



**1882**  
FOUNDATION



**Chinese American Women in History Conference 2023**  
**October 5-7, 2023**  
**Washington D.C.**

**Day 1**

**Chinese American Museum, DC**  
**📍 1218 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20036**

**2:00PM - 5:00PM Registration and check-ins (Museum exhibits are open)**

**5:00PM - 7:00PM Opening reception**

Join the 1882 Foundation and our partners at the Chinese American Museum, DC for a casual opening event to network, meet presenters, and explore the museum. Refreshments and heavy appetizers will be served.

**Day 2**  
**The Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives**  
**1201 17th St NW, Washington, DC 20036**

9:00AM – 9:05AM, Banquet Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor (light breakfast served)  
Opening remarks by 1882 Foundation Executive Director **Ted Gong**

9:10AM - 10:25AM, Theater Room 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

**Breaking the silence – the intergenerational impact of exclusion**

**Screenings/clips:** *Chinese Couplets*, *Tracing History*, *Bluff City Chinese* (working title)

Filmmakers **Felicia Lowe**, **Jalena Keane-Lee**, and **Thandi Cai** will discuss their experiences researching and translating their findings through the visual media. How has the concept of 'breaking the silence' operated in their work, and how might it be a point of entry to examine the lasting impacts of Chinese exclusion? Hailing from different generations of Chinese American filmmakers, each will explore how an intergenerational culture of silence has enforced the invisibility of Chinese American women and gender minorities' stories, and how storytelling can become a site of healing and reconciliation.

10:30AM - 11:45AM, Theater Room 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

**Family**

**Emerald (Emmi) Dunn-Bahurlet & Andrea Louie**

"Love of Another Color" by Emmi Dunn

Interracial cohabitations in the Mid-South began as early as 1880. In the absence of Chinese women, how did couples meet? Focus is on one couple who continue to send their children to China for school and descendants who effected changes in Memphis politics.

"Toy Len Goon: Going Beyond Tradition" by Andrea Louie

Andrea Louie's maternal grandmother, Toy Len Goon, was selected as U.S. Mother of the Year in 1952 during the Cold War. Though she was portrayed in the media as being a traditional woman and mother, she was also a businesswoman who ensured that her family remained connected to family association in Boston and who fulfilled her obligations to family in China. However, while it appeared that she was fulfilling traditional gender roles, in order to do so, she had to navigate social and cultural worlds beyond them.

12:00PM - 12:45PM (boxed lunches provided), Banquet Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

**Keynote Luncheon Address: Screening "Yellow Fever": Racist Misogyny in Cinematic Representations of Asian American Women, Dr. Alexa Alice Joubin**

In 1930, English novelist Evelyn Waugh entertained the prospect of Chinese American actress Anna May Wong playing Ophelia, Hamlet's love interest. Waugh went on to say that "I cannot see her as Lady Macbeth." These comments reflect the racialized myths about Asian women as subservient and dainty objects. These myths continue to inform racist misogyny today that has congealed around the fetish of "yellow fever." The notion of yellow fever makes Asian women interchangeable and invisible on screen, affecting characters and their actors such as Constance Wu and Michelle Yeoh. This illustrated keynote presentation reveals the manifestation of

“yellow fever” in the depiction of Asian American women and suggests ways to identify tacit forms of misogynistic racism as well as strategies for inclusion. The misogyny directed toward women of East Asian descent is fraught with racialized myths about Asian cultures and womanhood. As a result, racial hierarchies are used as justification for mistreatment of women.

1:00PM - 2:15PM, Theater Room 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

**From Soo Yong to Anna May Wong: The Entertainer**

**Screenings:** *Anna Unbound*

Hodges will briefly review Anna May Wong's life and legend, discuss recent works on her including biographies, criticism, poetry, film and drama. He will then identify some potential new insights into Wong's life and legend. Join scholars **Graham Hodges** and **Yunxiang Gao** in conversation with filmmaker **Robin Lung** for a moderated interview on the continuing legacy of Anna May Wong and emerging scholarship on Soo Yong.

2:30PM - 3:45PM, Theater Room 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

**The Kim Loo Sisters: From Kiddie Revues to the Silver Screen; Ten Times Better**

**Screenings/clips:** *The Kim Loo Sisters* (clips), *Ten Times Better* (clips)

**Jennifer Lin** will discuss how she “discovered” George Lee, the subject of her current short documentary, *Ten Times Better*, and the significance of this dancer’s story to the history of Asian American performing artists. Born in Hong Kong in 1935 to a Polish ballerina and Chinese acrobat and raised in Shanghai, George was prodded by his white mother to be “ten times better” when they fled to America in 1951. Performing in original productions of George Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker* and Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Flower Drum Song*, he rose to the challenge with success and disappointments in a pioneering career spanning more than 25 years.

How did four daughters of a Chinese paper son and a Polish dressmaker break through the bamboo ceiling to become the first Asian American act to star in Broadway musical revues and share top billing with Frank Sinatra, The Three Stooges, Ann Miller, and Jackie Gleason at a time when interracial marriage was illegal in sixteen states and anti-Asian sentiment was rampant? In this panel, award-winning author and filmmaker **Leslie Li** will discuss the Kimmies' career on stage and screen—its stumbling blocks and its stepping stones—and how their talents were showcased in different media as public tastes, performance venues, and new technologies transformed show business in the 20th century.

This panel will discuss the work of Li and Lin on doing historical inquiry documentaries on early Chinese Americans in the entertainment industry, in moderated conversation with **Jenny Cho**.

4:00PM - 5:00PM, Theater Room 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

**Ah Quon McElrath: Hawai'i Labor History**

**Screenings:** AQ the film, clips

Producer and director of *AQ the Film* **Joy Chong-Stannard** will screen clips from the soon-to-be released documentary film exploring the life of Ah Quon McElrath (1915-2008). Ah Quon, also known as AQ, was an intellectual force who gave voice to Hawai'i's working class, and helped

power a labor movement based on racial equality that transformed Hawai'i from a semi-feudal oligarchy to a modern labor democracy. Born to immigrant Chinese parents and raised in extreme poverty, she became one of Hawai'i's most influential leaders, helping shape the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) into a powerful force for social change. After retirement from the union, she continued to work tirelessly for social and economic justice. She championed universal health care, education, press freedom, civil and human rights. Presentation at the CAWH 2023 conference is the film's first showing to a public audience.

### Day 3

National Portrait Gallery

📍 8th St NW & G St NW, Washington, DC 20001

#### Exploring Kinship at the Smithsonian

9:00AM, participants will meet outside the G Street entrance at 8:50AM (10 minutes before program begins).

How have Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander women historically forged interpersonal connections and facilitated community? Join educators from the Smithsonian for a 90 min workshop at the National Portrait Gallery where participants will examine portraits of AANHPI women including the exhibitions 1898: U.S. Imperial Visions and Revisions and Kinship on view at the National Portrait Gallery. Participants will learn educational strategies to uncover pathways between our past and present, particularly with regard to how we can reassess notions of race, power, and gender.

I Street Conference Center

📍 600 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001

#### Weaving AAPI stories into the American Narrative

11:00AM – 1:00PM

Directions: Please enter on the Massachusetts Ave side through the Venable LLC building. 1882 Foundation staff and volunteers will be present to guide you to the conference room. If an 1882 Foundation representative is unavailable, notify the guard at the reception desk that you present for an event in the conference room. (When searching for the I Street Conference Center on Google Maps or Apple Maps, enter "Venable LLP" at 600 Massachusetts Ave NW.)

A common dilemma for teachers is how to bring little known - but important stories - into their classrooms while ensuring that those lessons have a clear connection to curriculum standards. The Supreme Court case of *Gong Lum v. Rice (1927)* is one such *example*. This two-part workshop will investigate the history of the case, the first challenge to the “separate but equal” doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and the major role that Mrs. Lum played in seeking fairness in the education for her daughters. It is a compelling story of courage, pre-Brown v. Board of Education, in the context of the broader struggle for civil rights for all Americans. The first session will highlight the role of Mrs. Lum and the significance of the case. Adrienne Berard, author of *Water Tossing Boulders* about the Gong Lum case, will lead off a panel discussion with Esther Kim, Prof. of Education (William and Mary), Deenesh Sohoni, Prof. Asian American Studies (William and Mary), and Stan Lou of the 1882 Foundation who grew up in the Mississippi Delta in the years following *Gong Lum v. Rice*. The second session will feature lessons created by Diana Kim and Collin Absher (both students at W&M), and Ting-Yi Oei (1882 Foundation) that further illustrate the ways in which Chinese American and AAPI stories can be effectively integrated into the curriculum.

Coffee and snacks will be served.

## CHINESE AMERICAN WOMEN IN HISTORY (CAWH) CONFERENCE 2023 SPEAKER AND PANELIST BIOS

### **DAY 2 PANEL – Breaking the silence – the intergenerational impact of exclusion**

**Felicia Lowe** is an award winning independent media producer, director, and writer. Her documentaries; *Chinese Couplets*, *Carved in Silence*, *Chinatown* and *China: Land of My Father* reveal the unique experiences of Chinese in America while underscoring our common humanity. In September, 2022, Lowe was recognized by the Chinese American Museum of Los Angeles as a History Maker and presented with the Societal Transformation Award for her body of work. Lowe recently produced the animated video, *A Journey Through Angel Island* and led the creative team that produced the videos for the California Museum exhibit, *Gold Mountain: Chinese Californian Stories*. A past board president of the Angel Island Immigration Foundation and descendant of Angel Island detainees, she is gratified to play a role in the preservation and restoration of this important National Historic Landmark.

**Jalena Keane-Lee** is a filmmaker who explores intergenerational healing through narrative change. She is a recipient of the Gotham Documentary Fellowship, Creative Culture Woman Filmmaker Fellowship, Wyncote Fellowship, NeXt Doc Fellowship and named one of Adobe x Sundance's 2023 Women to Watch. She has won Tribeca Through Her Lens 2020 and DocPitch 2022. Her short films have played at over 50 film festivals, winning best short at LA Asian Film Festival in 2020 and the Jury Award at Sundance in 2023. Jalena co-founded [Breaktide Productions](#), an all women of color production company that has won two Cannes Lion awards for branded content. She is currently working on her first feature documentary which participated in the 2022 Sundance Edit and Story Lab and is set to premiere in 2024.

**Thandi Cai (they/them)** is a queer, Indonesian, Chinese American artist from the American South exploring the futurities of Asian diasporic identity through critical dialogue, textiles, performance, film, graphic design, and print media. At the core of their creative and socially engaged practice is a desire to steer the world into a future that breaks free from the oppressive colonial systems of gender binaries, nation-states and capital. After earning a BS in Architectural Design, they served for two years as an education volunteer for Peace Corps Lesotho until 2018. From there they were a teaching-artist, exploring the intersection of nonprofit work, art, and community organizing. In 2022, they earned an MFA in Visual Communication Design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. They maintain a community-centered design practice, partnering with clients such as Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, US-China Business Council, and Michelle Obama's Kitchen Garden. They have exhibited work at the Chicago Art Department, Crosstown Arts, Morija Arts Center and the Museum of Science & History of Memphis. In 2020, Cai co-founded Meng Cheng Artist Collective in service of community artmaking and dialogue in the Memphis community. They are currently collaborating with the Chinese Historical Society of Memphis & the Midsouth in the creation of *Bluff City Chinese*, a documentary about the expansive voices of the Chinese diaspora in Memphis.

## **DAY 2 PANEL – Family**

**Emerald (Emmi) Dunn-Bahurlet** was born in Mississippi - moved to Memphis, TN. Emmi has a B.S. in Medical Records Administration, and has worked abroad in U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Europe, and China either in Medical Records or teaching English as a second language. Emmi returned back to Memphis in 2013. Emmi is a founding member of the Chinese Historical Society of Memphis and Mid South, which began in 2016. Appointed to the Shelby County Historical Commission in 2019. Emmi began research into the history of the Chinese in Memphis and established the year that the first Chinese settled in Memphis; 2023 marks 150 years of Chinese living in Memphis. From this research the Chinese Historical Society has established two historical plaques: the first marker is at the site of the first Lung Kong Tin Yee building and the second plaque marks Chop Suey Cafe as the longest serving Chinese cafe in Memphis and the reverse side honors the Chinese businesses on Beale Street (known for blues music). Emmi is continuing research on Chinese cemeteries in Memphis, Mississippi, and Arkansas that will become a database for searching ancestors. Emmi is conducting extensive ongoing research of genealogies of families living in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Memphis. Emmi is currently on the steering committee for the Arkansas Chinese Heritage Center, University of Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas.

**Andrea Louie** received her B.A. from Bowdoin College, and her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a Professor of Anthropology at Michigan State University, and founded the Asian Pacific American Studies Program there. She is author of “Chineseness Across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States,” and “How Chinese Are You?: Adopted Chinese Youth and their Families Negotiate Identity and Culture.” She has done research on Chinese international students at MSU, and received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship in 2020 to work on a book on her maternal grandmother, who was selected as U.S. Mother of the Year in 1952.

## **DAY 2 KEYNOTE LUNCHEON ADDRESS – Screening “Yellow Fever”: Racist Misogyny in Cinematic Representations of Asian American Women**

[Alexa Alice Joubin](#) is the inaugural recipient of the bell hooks Legacy Award and holder of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award. An immigrant from Taiwan, she studied at Stanford before moving east to the nation’s capital. She has been dedicated to advancing social justice in her teaching and research.

The bell hooks Award is named after the late feminist writer, who unfortunately passed away during the pandemic. The bell hooks Award recognizes Alexa's achievements in “dismantling intersectional systems of oppression” through her “groundbreaking work that speaks to our moment in history and our hope for the future.”

In 2018 she co-authored a book called Race. It was published by Routledge. In 2021, she wrote a book on Shakespeare and East Asia, which was published by Oxford University Press. The book examines adaptations on stage and on screen throughout east Asia, and uncovers an exciting history of cultural exchange. She has published 23 books on race, gender, cultural globalization, film, and theatre studies.

She teaches at George Washington University here in Washington, D.C. She is Professor of English, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Theatre, International Affairs, and East Asian Languages and Literatures and the Co-director the Taiwan Education and Research Program.

You can follow her work at [ajoubin.org](http://ajoubin.org)

### **DAY 2 PANEL – From Soo Yong to Anna May Wong: The Entertainer**

**Robin Lung** is a 4th generation Chinese American with deep roots in Hawai'i. She specializes in bringing untold minority and women's stories to film. A Stanford University and Hunter College graduate, she became a filmmaker after successful careers in book publishing and higher education. Lung's feature documentary Finding KUKAN about her discovery of the lost Oscar-winning film KUKAN and Li Ling-Ai, the woman from Hawai'i who produced it, received the American Library Association's Notable Film Award in 2019 and was selected to be broadcast nationally on PBS World's America ReFramed series. Lung made her directorial debut with Washington Place: Hawai'i's First Home, a PBS documentary about the legacy of Hawai'i's Queen Lili'uokalani and her personal home. In 2015 she was selected as one of four documentary fellows for the NALIP ARC diverse female filmmaker residency and is a proud member of the renowned filmmaker distribution cooperative New Day Films, serving on New Day's Steering Committee from 2019-2021. Lung's short documentary Nancy Bannick: Saving Honolulu's Chinatown, which is about photo journalist Nancy Bannick and her work to preserve Honolulu's Chinatown in the face of urban renewal, premiered at the 2022 Hawai'i International Film Festival and was chosen to screen on all transpacific Hawaiian Airline flights in 2023. Lung recently completed her first stop-motion animated film, *Anna Unbound*. An experimental homage to Anna May Wong, it was inspired by a poetry reading given by Sally Wen Mao at the first Chinese American Women in History Conference in 2019.

**Gao Yunxiang** (高云翔) is professor of history at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research focuses primarily on trans-Pacific cultural history in the twentieth century. She has published two books: *Arise, Africa! Roar, China!: Black and Chinese Citizens of the World in the Twentieth Century* (UNC Press, 2021) and *Sporting Gender: Women Athletes and Celebrity-Making during China's National Crisis, 1931-1945* (UBC Press, 2013). The former has won the following honors: 2022 Academic Excellence Award of Chinese Historians in the United States; Honorable Mention for 2022 Robert H. Ferrell Book Prize of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations; Finalist for 2022 Wallace K. Ferguson Prize of the Canadian Historical Association; *A History Today's* Book of the Year 2022; And a Book Authority's 2022 Best New African Americans History Books and Best Politics Ebook. Supported by a NEH (National Endowment of Humanities) Long Term Fellowship at the New York Public Library, she is finishing a biography tentatively entitled "Soo Yong (杨秀 ca.1903-1984): A Hollywood Actress and Cosmopolitan of the Asian Diasporas.



**Graham Russell Gao Hodges** is the George Dorland Langdon, Jr. Professor of History and Africana Studies at Colgate University. He is the author or editor of twenty books including *Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend*, 3rd Ed. Chicago Review Press, 2023.

**DAY 2 PANEL – The Kim Loo Sisters: From Kiddie Revues to the Silver Screen**

**Leslie Li** is the producer/director of *The Kim Loo Sisters*, a feature-length documentary about her mother and three maternal aunts—a jazz vocal quartet popular in the 1940s and '40s—who were the first Asian American act to star in Broadway musical revues. She is the author of three books: *Bittersweet: A Novel*; *Daughter of Heaven: A Memoir with Earthly Recipes*; and *Just Us Girls: The Official Companion Book to The Kim Loo Sisters*. Her personal essays and feature articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Gourmet*, *Saveur*, *Garden Design*, *Modern Maturity*, *Dorothy Parker's Ashes*, and elsewhere. Her hybrid novel *The Forest for the Trees* will be published by Black Lawrence Press in September 2024. *Blended [Harmony]: The Kim Loo Sisters*, a musical about the Kim Loo Sisters, will premiere in May 2024 at History Theatre in St-Paul, Minnesota. She lives in New York City.

**Jennifer Lin** is an award-winning journalist, author and documentary filmmaker. She produced and co-directed the feature-length documentary, *Beethoven in Beijing*, about the Philadelphia Orchestra's China legacy, which premiered in 2021 on PBS's *Great Performances*. Temple University Press published her companion oral history in 2022. For 31 years, she worked at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as a reporter, including posts as a foreign correspondent in China, a financial correspondent on Wall Street, and a national correspondent in Washington, DC. Jennifer published a family memoir, *Shanghai Faithful: Betrayal and Forgiveness in a Chinese Christian Family* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017). In addition to *Ten Times Better*, Jennifer is working on another documentary project, *Beyond Yellowface*, about two New York City dancers trying to rid ballet of offensive Asian stereotypes.

**Jenny Cho** is a video producer, editor, and author. Her past clients include Nat Geo Wild, Associated Press, Samsung, MotorTrend, HBO, Amazon Web Services, The Washington Post, RaffertyWeiss Media, AARP, and more. She is the author of *Chinatown in Los Angeles*, *Chinese in Hollywood*, and *Chinatown and China City in Los Angeles*, published by Arcadia Publishing. Her short documentary, *Revisiting East Adams*, was the recipient of a California Council for the Humanities and Durfee Foundation grants. As former board member of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, and the Organization of Chinese Americans, Greater Washington, DC chapter, she has contributed countless volunteer hours on behalf of Asian American communities in both California and the DC area. She is currently the editor of the Dora Fugh Lee documentary on behalf of the Chinese American Museum in Washington, DC.

## **DAY 2 SCREENING/CLIPS – Ah Quon McElrath: Hawai'i Labor History**

**Joy Chong-Stannard** is a Hawai'i based independent filmmaker with extensive experience in archival research of historic photographs, moving images and historic documents that lend a visual dynamic to her portrayal of island history. Chong-Stannard's fascination with Hawai'i past led to directing and editing productions that explore the dynamic social and economic upheavals of Hawai'i's history that include *Betrayal*, the award-winning nationally broadcast docudrama of the overthrow of Hawai'i's last reigning monarch and the ongoing *Biography Hawai'i* series. Her production of *Ka Hana Kapa* tells the inspiring story about a small group of women who sought to revive the ancient art of making kapa or Hawaiian bark cloth. She is also the Producer/Director of the live weekly public affairs program, *Insights on PBS Hawai'i*. She is currently in post-production for the documentary *Ah Quon McElrath: The Struggle Never Ends!*

## **DAY 3 – Exploring Kinship at the Smithsonian**

**Mia Cariello** is an Education Specialist at the Smithsonian Institute's Asian Pacific American Center. **Ashleigh Coren** is the Head of Education for the American Women's History Initiative, a department of the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum. **Erin Koester Tusell** is a Gallery Educator at the National Portrait Gallery

## **DAY 3 – Weaving AAPI stories into the American Narrative (Education Workshop)**

**Ting-Yi Oei** is a lifelong educator. He earned his BA in History from Hamilton College and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Brown University. He taught middle and high school social studies for 20 years and was a high school administrator for another ten in Virginia. Along the way he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in South Korea, was a Fulbright Teacher in Scotland, and spent a year teaching in the Dominican Republic. He was also awarded a one-year research fellowship at Teaching Tolerance (now Learning for Justice), the education project of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala. In 2019, Gov. Ralph Northam recognized him with an award as the Asian American Volunteer Citizen of the Year for Virginia. Along with his work as the Education Director for the 1882 Foundation. He is a curriculum consultant with a particular interest in improving the quality of teaching of Asian Pacific American history.

**Stan Lou** was born in Greenville, Mississippi, of immigrant parents from China. Stan earned Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Michigan and had a career with the Federal Aviation Administration before retiring in Washington, DC. He is most proud of his three accomplished children who all reside in California now. Upon retirement Stan went to China in 2003 to teach English to university students and to learn about himself there for almost three years. He returned to the Washington, DC, area where he has committed himself to become busily engaged with understanding more about his heritage as a Chinese American. With that as his motivation, he has worked with the Asian Pacific American community to improve the quality of life for its members. Most of his focus has been with OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates, where he has served as co-president of the Greater Washington DC Chapter and is currently the Vice-President for Education & Culture on the OCA National Board. He worked with the 1882 Project and is active with a group that created the Talk Story series that engages the DC community in sharing the stories of their experiences living as APAs.

**Adrienne Berard** is an award-winning journalist and graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. She is the author of "Water Tossing Boulders: How a Family of Chinese Immigrants Led the First Fight to Desegregate Schools in the Jim Crow South." She currently serves as a senior research writer for Penn State University and has previously worked for the College of William & Mary and Delta State University in Mississippi. She and her family manage a small farm near the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia.

**Esther Kim** is an Assistant Professor in Curriculum & Instruction in the School of Education and Affiliate Faculty in Asian & Pacific Islander American Studies at William & Mary. Her teaching and research focus on representation in Social Studies with an emphasis on how racial and religious identities shape and are shaped by curricula.

**Deenesh Sohoni** is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) Studies program at William & Mary. His research examines the significance of race, ethnicity, nativity and citizenship status in a variety of social institutions such as education, marriage, the military, the law, and the media. His work has been published in top academic journals such as *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, *Sociology of Education*, *Law and Society Review*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* among others; cited in legal cases and *amicus* briefs; and covered in international, national, and local media outlets including *National Public Radio* and *The Atlantic*. His current research examines the relationship between race, military, and citizenship through the lens of "military naturalization." In conjunction with Professor Esther Kim, he leads the K-12 Asian American Student Education (KAASE) Initiative at W&M.

**Diana Kim** studies Government and Asian Pacific Islander American Studies and is the director of the Asian American Student Initiative at William & Mary. She has experience in Asian American history archival research and curriculum development with the APM Research Project, where she has also worked with high school students to provide an opportunity to study underrepresented Asian American histories. Diana believes in harnessing local community power to establish more impactful and necessary change for all communities and making Asian American history education accessible for K12 educators. She especially wants to help ensure that the future of Asian American political engagement is rooted in compassion and solidarity.

**Collin Absher** is a Senior at William and Mary majoring in Chinese Studies and APIA studies and serves as the APIA studies chair to the Asian American Student Initiative. He found himself as a welcome nontraditional member to this community through experiences in academic, political, and cultural spheres. Collin has had the honor of working in the Philippines as a Freeman Fellow and studying in Taiwan as a Boren and Gilman Scholar to further his understanding of the world as a global citizen. His current research focuses on the restructuring of Heritage Learner Mandarin classes to include Chinese and Asian American identity in order to strengthen social and ethnic identity of Chinese American youth, He is impassioned to use ethnic languages as tools for a means of decolonizing marginalized peoples by courageously reclaiming one's history.

## 1882 Foundation Team Bios

**Ted Gong** is Executive Director of the 1882 Project Foundation and President of DC chapter of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. Before retiring in 2012, Ted was a career diplomat in the U.S. Department of State where he served primarily in East Asia on policy and operational issues related to border management and security, migration and refugees, and consular affairs. He has degrees in History, Asian Studies, and National Strategic Studies from the University of California, University of Hawaii and the U.S. Army War College. Ted is also included in *The Guardian's* [The Frederick Douglass 200](#), a list of two hundred people — abolitionists, diplomats, writers, feminists, and more — who best embody the spirit and work of Frederick Douglass.

**Yilin Zhang** is a communications strategist and health care professional. Yilin is a former candidate and has led campaigns in DC. Yilin works with nonprofits in DC, advising on and leading community outreach and engagement activities. She holds degrees from the London School of Economics and Political Science and University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and was a Fulbright Fellow.

**Mia Owens** grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, and she earned a B.A. in Global Studies and French at Samford University in Birmingham. After completing her undergraduate degree, she joined the AmeriCorps-Ohio History Service Corps as a Local History member for the Trumbull County Historical Society. In 2021, she moved to Washington, DC to earn a M.A. in History with a concentration in Public History at American University. During her graduate studies, Mia began interning at the 1882 Foundation to conduct research on the history of DC's Chinese American community. In 2022, she began working as a program associate with the 1882 Foundation. In addition to assisting the 1882 Foundation with programs, Mia currently works as a curatorial assistant at the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center.

**Amy Trang** is a social entrepreneur with experience in building public private partnerships. She is the founder and CEO of Social Capital Solutions, Inc. (SCS) and oversees the Nonprofit Services and Government Contracting projects for the company. Before starting SCS, Amy was the Multicultural Outreach and Community Planner at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging under Fairfax County Department of Family Services from 2008 to 2013. Amy completed her doctorate degree in Public Policy from the George Mason University School of Public Policy. Amy has been an adjunct faculty at UVA since 2000.

**May Cheh** earned degrees in Chemistry and Computer Science from the University of California, Berkeley and American University. She had a career at the National Institutes of Health doing research in medical informatics and directing a training program for visiting fellows at her institute. May was born in Guangdong, China, and came to the United States as a toddler. The first member of her family came to the United State during the California Gold Rush in the 1800's, but, because of the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act against Chinese immigration, May and her mother were the first women in their family to immigrate to the United States. May's passion is to preserve the history and stories of Chinese families in America.

**Sojin Kim** is a curator at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, where she works on multifaceted, collaborative projects addressing migration, music, and public history. She was previously a curator at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (2008-2010) and the Japanese American National Museum (1998-2008). Sojin holds a PhD in folklore and mythology from University of California, Los Angeles. She serves on the board of [Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation \(APIAHiP\)](#).