national membership-driven organization of community advocates dedicated to advancing the social, political, and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in the United States.

- To fulfill its mission, OCA has adapted the following goals to:
- Advocate for social justice, equal opportunity and fair treatment;
  - Promote civic participation, education, and leadership;
  - Advance coalitions and community building; and
  - Foster cultural heritage

Founded as Organization of Chinese Americans in 1973, OCA has since grown to a robust national advocacy organization to advance the civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans and aspiring Americans. The organization presently has over 100 chapters, affiliates, and partners, impacting more than 35,000 individuals all across the country through local and national programming. While the organization's headquarters remain in Washington, DC, allowing OCA to directly engage in critical public policy issues on a macro level, it continues to largely remain as a grassroots constituency of lay advocates from all walks of life and diverse ethnic identities addressing uniquely local level issues impacting over 19 million Asian Pacific Americans across the country.

OCA takes no collective position on the politics of any foreign country, but instead focuses on the welfare and civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans.

# IMAGE

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Greetings Advocates!

At OCA, we are continuously striving to uplift and empower the next generation of AAPI leaders. But what does it mean to truly “build a pipeline of leaders”? What does this pipeline even look like?

The AAPI pipeline of leaders is made of students, teachers, politicians, activists, community members, immigrants and children of immigrants. The pipeline is built by people like you, our AdvOCates; organizations like OCA only exist to facilitate this process.

This is an important year: we are in the process of getting out the vote for the midterm elections and beginning campaigns to Get Out the Count for the 2020 Census. Now, more than ever, it is crucial for AAPIs to rise to the occasion and vote, educate, and advocate for other AAPIs running, as well as the complete count of AAPI populations in the Census. We must be heard.

As OCA continues to work on immigration legislation, Census outreach, and other call-to-actions, we hope you will also continue to join OCA at the local and national levels through our programs, events, and phone banking/social media movements. We need you more than ever.

In solidarity,

Sharon M. Wong  
OCA National President

UPLIFT



Happy Summer Advocates!

First, have you registered to vote? This year’s pivotal election is more important than ever and we need AAPIs to be counted! Do it now.

In this issue of IMAGE, we take a moment to get to know various local AAPI politicians across the country. With the groundbreaking record of eighteen Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Congress members in 2017, it is exciting to see more and more AAPIs running for and getting elected into office. The work that our partner organizations, OCA, and our community members have put in to build a pipeline of AAPI leaders is becoming more visible at local and national levels.

I’d like to recognize the work that is shouldered by AAPI students themselves, most notably through regional student conferences that are completely student-run. They are truly making an impact through their devotion of volunteering to help educate and provide a space for their peers.

As you read through this IMAGE issue of interviews and book/AAPI author reviews, we hope you are inspired to engage more in the community in order to help uplift others’ voices but also be uplifted in your own passions and endeavors.

Many Cheers,

Kendall T. Kosai  
Deputy Director

# FAASU/UVSASE

Photos Courtesy of Adrian Gilliam/UVSASE



Adrian Gilliam

**Q: Who are you and tell me a little bit about yourself!**

My name is Adrian Gilliam, I'm a Taiwanese American born & raised in Orlando, Florida. Currently, I'm the Executive Director for the Florida Asian American Student Union (FAASU), Expansion Director for Sparks Magazine, a Programming Associate for Element Conference by the Union of Vietnamese Student Associations of the Southeast (UVSASE), and a full-time software developer for a healthcare solutions company. Being born & raised in Florida as a mixed race Asian American, I was frequently unsure of what my identity was growing up. Looking back, I think this is what prompted me to become so involved in learning more about APIA advocacy and identity in college, and continue that experience into my post-grad working life. It's a personal mission of mine to make sure that everyone has an environment where they can be comfortable in and learn more about their personal identity.

**Q: Tell me a little bit about the conference(s) that you help organize.**

I'm currently working on three different conferences. The primary conference I've been focusing on is the *FAASU Summer Leaders' Summit*, which focuses on bringing students who are engaged with APIA Advocacy throughout the state of Florida together for a day of discussions, engagement, and collaboration. At the summit, students from FAASU's eight affiliates get to learn more about how different APIA support systems at other schools' work, learn more about APIA history in Florida and America, and network with other students from across the state.

Another great conference that I've been working on for the last few months is *Element*. It's the first time UVSASE has put on a conference, and I'm really excited for it. It's a three-day event focused on Vietnamese American and Asian American professional development. There are going to be several different workshops and discussions varying from career panels to creative dance.

The last conference I'm working on is the *Sparks Magazine Fall Summit*, which is a daylong conference focused on teaching students about ethnic media, journalism, advocacy, and anything in between. It's the 2nd Annual Conference Sparks Magazine will be holding, and in a time where journalism and media is under attack, I find it especially important that we provide students the opportunity and resources to succeed in the field.



UVSASE Committee

**Q: What do you do for the conference and how much time do you spend on the work?**

I would say in terms of dedicated time solely for the conferences, I spend about 10 hours a week (5 on FAASU, 3 on Sparks, 2 on UVSASE), but including the general work I do for FAASU & Sparks the number comes closer to about 15-20 on average. There's a lot of housekeeping to do to make sure the organization can even stay alive to host the conference. This type of work ranges from doing recruitment for open positions, scheduling social media posts, or responding to message on Slack. I also want to emphasize that 15-20 is an average, there have definitely been weeks where I've spent less than 5 and others where I've spent over 40. Even during in the weeks leading right up to a conference I'll get a super wide variance in terms of my workload, waiting on other people or projects to finish up.

**Q: Why do you volunteer for this job?**

I know that a lot of people take on large roles in volunteer organizations because it helps their day job, but these sorts of roles have very little impact into my main career of software development. My main motivation for volunteering and sticking with these involvements really relate to my personal mission of providing an environment where people are free to express and learn about their identity. This is especially crucial for APIAs in the South, where the dynamic of what it means to have that identity is changing. When I was in college, I very rarely heard about the great opportunities that organizations can provide, such as OCA's APIA-U, or any sort of regional conferences/organizations. Now when I try to recruit students for FAASU or Sparks, they're weighing what I'm offering against half a dozen other APIA interest organizations in the region, which I think is amazing! I'm really motivated by seeing the effects that organizing these sorts of events can have on students' lives, whether it's helping students learn more about APIA history in America or maybe helping people network with their next best friend.



UVSASE Workshop

UVSASE Group Picture



**Q: What makes the students in your region unique?**

Each area of America has its own distinct subculture, which I find especially true when one considers the racial aspect. Having worked with other APIA advocates from across the country, I think that the Southern region of the United States has a very unique APIA culture, which is drastically different than the West Coast or the Northeast. Part of this, I believe, is due to demographics. When you compare the San Francisco Metro Area at 23.2%, or even the DC Metro area, at 9.3% to the Atlanta Metro Area's 4.8% Asian American population you can see the drastic difference. I think the relatively small population causes a lot of APIA students to not consider their identities as independently valid, but instead see themselves in the context of primarily belonging to a different racial community, whether its Black, White, or Hispanic.

Nonetheless, I really do see this changing, and a lot of the change is recent. FAASU, UVSASE, and Sparks Magazine as we know them today were all formed within the past decade or so, and that itself speaks volumes. You can see through APIA community organizing today, that the next generation of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in the South are really forming their own identity. Even in popular culture, shows like Fresh Off the Boat are great because not only do they show off Asian Americans, but they show them off in



FAASU Group Picture

an area of the country you wouldn't normally think about us.

**Q: How is your conference unique from other conferences in your region/AAPI community?**

In terms of the conferences organized by UVSASE and FAASU, I think they're unique in that they contain regional cultural competency. They're by and for APIAs who are from that region, and understand the local issues, news, and events. When you have a large region or a national conference, it's pretty much impossible to perfectly tailor your workshops or speakers to the nuances of every individual community that your conference is comprised of. By having region focused conferences, you can really focus on the students and affiliates who give your conference life and ask them what matters to them.

*Sparks Magazine* has a unique conference to me, because it tailors very much so to students who are just entering ethnic media or more broadly into the industry as a minority. In an industry already constantly under attack, it can be even more difficult being a minority. Just in some brief conversations I've had with reporters, they find some of the attacks ridiculous and funny until they share it with their parents and their parents start crying. It's an unfortunate reality, but I think it's important to prepare students for it and to give the other helpful skills along the way.

# OCA Greater Seattle



**Q: Who are you and tell me a little bit about yourself!**

My name is Dylan Tran and I am an undergraduate at the University of Washington studying Education and American Ethnic Studies. I am also one of OCA-GS interns. I'm originally was born and raised on the Hilltop and Eastside of Tacoma, WA. I am heavily involved in the Asian Pacific American student organizations on campus in addition to working three jobs on campus.

**Affiliated Student Organizations:** API Cares About Mental Health, FASA sa UW, Khmer Student Association, Micronesian Islands Club, etc.

**Jobs:** UW Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity Multicultural Outreach and Recruitment - Student Ambassador; UW Student Legal Services - Legal Assistant; UW Office of Admissions - Campus Tour Guide, and formerly as an Educational Opportunity Program - Teaching Assistant

**Q: Tell me a little bit about the conference(s) that you help organize.**

One of the conferences that I'm helping coordinate is the first ever, "A4A" conference with the theme "KNOW ME". A4A is an acronym for Asian Americans 4 Arts Activism. A4A is a student led, grassroots organization with members across the Greater Seattle Area. KNOW ME is a three day event sponsored by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods with a mission to recognize and celebrate Asian American identity and culture through cinema, photography, spoken word, panel Q+As, and of course food. This year, A4A highlights the lack of visibility faced by Asian American art and artists through three workshops: Day 1 (5/26/2018) SEE ME: Biographies and Film; Day 2 (5/27/2018) FIND ME: Family and History; Day 3 (5/31/2018) HEAR ME: Performance Arts through generations.

**Q: What do you do for these conferences and how much time do you spend on the work?**

For A4A, I worked with a dedicated officer board team with the guidance of our fiscal sponsor, OCA-GS to apply for a \$5000 grant from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. We worked to budget the airfare, honorariums, facility rentals, equipment rentals, etc. in addition to recruiting a lot of our own peers as photographers, graphic design artists, and logistical assistants. I connected with on campus RSOs, off campus organizations, and intergenerational Asian Pacific American community leaders to program and advertise this conference in recognizing Asian Pacific American Heritage month. We also scouted out venues, got in contact with local artists and filmmakers, and handled invoices for the first time ever, all under the supervision of OCA-GS of course.



# VIA-1

Photos Courtesy of Pele Le, UVSA Midwest

**Q: Who are you and tell me a little bit about yourself!**

Hello, my name is Isabelle Ngo! I am a West Coast native and living in the Midwest as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying Communications, Political Science, and International Policy. I am currently serving as the Union of Vietnamese Student Association of the Midwest's (UVSA-Midwest) External Vice-President and I served as the Sponsorship Director for this year's Vietnamese Interacting as One (VIA-1) Conference.



Isabelle Ngo

**Q: Tell me a little bit about the conference(s) that you help organize.**

The Vietnamese Interacting as One Conference, also known as VIA-1 Conference, is an annual leadership conference that is co-hosted by UVSA-Midwest and a local Vietnamese student organization, and this year's conference was co-hosted by the University of Cincinnati's VSA in Cincinnati, Ohio! The conference spans over three days with over 400 attendees partaking in activities and workshops to build their leadership skills and cultural awareness to bring back to their respective communities. Throughout the conference, participants raise appreciation for Vietnamese culture, take part in a continental philanthropy project, and network with others to make connections that will benefit them individually and professionally.

**Q: What do you do for these conferences and how much time do you spend on the work?**

VIA-1 Conference would not be possible without the hard work of our executive directors, committee directors, and staff who come from all around the region! Having different conference committees allows leaders in our community with different skillsets to hone their leadership skills by being part of conference staff. During the nine months before conference, I spent approximately 5 to 10 hours each week preparing for conference as the Sponsorship Director by leading a committee to create partnerships and seek out donations for conference.

**Q: Why do you volunteer for this job?**

I looked up to student and community leaders who came before me, and believed that I could leave my mark one day too. This was my opportunity. A4A pushes to provide safe spaces to raise awareness and celebrate Asian Pacific American communities by sharing personal narratives, building solidarity, and eating good food. I volunteer for A4A because seeing an idea turn into a reality with teamwork and patience, gives me life.

**Q: What makes the students in your region unique?**

The Greater Seattle area is home to some of the most well established Asian Pacific American communities and long-time civil rights activists. As a matter of fact, Seattle's Asians decided to be "Black" instead of "white" during the bussing situation of the 1970s. Tacoma (my hometown) is also famous for the "Tacoma Method" in addition to being the location of the Northwest Detention Center (ICE holding cells for undocumented immigrants awaiting hearings and deportations) while at the same time, 30% of Washington state's undocumented population is Asian and Pacific Islander. Seattle is also home to popular Asian artists, dancers, and youtube creators like the "Blue Scholars", "Massive Monkees", "Fung Bros" and "Richie Le". Washington has a rich history of Asian American Art and Activism. My mission is to recognize and celebrate that part of our history.

**Q: How is your conference unique from other conferences in your region/AAPI community?**

Our conference is unique because it is entirely community and student driven.



Family Activities at VIA-1

**Q: Why do you volunteer for this job?**

This was my third time volunteering for VIA-1 staff. I decided to be a part of staff again this year because I've gained a lot of professional and personal skills from being part of staff. Professionally, I've gained insight on event planning and leadership to create a meaningful conference for 400+ attendees whereas personally, I've gained many impactful friendships and connections from all over the country through being a part of conference staff.

**Q: What makes the students in your region unique?**

Our organization services the Vietnamese-American community in the Midwest by working as a partnership organization and collaborating with individual student associations to conduct events and initiatives. Our main focuses are leadership building, cultural awareness and identity, social and community advocacy on issues affecting the Vietnamese community such as the refugee narrative, racial issues, and more. Although our organization focuses on Vietnamese culture, we are not a Vietnamese-exclusive organization and our members come from diverse backgrounds!

**Q: How is your conference unique from other conferences in your region/AAPI community?**

Something that makes VIA-1 Conference unique is that our organization has partnerships with other organizations from around the continent— both in the United States and Canada. Although we are based in the Midwest, our network is expansive and guests from other regions come to our conference to see what we do to bring back to their respective organizations. This year, we had guests from not only the Midwest, but from New York, Virginia, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and more!



Family Activities at VIA-1



Presentation at VIA-1



Attendees at VIA-1

**LEAD**

# Kris Valderrama

by Stephanie Wong



Image Courtesy of Kris Valderrama

2018 can undoubtedly be called the Year of the Women. 2018 has seen a rise in women running for political office, especially women of color. OCA had the chance to interview an Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) woman who has been in office for over ten years – Kris Valderrama. Kris currently represents district 26 in the Maryland House of Delegates and is of Filipino ancestry. Even though she is busy running from meeting to meeting, she was able to make time for OCA to learn more about her public service story, why she ran for office, and her experiences being in office for over ten years.

**Hello Kris, let us start with you telling us a little bit about your background.**

I was born in Washington, DC but raised in Fort Washington, MD. I lived my entire life in the county that I now represent. I am a product of the public school system in Ft. Washington where I attended the state school Salisbury State University. While at state university, I studied healthcare with plans to pursue being a therapist. However, that is no longer what I am doing, as I did not see myself doing that for the rest of my life.

**Your career path definitely took a turn, how did you get involved with public service?**

My father was my predecessor in the current seat that I serve. It started at a very young age, my father had me and my sister involved with his campaign. We were his secret weapons. We went door to door and people would remember us and vote. They would even give us gifts! However, even with all the volunteering that I did for my father's campaign, I never thought I would ever run. My father planted it in our heads and as my sister and I got older, she was certain she would never run for office, but I always admired my father. I got older, got married, worked a completely different job, but then when his seat opened in 2006, I considered it and decided to do it. I gave it 110% and barely won. Nevertheless, I won.

**You have been a member of the House of Delegates since 2007, how was your experience being a woman of color serving in such a high position?**

It was challenging and scary being out there to the public. Even to this day, I still get nervous when giving speeches. I received unusual treatment for being the daughter of my predecessor. People always say, "You had it easy because your dad was here before you." But I worked very hard to get to where I am and to make my own mark. I am very well respected in my district because I do good work for my constituents. However, even after 12 years of being in this position and with plans for reelection, the men still treat me differently. They frequently comment that I am "pretty" but I recently put them in their place by telling them "there is a



Del. Kris Valderrama at Women's Economic Security Agenda. (Image via workingfamilies.org)

brain in there." The men were shocked to hear me combat like that but now they know to treat me fairly and not make inappropriate comments.

**It is great to hear that you stand up for yourself in this space. What kind of impact do you feel that you have been able to make serving in office?**

Since being in office, I have been able to bring a different perspective that many cannot. I can relate to the diversity of my constituents. I can relate to the women, I also have young adolescent kids so I can relate to younger demographics and parents. I also represent not just women, but also women of color, Filipino American women, AAPIs, and the jurisdiction. Since I grew up here and am a product of the school system, my district knows me.

**As someone with a lifetime experience of public service, what is some advice that you would share to someone who is hoping to run for office?**

My advice is that if you are serious about it, I encourage you to do it. It is normal to feel afraid and nervous especially because you are putting yourself out there in front of people who will look at you through a microscope. However, not taking the risk is a loss. We need people who want to serve and that is always the right decision. Make sure though if you do decide to run – have a great support system. You cannot do this on your own.

**Have other women and people of color been supportive of you since being in office?**

Yes! It has been a challenge as I have learned this role does not allow me to please everyone but my communities taught me that my job is for us all to work together. I am always trying to reach out to have more women run for public office because we do not have enough of us. Whatever office – it doesn't matter: local or federal. With Asian Pacific American Heritage Month just coming to a close, I would also like to see specifically more Filipino Americans be representatives amongst the AAPI umbrella.

**Thank you for this interview Kris. Is there anything else you would like to share?**

If you are even slightly interested in running for office, take the risk, take the challenge.



# Floyd Mori

by Kendall Kosai

It's a warm spring day in DC and cars are honking outside the window along one of the busiest corridors in the city. Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS) President and CEO Floyd Mori, a man who began his humble roots near Salt Lake City and grew into one of the most powerful and recognizable faces in AAPI politics, sits at his computer typing a Facebook comment on photo of someone's lunch.

That style is classic Mori – engaging yet with a sense of humor that kept him humble. Mori has always been the personable type, often seen as an elder of the community who doesn't shy away from networking events designed for AAPIs a third of his age. His energy, often matching that of interns that flood the city each summer rings bright in his likeable style.

OCA sat down with Mori for an interview as he transitioned out of his role at APAICS where he reflected on his own political career, the current climate, and offered advice to a new generation of AAPI politicians.

**Can you tell us a little bit about yourself - where were you born and raised? How did you get into the political process at a relatively young age?**

I was born in Utah, near Salt Lake City, 79 years ago to be exact. It was before WWII. As a small child, I experienced a little bit about war - I had older brothers and sisters. Two of my older brothers went to WWII. They were soldiers. My oldest brother was actually killed and never came back. As a small child, I remember them going off to war.

We knew all our neighbors and they knew us. So we didn't get a lot of grief from our neighbors. It was the people who didn't have Japanese neighbors, or didn't know Japanese. But in my neighborhood the kids were pretty good to me. It wasn't until high school or college that I started to wonder about many "Japanese-ness". I was, for the most part, accepted into the crowd. I excelled in athletics, I think that helped because I made the 9th grade basketball team. When I was in the 7th grade, I was a pitcher in the little leaguers and threw no-hitters. I was an all-state baseball player. It helped me become one of the boys.

**You shuffled into politics after college. What was your turning point?**

Mori: My interest started in college due to the Presidential race between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon. My major was Economics and my professor was engaged in politics. He started a polling business and hired his senior and graduate students as pollsters.



Image courtesy of APAICS

I got engaged in student government, student clubs, and became the president of the Japan club. We did a lot of cultural stuff on campus. My first job was as a professor and I always told my students that in order to be a good citizen you have to know about issues. My interest naturally fell to policy. As a teacher, I thought I needed to practice what I preached.

Then, there was an opening on the city council, and I thought I needed to represent a growing community. So I decided to run and it was a successful campaign. Although I was not favored to begin with - my community was 99% white - but I related to people in different ways. Since I was a professor of economics, I could talk intelligently about the issues about taxes. I could talk about expansion in the community - how should we control expansion and growth? Or should we shut it off? I took a balanced approach - we need to control growth but also need growth to provide services for our kids. Because I got the most votes, I became to may-or pro-temp immediately. After 6 months I was voted in as the Mayor of Pleasanton, California.

**Did you feel like there was any barriers? Nowadays, we see lots of rhetoric. Did you encounter anything like that?**

At that time, there were no major threats. I wasn't part of a party, but I ran as a Democrat. They had been waiting for this guy to pass away so they could run. There was a county supervisor and Dean of a University who were expected to take the seat because they had been politicking for three-plus years. But I related to a lot of people because I didn't have a background in politics. A lot of republicans voted for me in this open race - I got the most votes! My competitors faded away after a year.

Have you ever seen the movie, The Candidate? That was me. I asked myself, 'Now, what do I do?' So I started by talking the talk.

**What were you most proud of in Assembly?**

Now when I look back, the most impactful legislation was a bill that began with an intern approaching me – 'Mr. Mori look at this law' and it was a law on rape - defined as committed on females other than your wife. How do you interpret that?

So it was a civil matter. At the same time, there was a case in Oregon where they were trying this guy who raped his wife. To me, it wasn't a civil matter, it was a criminal matter. I didn't feel like my wife was my property. It took me two sessions to work on the bill, but it became one of the first spousal abuse laws in the country. In 1978, the bill was passed. In terms of women's rights, and acknowledging abuse, harassment in America. It was one of the very first steps.

**Many people consider you a pioneer in your community. Obviously, when you went into assembly there wasn't a lot of people that looked like us. During your term, did you see progress in representation?**

The initial impact I could make was hire Asian Americans to our staff. When I went up there, I could count them by hand. There was three Asian American women in the whole assembly. So I hired three more on my staff. Whenever I got the chance, I continued to hire Asian Americans.

**APAICS is committed to being a pipeline to civic engagement. As you step out of your role, what do you see as the future of the AAPIs engagement in politics?**

It has taken time for AAPIs to catch up. From the APAICS perspective, we want to see more AAPIs. However, we have made progress. In California, we have a hundreds of AAPI elected official in local politics. We have seen representation grow in Orange County where out of 5 county Supervisors, 3 are Asian Americans. 3 out of 5. That ain't bad. We'd like to see more people come out to run for office. Even under the new Administration - we're going to see more people running for positions in 2018.

**What advice do you have people who aspire to get involved in political process?**

A lot of people say they've been around. However, they haven't done anything. You have to be engaged and establish yourself - establish your presence. In AAPI communities this is an issue because they haven't been engaged and involved.

I was a little league coach, so parents knew who I was. I went to church, so the church goes knew who I was. People know I was a veteran, so that's another way to relate to me. I have family. There were many ways I could relate. People could put themselves in my shoes. People thought, Mori is just like me, so he's going to represent me.

**We live in a very politically charged environment, more than some have seen in our lifetimes. What is your advice on how people can work more collaboratively?**

First, you have to understand that people develop political opinions from their point of view. Everyone has different opinions that are formed from their background. When I discuss an issue, I try to explain it from my perspective and try not to react like most people: belittling others. If you believe this you're dumb or evil.

People turn things into emotional and moral issues. I'd rather have people make their own decisions. We need to understand people as people instead of labeling them right off the bat.

In my day, we used to eat together. I roomed with a Republican. When there was an issue that came along, I could approach it better than most people. When we did a bill on preserving camps, we needed a Republican co-author in both the House and the Senate. I got my former roommate, the Republican Chairman: the most powerful guy in the house carried the bill for me. I had a personal friend in the Senate to co-author. I didn't label others, and got along well with Republicans and Democrats. I tell my fellows and interns, make friends with someone across the line because maybe in 20 years they'll help you out.



**Can name one AAPI that inspires you?**

Someone I am a friend with for at least forty years is Norman Mineta. Here he is, he's older but still goes out - Ambassador for the Cherry Blossom event. In his day, he would remember you if he met you 20 years ago. He remembered everyone, what you wore, who you were. I don't know how he does it. He is engaged with the community. I tried to pattern what I do, on that concept: if someone needs something - I try to do those things for them.

**Any final thoughts?**

A person needs to follow their passion. My passion was always public policy. From economic policy to international policy. Along the way, I came across a good fortune of being able to maximize the interests I had. As a member of the State Assembly and Mayor, I was always looking for new businesses to come. That led me to my next career in business consulting, I started bringing products to Japan. I always had a friend so I could bypass a lot of lower-level people. I retired from business and began pursuing politics because I knew a lot of politicians at the time. It helped with APAICS; you develop these real relationships all along the way. Develop good relationships and it'll help you 30 years down the line.

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\*OCA would like to thank and congratulate Floyd Mori for his service to the AAPI community. We wish him well in his future endeavors because we all know that he will never "retire". Thank you, Floyd for your leadership and friendship.\*

# Mayor Falconi

by Nathan Wong, Images Courtesy of Nathan Wong



Biography: Ronald "Ron" E. Falconi is currently the Mayor of Brunswick, Ohio. He is very active with the Republican Party in Northeast Ohio. He is the only Filipino-American elected official in Ohio.

## Q: What generation AAPI are you?

A: I am the first generation to be born here in the US. My parents are Filipino, they actually met at the US embassy in Manila to apply for visas to come over here in the 1960s. I am the first generation to be born here.

## Q: How do you represent the AAPI community in your work? Which policies do you focus on that relate to AAPIs?

A: I got to know different people within the community like Lisa and Wayne [Wong]. They've invited me to speak at the Cleveland Asian Festival the past several years. As know, there aren't a lot of Asian Americans here in Northeastern Ohio. Although the number is growing, different communities are growing as well. So I put myself out there and offer my services to [people like] Wayne and Lisa.

My background is Filipino, so I try to communicate with the Filipino community. My parents came here in the late-1960s, so there are various Filipino groups I've been a part of. They've watched me grow up over the years. Filipino groups, there's many different kinds. There's the Association of Philippine Positions in Ohio, Philippine American Society of Ohio, Filipino American Millennial Society of Ohio, Philippine Nurses Association of Ohio; I've been involved with those groups one way or another over the years. Ever since I've been in elected office, they've invited me to do their swearing-in ceremonies or go to their fundraisers. I've participated.

I don't have an opportunity to focus on policy specifically, at least not in my capacity as Mayor of Brunswick - other than the general complaints about their taxes, the roads, and stuff of that nature. However, I am a member of the Republican Party, so I am interested in getting more Asian Americans involved in the political process. And this whole thing with trying to get involved at the national level is fairly new to me, I've been involved with it for several years now, and I'm still kind of finding my way, and meeting the people, and contacting them, and them contacting me, so we're still at the very early stages of that.

## Q: What's your favorite Asian/American dish?

A: There are several Filipino foods that I like, the way that I make them aren't even the way they are supposed to be made. But I like menudo. My family beginning to try to learn how to cook. So I've been trying to learn how to cook a Filipino soup called picadillo. And I like sweet and sour chicken, friend rice, and chicken with broccoli—so those are my favorites. However, my eating repertoire is somewhat limited because I am allergic to seafood. So anything that swims in the sea, I can't eat. It's a serious one, you cannot even cook it with me in the room, cause then I would have an allergic reaction to it. Say you handed me a fork, and it has seafood on it, I would get an allergic reaction to it.

## Q: Name one AAPI out there who inspires you.

A: Oh gosh. There's a lot. But a recent one is Steven Yeun from the Walking Dead. I was amazed by him. I know he's Korean, and the pizza delivery guy, but he's not the "Asian". Anyone could be his role. And I like the fact that Hollywood created that particular character for him. He's just a person who happens to be Asian. And if you go onto the street and ask someone who are you favorite. Asian actors, you get, oh, there's Jet Li and Jackie Chan. I get that, and I know there are certain roles that are stereotypically Asian. And if you're Asian and trying to break [into Hollywood], I understand you are going to take any work that's out there. But I was amazed by how they portrayed Steven Yeun. He doesn't have an accent. He just reminded me of an average, everyday, regular, AAPI guy.

Really, the biggest influence regarding AAPI people, are my parents. They came to this country, they were in their late-20s, early-30s. After they finished [school], my dad was an electrical engineer, my mom was a physician, and when they came here, they didn't work in those jobs. My mom started as a bank teller and a nursing assistant. And they came to this new country, no one looks like you, and they started their lives here, and that takes guts! There was a certain amount of risk involved, and they're going to do it because this is America, and you can make your dreams come true as long as you work hard. I think my dad started out with \$100 in his wallet. I have to kids, and raising kids is fun, but it's also hard. But I can't imagine raising kids in a different country where everyone is different from who you are. Especially my mom, she has two strikes, number one is that she is not white, and of course, she is a woman. In the 1960s and 70s, trying to break out in the field of medicine, where it is dominated by white guys. She was one of the people who helped break that barrier. She faced discrimination, and some of the people there were so rude. She started out as a surgical assistant, and if you gave the instruments wrong, they would take it and throw it on the floor. And then when she was pregnant with my sister, they would make comments like "Are you pregnant again!? What's wrong with you people!?" Is it a big deal? Probably not, but it's those little digs here and there. We're the minority of the minority or the minority. I am in complete awe of my parents.



**Q: What are you currently reading/listening to?**

A: I just finished *Crazy Rich Asians*. As a matter of fact, the movie is coming out, so I can't wait to see that. I also read *Treating People Well*, by two White House etiquette secretaries, one from Bush, and the other from Obama. I am currently reading *Shattered*, it talks about Hillary's campaign in 2016. I like reading political books, biographies, history. My wife tries to get me to read romance novels, so I've read one romance so far. I like reading books about people, how to talk to people, how to treat people well, I find it interesting.

**Q: What was the turning point that made you decide to run for office?**

A: I've been involved with politics for pretty much my entire adult life. I've always had in the back of my mind that I would want to run for office someday. I think the question is more about when. I would have to say as soon as that I knew that one my kids were in school, at least when they were potty trained, I would have more flexibility there. When I first ran, my kids were seven and five [years old], a little over ten years ago.

**Q: What is a secret talent people don't know about you?**

A: Well, I can sing in the car. But I think I am better at slow songs than fast songs, but I'm probably horrible at that as well. But if you see my mouth moving when I'm driving, I'm probably not talking on the phone.

# Hon. Theresa Chang

by Thu Nguyen



Image via Harris County

During my childhood in Houston, there were few Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who were household names. One stood out in particular not only because it was an AAPI name, but it was also the only AAPI woman's name I saw in on street signs and in our local leadership.

Judge Theresa Chang never meant to enter law and politics. As a first-generation immigrant from Taiwan, she graduated from Texas A&M University Kingsville with a master's degree in mechanical engineering. After working in Houston as a process engineer for twelve years, Chang wanted to understand environmental laws for herself rather than through a

law counselor. With her mother and husband's encouragement and support, she juggled part-time law school with a young son and her full-time engineer job for five years.

"Law school wasn't difficult itself - it was just hard on my family and I never had enough hours in a day," said Chang in a phone interview. After completing her law degree, she gave herself two years to try her hand in law as a lawyer and joined the Houston County Attorney's Office in 1997. When a district clerk position opened in 2007, Chang applied and received approval from all 59 District Court judges. She first became a judge as an appointee in 2012 to the Harris County Civil Court No. 2 and remained a judge throughout various courts through 2018.

Judge Chang's involvement with community work began long before law school, though, when she helped restart the OCA-Greater Houston Chapter in 1992 and later became an OCA National Vice President on the Executive Council. Today, she continues to work with community groups, including the Asian American Bar Association, the Houston Grand Opera, YMCA, and has served on the boards of many organizations including the Board of Regents of the University of Houston system as appointed by then Governor George W. Bush. Her legacy and continued dedication to serve the community through leadership and volunteerism has been recognized through various awards, including Women on the Move in 2005.

**FUN FACTS:**

**Q: How does your work impact the AAPI community?**

As a judge, I have been able to maintain a record as being a top-rated judge for fair and just decisions. I hope to be an example for other Asian Americans who also want to enter law and policy.

**Q: Name one AAPI who inspires you.**

My mother, who immigrated here when she was fifty-eight. Her resilience and willingness to learn and adapt, like learning how to drive at the age of sixty, inspired me a lot.

**Q: What's your favorite Asian/American dish?**

Well, sashimi is my favorite but what people don't know is that I can cook this dish called 'Ants Climbing a Tree' (Ma Yi Shang Shu) the best.

# OCA-Pittsburgh

by Stephanie Wong, Images Courtesy of OCA-Pittsburgh

## IMPACT



Clockwise from top right: APA-Y Leadership with OCA National; LNY Parade; Lion Dance; Showcase Dance

**Q: Tell us your name and your relation to the OCA – Pittsburgh chapter.**

Kai Lin, President, OCA Pittsburgh

**Q: What is your favorite thing about OCA – Pittsburgh?**

We are very active in our local community and everyone, old and young alike truly enjoys watching our performance teams and especially at our showcase where the brilliant colors and artistry of our culture is truly represented.

**Q: Using three (3) words describe OCA – Pittsburgh chapter, and why did you pick those 3 words?**

Dedicated, Vocal, Steadfast... We are a wonderful and dedicated organization that represents our local APA population and gives our people many opportunities to be heard and to voice our concerns and desires for our community. OCA's longevity is one of our strongest assets. We are dedicated to hold true to our culturally rich heritage, while moving forward with the times and staying relevant. We have grown to be a prominent APA organization in Pittsburgh, recognized by local government as well as the Pennsylvania Commission on Asian American Affairs.



Clockwise from top right: Free Medical Clinic; Taste of Taiwan; Yo-yo Performance; Dragon Dance

**Q: What annual activities does your chapter host/co-host throughout the year?**

- OCA Lunar New Year Banquet
- Lunar New Year Pittsburgh Kickoff Celebration
- Lunar New Year Pittsburgh Parade
- OCA Chinese Dance Performance Showcase
- A Taste of Taiwan – Cooking demo and dinner
- Dragon Boat Festival
- OCA Free Medical and Dental Clinic
- WPXI Holiday Parade Chinese-American Float and Presentation
- OCA General Meeting and Holiday Luncheon

\* Our performance teams participated in 23 events in 2017; Hosted/Co-Hosted/Participated in 35 events in 2017

**Q: What is your most popular event of the year?**

Our Lunar New Year Banquet is by far our most popular event of the year. This past year was our 31st annual event and this formal event showcased an authentic 12-course Szechuan style meal. The event also features the traditional Lion Dance, Chinese dance, along with other fabulous invited entertainment; honors community APA leaders and volunteers; recognizes our annual sponsors; presents Congressional Award to our youth participants; provides beautiful decorations and an ambiance that keeps 400+ people coming back to every year!.



Clockwise from top right: WPXI Parade; LNY Banquet; Eye Dotting

**Q: How involved is the OCA – Pittsburgh chapter with the local community?**

We have participated in GOTV and continue to encourage the APA community to educate themselves and register to vote. We sponsor local events such as: Pitt International Week – An Evening with George Takei; Press Event – The Power of the Purse – How Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders contribute to the Pennsylvania Economy; Greater Pittsburgh Chinese Restaurant Association Chinese New Year Banquet; Tree Pittsburgh Ginkgo Fest. Our performance teams and speakers attend local events and schools for performances, demonstrations, and education (Chinese dance, Chinese Yo-Yo, Lion Dance, Dragon Dance, Chinese Calligraphy, Cultural History). We conduct a free medical and dental clinic for the Chinese/APA community. Our OCA Youth volunteer and participate in events such as: Pittsburgh Marathon, YMCA Turkey Trot, and Light of Life Rescue Mission as part of our efforts to support other organizations and fundraisers. We have a strong relationship with the Mayor's office to help highlight the Asian Community and our endeavors, economic or otherwise. We raise awareness for our APA population and have helped with the City of Pittsburgh proclamations such as: Taiwanese-American Heritage Day, Lunar New Year, Day of Inclusion recognizing the 135th Anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

**Q: How has your chapter grown/changed in the last 5-10 years?**

Over the past 5-10 years, we have expanded our reach past just the Chinese community, but to all APA communities by establishing key relationships and working closely with organizations/entities such as the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition, Uncover Squirrel Hill, Sarah Heinz House, Cranberry Township, City of Pittsburgh, Tzu Chi Academy, Pittsburgh Chinese School, Pittsburgh Chinese Restaurant Association, Nationality Rooms and the Asian Studies Center at The University of Pittsburgh. We've grown the number of events we host or participate in from less than 10 to over 30+ every year. We are much more engaged with our local government and actively support other local communities and their efforts. We've grown our dance program into a full performance team that includes an adult program and an active lion/dragon/yo-yo team. We intend to continue to focus on our Youth and young professionals, along with re-establishing senior programs.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to share about OCA – Pittsburgh?**

We hope to bring awareness and greater understanding of our culture and heritage to the area...we are achieving this through our programming and relationships. Our long term goal is to establish an Asian American and Pacific Islander Center in Pittsburgh.

# OCA Bookshelf

by Monica Lee



Bao Phi – “Song I Sing,” “Thousand Star Hotel,” and “A Different Pond”

Bao Phi has been a performance poet since 1991. His most recent published collection of poems *Song I Sing* and *Thousand Star Hotel*, and his children’s book *A Different Pond*, has won him numerous starred reviews and awards including: Best Spoken Word Artist (2012) and Artist of the Year and Author of the Year (2017 & 2018) by Minnesota’s “City Pages,” the Caldecott Honor, the Ezra Jack Keats New Writer and New Illustrator Honors, and the Asian/

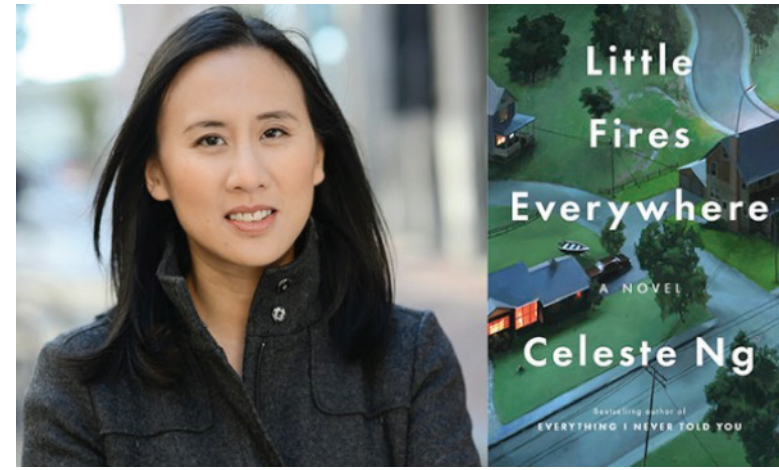
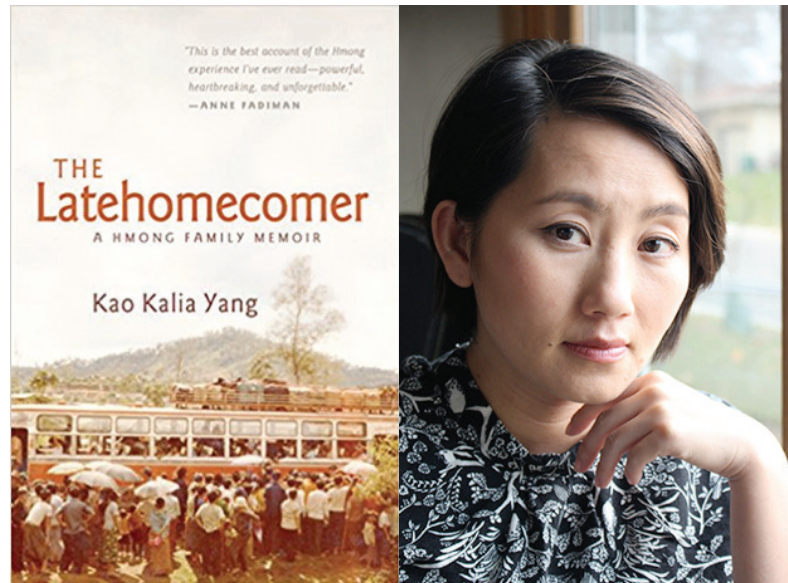
Pacific American Award for Literature. Phi’s poems and stories centers mostly on immigration, race and the Vietnamese American diaspora. Jeff Chang – author of *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* and *We Gon’ Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation* says “Bao Phi is a careful observer and a sweeping documentarist, the bard of Vietnamese America. In *Song I Sing*, he paints vivid portraits of the pride, pain, and perseverance of a people. A remarkable debut from a sure and important voice.”

Phi continues to perform his work all across the country and continues to discuss global and political issues. He remains active as an Asian American community organizer and currently serves as the Program Director of Event sand Awards at the Loft.

Kao Kalia Yang – “The Latehomecomer” and “The Song Poet”

Hmong-American and Minnesota native Kao Kalia Yang is an activist, teacher, and author of *The Latehomecomer* and *The Song Poet*. Her memoirs pay a tribute to her family’s journey from Laos to America and the hardships that many Hmong refugee families faced both in Laos, Thai refugee camps, and life in America after the Vietnam and Secret Wars. They’re heart wrenching stories that will move you to tears and make you think about family, loss, sacrifice, opportunity, and hope.

Yang is a graduate of Carleton College and Columbia University. She currently lives in Minnesota with her family where she is working on her next project, a children’s book, *A Map Into the World*.



Celeste Ng – “Everything I Never Told You” and “Little Fires Everywhere”

In rising star-author Celeste Ng’s *Little Fires Everywhere*, she writes a moving and captivating story about a family turned upside down when a single mother and daughter move into Shaker Heights, Ohio. It perfectly captures the difficult nuances of family dynamics, race politics, and the love between a parent and their child. In the book you start off wondering who started the fires and wonder how it began, but realize in the end perhaps everyone was tending to the fire the whole time.

Celeste Ng, originally from Pittsburgh, PA and Shaker Heights, OH, has won numerous awards already with her first novel, *Everything I Never Told You*. It has garnered great success in the literary world by winning awards including the NYT Bestseller, the NYT Notable Book of 2014, and the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, and was named best book of the year by over a dozen publications. Her latest book “*Little Fires Everywhere*” is already a NYT Bestseller, and was named a best book of the year by over 25 publishers.

Ng holds an MFA from the University of Michigan and completed her undergraduate degree at Harvard University. Celeste currently writes in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Thi Bui – “The Best We Could Do”

Thi Bui was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the US as a child. She is the illustrator of Bao Phi’s *A Different Pond*, and author of her recently published graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do*. Her graphic novel centers on her family’s experience during and after the fall of Saigon. Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen - author of “*The Sympathizer*” and “*The Refugees*” – says that it’s “a book to break your heart and heal it,” as Bui explores what parenting means to her, the meaning of family, the importance of identity, and what makes a home. She was a founding teacher of the Oakland International High School, the first public high school in California for recent immigrants and English learners. Bui is currently working on her next graphic nonfiction work about climate change in Vietnam.



Bui currently teaches in the MFA in Comics program at the California College of Arts and lives in Berkeley with her son, husband, and mother.

# OCA Lifetime Members

Benjamin Wallace	Michael Chiu	Sandy Yan	Helen Hui
Betty Sung	Frances Leung	Kung Lee Wong	David Lee III
George Ong	Sam Ong	Andrew Chen	Stanley Wang
C. Joanna Lei	Janny Leung	Join Luh	Winnie Tang
Leslie Moe-Kaiser	Ginny Gong	Kam Liu	Jaclyn Chu
Raymond Wu	Hardy Chan	Carol Tsai	Elaine Lai
Jessie Lee Yip	Stan Lou	Cecil Fong	Andrew Torelli
Raymond Wong	Mary Lee	Celine Fong	Victor Yau
George Y. Cha	Julie Wang	S.B. Woo	Edwina Kho
Claudine Cheng	Janet Namkung	Sadi Chhoa	Peter To
Jeri Floyd	Astria Wong	Qing Wu	Kyle Luke
Monica Arima	Eugene Moy	Colin Chang	Kevin Asehan
Donald Sheu	Robert E. Lee	Kai-Tung Li	Roxanne Ramirez
Alice Cha	Martha Wong	William Kwan	Frank Liu
Kitty Pon	Ling Liu	Aiden Yee	Michael Kwan
Wai Ling Eng	Harold Hom	Chi-Ming Chow	Charles Cha
Sylvia Lam	YM Administrator	Claire Faith Weinan	Mary Tom
Woon-Wah Siu	Cindy Tong	Karl Frank Rosenberger	
Clyde Wu	Amy Lee	Kenneth Lee	
David T. Lin	Rose Eng	Paul Sha	
Keith Wang	Wendy Karahalios	Dai-Shan Wong	
Ken Yeung	Brandon Hou	George Gee	
Patrick Leung	Victoria Ma	Hwa-Shan Ho	
William C. Uy	Jae Chin	Wen Ching Lee	
David Wong	Wai-Ching Lam	Michelle Chiu	
Marriam Tasawar	Marjorie Lee	Cassandra Kwoh	
Janet Lew Carr	Robert Wu	Michael Lin	
Jimmie Yee	Alex Mark	Jessie Cheng	
Mary Au	Felix Chao	Geoffrey Lee	
Edward Kang	Kevin Luke	Albert Lau	
Thomas Lee	Helen Kho	Andrew Wong	
Tom Hayashi	Stan Tsai	Jane Chen	
Assunta H. Cha	Sue Yang	Jeanne Lee Jackson	
James Tso	Margaret Wong	Alice Chang	
Mary Ann Yu	Pearl Lin	Songbae Lee	
Aryani Ong	David Yao	Howard Chan	
Glen Fukushima	Ed Webman	Diana Gin	
Lisa Summa	Peter Yang	Richard Ikeda	
Stanley Jsa	Peter Wu	Dominic Ling	
Jenny Kho	Sandy Nguyen	Regina Yin	

# OCA Lifetime Families

C. Joanna Lei	Wah Lee	Jason Bobadilla	Fei Qiu	Linda Bien	Peter Gong
Flora Chan	William Kaung	Miriam Yeung	Ying Chan	Margaret Choi	Alfonso Tan
Annie Kwan	Paul Leung	Sharon Wong	Ai Zhen Xu	Jean Chang	Dwanchen Hsu
Lian Hao	Hsing Wu Lin	Rosemary Abriam	Grace Chen	Sharon Wong	Tammy Huang
Phillip Wang	Moses Wu	Joyce Wang	Peter Chang	Gary Guo	RungFong Hsu
Rene Francis	Roland Hwang	Sonya Jent	Carol Fang	Sheldon Pang	Helen Yu
Ann Elizabeth Chan	Jee Choy	Joe Chiu	Anchen Wang	Sam & Kathy Law	Michele Tam
Deborah Ching	Sen Maw Fang	Alice Lee	William Tong	Johnny Hsu	Austin Tao
Dick Du	Virginia Gee	Thomas Eng	Alice Cha	Gregory Christopher	
Vincent Young	Wilem Wong	Theresa Chang	Linda Saw-Aung	Kenneth Hum	

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