

MAY, 2021

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS HERITAGE MONTH NEWSLETTER



Out of Many, One

By Billy Huynh. There is a common misconception that all Asians look alike and that their experiences are the same. For many generations in America, this representation of Asians has perpetuated the racial stereotypes that continue to be painfully rooted in this country. Asian Americans have been misrepresented as a monolithic group. The actuality is that there is a wide range of perspectives, history, and culture. Asia is home to 2,197 languages. The term "Asia" is more of a geographic term than a homogenous continent because it is truly a continent with a wide array of diversity among the regions it covers. Some Asian nations have been bitter ancient enemies for centuries and some continue to be rivals to this day. If one looks closely, there are many differences among the Asian cultures.

What does unite Asians is valuing community above the individual. It is common to have multi-generation families living under the same roof or celebrating altogether by feasting on ethnic foods. Some other commonalities among Asians are the enduring of extreme hardships: natural disasters, war, famine, military dictatorship, and religious persecution. Asians often feel compelled to work hard to earn what they need to sustain and achieve in life. This includes valuing education. The recent anti-Asian sentiments have unified the Asian communities to stand against hate in this country. Though there are many Asian ethnic groups, they stand as One in Love.

*"So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." -
Romans 12:5*

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ASIAN AND PACIFIC
ISLANDERS HERITAGE
MONTH NEWSLETTER

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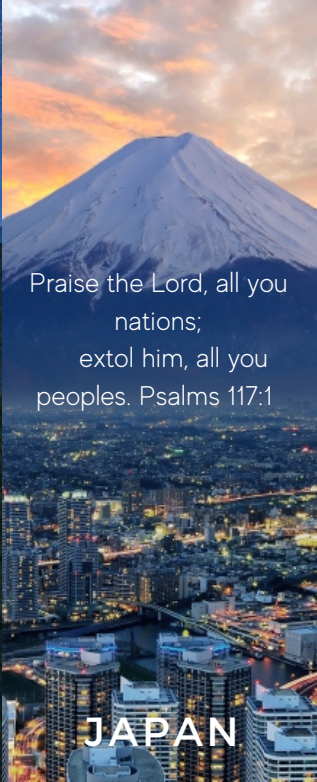
Get to know Asia and Pacific Islands



Matthew 28:19 "Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples."



CHINA



Praise the Lord, all you nations;
extol him, all you peoples. Psalms 117:1

JAPAN



SOUTH
KOREA



PHILIPPINES



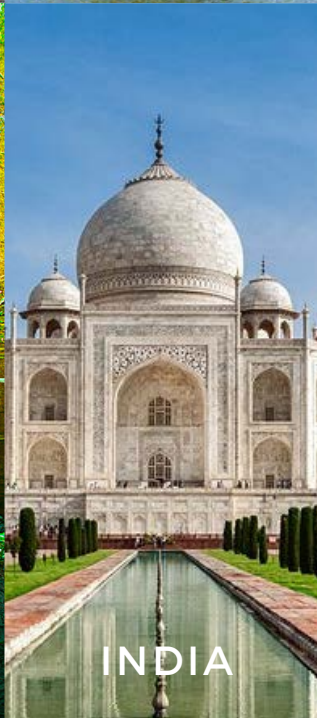
INDONESIA



THAILAND



VIETNAM



INDIA



TAIWAN



CAMBODIA



LAOS



MALAYSIA



SINGAPORE



HONG KONG



MYANMAR

He builds his lofty
palace in the heavens
and sets its foundation
on the earth;
he calls for the waters
of the sea
and pours them out
over the face of the
land—
the Lord is his name.
Amos 9:6

Pacific Islands

HAWAII

AMERICAN
SAMOA

FRENCH
POLYNESIA

PAPUA NEW
GUINEA

GUAM

TONGA

SOLOMON
ISLANDS

MARIANA
ISLANDS

SAMOA

COOK
ISLANDS

MICRINESIA

FIJI

EASTER
ISLANDS

NEW
CALEDONIA

MARSHAL
ISLANDS

NICOLE SON

Junior at Pepperdine University

Creative Writing Major, Religion Minor

Favorite Dish: KBBQ and Sushi

Favorite Scripture:

2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."



"LIVING HOPE"

Shame

that made me wince in middle school at the sound of my father's voice. I'd rush to correct his accent. "My name is Nicole. Not Nee-kohr. Shouldn't you know this by now?"

Shame

for the shape of my eyes, for my skin, my hair, my height. Avoiding mirrors to escape confronting standards for beauty that always felt so high. Accepting I'd only be exotic in the world's eyes.

Regret

for jokes that stung and simmered, yet remained smothered in my roll of the eyes or forced laugh. Wondering who was to gain for these jokes and who else used them to mask their pain.

Regret

for my pitiful acts of defiance, for bringing hamburgers to pho restaurants, for my revolts against Korean Saturday school, for my pride in being deemed "white-washed."

Faith

that overcomes shame and regret. Rescuing me from an exhausting cycle of relentless striving yet still hiding who God created me to be. In light of the Cross, I'm finally learning how I'm fully loved, fully known, fully made.

Faith

that out of many, I was chosen to live by grace. Cast out of darkness and brought into a Kingdom and family of wondrous light, color, and diversity where I can be seen, where there is true beauty.

Hope

to continue discovering who God created me to be. Praying you see those who look like me and know we are not all the same. Imploring you to hear our stories, to learn our names as we scale down walls we've built to guard against shame.

Hope

to be one in Christ. Uplifting each other for our glory and strength, our brokenness and weakness. Instead of hiding, living openly and continually praising Christ for bringing those on the outskirts to live inside.

This Hope will never put us to shame.

WHAT MISSION MEANS TO ME



Growing up, mission was something that has been embedded in me. I've witnessed the growth and perseverance of my parents and the dedication they have for Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope in Cambodia. My parents have been working there for a very long time, so the place holds a special place in my heart. I spent my childhood going to the hospital to get treatment and I spent my high school years volunteering there every summer because of the mission it holds.

Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope, established in 1996, is one of the leading non-governmental hospitals in Cambodia and is managed by HOPE worldwide. The hospital's mission is to provide further education and clinical training for medical professionals, while delivering high-quality, free and affordable medical care for the poor and disadvantaged in Cambodia. Till this day, the hospital has treated over 1.5 million patients in Cambodia free of charge.

The story began in a time of civil unrest in the aftermath of one of the most devastating genocide events in the world's history: The Khmer Rouge. It was a time when the education and public health systems had to be built again from scratch; a time when "the rich were poor and the poor were even poorer", and people had nowhere to turn in times of illness or tragedy. My parents lived through this tragic time, but God decided to spare their lives and give them a heart of mission. After being baptized in 1997, they decided that they wanted to stay in Cambodia and use their medical degrees to serve the people there because they saw the need and a calling from God. (continued on the next page)

MERICA SIN



Sophomore at Pepperdine University

Psychology Major / Social Work Minor

Favorite dish: Lok Lak (Cambodian dish)



WHAT MISSION MEANS TO ME

(continued from the previous page) Cambodia is a developing country and is 97% Buddhist, but God decided to bless me with a different life, and put me in a different environment. If I didn't grow up the way I did, I don't think I'd be a disciple today. I did not have to live through the struggles my parents went through. Instead, I was given a non-typical Cambodian life. I was raised in a middle class family, went to a private international school, and grew up in a Christian household and in church. I connected with the hospital at such a young age that I wanted to take part in it. Throughout my high school years, I volunteered for the hospital. I took part in the "Home Care System" in which we provided support to the impoverished. We went on missions to help build houses, schools, and so many more. I've seen the life that I was given and wanted to use it for God's glory. My parents are my biggest inspiration and I see the example that they have set for me. I see the growth of the hospital and the impact that it has to Cambodia. I see the disciples in Cambodia who also work for the hospital treat others with love and care. Finally, I see God works miraculously in so many ways.

I see a need in this world, and I want to do something meaningful with my life. As of this moment, I'm still not entirely sure what my calling from God is, but I am taking it one day at a time. Mission to me is serving God's people and loving them just like how He loves us.

As Galatians 5:13 says, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love".

HOPE WORLDWIDE CAMBODIA



Together the hospitals and clinics in Cambodia form a health network that is changing the lives of the poor and helping to transform medical care for a nation. Health and social services are Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital, Kampot, Cambodia a major focus of HOPEww programs, comprising 72% of global activity programs. Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope's mission is to provide for the further education and training of medical professionals while delivering free, 24-hour high-quality medical care to the poor and disadvantaged of Cambodia. The Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital (SKMH) is a charity hospital that was built with the vision to improve the health situation of Cambodians, especially children, and expectant mothers, regardless of their ability to pay. SKMH's fees are based on the patient's ability to pay as determined by a financial assessment. Low-income families will be treated for free; patients who can financially contribute to their medical care will be required to pay a fee. The hospital is operated mainly through Cambodian staff. The Cambodian team is supported by experienced expatriate specialists. (Excerpt from HOPE Worldwide Website)

MEGAN ELIAS

Favorite scripture:

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.



TRUE TRANSFORMATION

I sit in the back of my jarring classroom as off the flippant roll of a tongue, a student casually proclaims, "Asians are ugly." The class starts to chime in and add to the discussion. My body starts to crumble. My face becomes flushed with red as my heart pounds. The heat of my palms set fire to my surroundings.

I fall into a familiar memory that brings my face that same color of those cheap red disposable chopstick wrappers in my grandma's restaurant. I am sitting on a bench outside of an audition room. I look to my left and all I see are endless pale-faced girls with long hair. I snap my face to the right and I come to the realization that I am all alone. I am the only Asian person in this entire room. After time and time again, I have become numb to this constant repetitive undefined feeling that I couldn't quite describe as being the only different one. Why?

My body begs for a black hole that I can crawl into. My heart begins to quicken as what's left of my already shattered self-confidence deteriorates.

Why does life have to be a gameshow? Had fate rolled the dice and determined that I would automatically stick out, just because of my background? Had destiny taken a turn on the wheel and landed on the worst possible scenario? I had no answers.

My face flushes the color of those beautiful red envelopes given out during Chinese New Year. I lean back in my chair, staring at the pale sea of faces looking right back at me in the audition room. People look at me and I realize that they label me as Asian. I adjust my black hair and know I represent what it means to be Asian. My culture is not a replaceable plastic Barbie doll that you recycle when the "prettier" and "skinnier" doll comes out. I do not want to keep my passionate fire hidden and mumble when I can roar like the dragons I watched on the streets of Chinatown ever since I was a child. I honor fate and destiny, the same way I am taught to honor my elders. I remember the dark periods of loneliness while thanking the light that shines in the lanterns casting a spell on me during Chinese New Year. (continued on the next page)

MEGAN ELIAS

Favorite Asian dishes: dim sum, roti canai, pho



(continued from the previous page) I want to radiate my culture, not because I have no choice, but because I am thrilled I have that choice. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Megan Elias and I am proudly Asian.

Now that I have introduced one part of me, an ambassador of Christ is the essential identity I am proud to have. Jesus intentionally went out of his way to surround himself with people who were unlike him. Although it could seem uncomfortable to many, the hospitable nature of Jesus is something so humbling to me that I strive to embrace. As I seek unification through appreciating differences, I become excited to talk about my own culture! Being a disciple means there are captivating pieces of wisdom and stories waiting to be shared. Not only can we offer stories, but the insights with being Asian is another added layer because it is truly a blessing to fight the good fight alongside brothers and sisters who have gone through the same things that I have. Through one body of Christ, it consists of strong voices with the same mindset of trying to be like Jesus and love one another.

While this world is not our permanent home, we continuously need to strive to uplift each other while we are here. To assist the church and our community on racial healing, I challenge us to reflect on areas we need to grow in. For me, it's taking time to meditate and speak up. I encourage us to reach out to people in our community and ask how they are doing. Find answers to things that are difficult to comprehend and seek understanding. Pray for the lives disgracefully taken too soon and for the future of this world. Our love for people needs to be so evident to those around us and this is how we can get closer to healing.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR ME TO BE ASIAN AMERICAN

I grew up as a third generation Chinese American. My parents were born in America as well as both of my grandmothers. My grandfathers were born in China. I was born in Stockton, California but at the age of three my parents moved to Fresno located in the central part of the state. Two of my childhood friends who I remain in contact with today were both Chinese but most of my other friends were primarily Caucasian. Asian American was not the common term that we identified with. Oriental was often used to describe us. I remember being called different names such as “Chink” or “Slanted Eyes” but no instances of racial bullying. As I progressed through elementary, jr high and high school I was always labeled a being “smart” and “good at Math” just because I was Asian. At one point I didn’t like being Chinese and wished I was a different race. It wasn’t until I attended college that my perspective on what it means to be Asian American changed. I began to meet more people who were Asian and I started feeling more proud of my heritage. I also spent time with my grandmother, who even though she was born in America, went back to China where she spent most of her childhood. We looked at pictures and she shared some of the history of our family. While I cannot specify a reason or determine why I felt ashamed of being Chinese, I no longer feel that way.

Growing up as a minority and feeling different from those around me affected me more than I realized. As an adult I’ve met all sort of different Asians and some of my closest friends are Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Phillipino. We all share a common connection. Believe it or not even amongst the different Asian groups, there is a divide. For many years Japan had control of Korea and today there is still conflict between the two countries. I read an article that as Asian Americans, we have to work together to fight for social justice and equality, not just for ourselves, but for everyone around us. If we are not proud of being Asian then how can we stand together in solidarity to fight off hatred and racism. Today I’m honored to be Chinese and as a disciple pray for more opportunities to reach out to Asians and share God’s word with them.

STEPHANIE FUNABASHI

Favorite Scripture:

Psalms 46:10

Be still and know that

I am God



Favorite Asian dishes: Peking duck, all noodle dishes (Chow Mein, Chow Fun, Pancit, Japchae, Pho, Ramen, Yakisoba)





COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS TO RACIAL HEALING

BY JAMES LEM

Favorite Scripture:

Ephesians 6:10-18

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God...Stand firm then...Take up the shield of faith...Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"

I suppose my story is somewhat unique since I grew up in an all-white suburban neighborhood in the West End of Toronto, Canada. I was born to a Japanese mother and a Chinese Father which was considered unusual at the time, because of the historically tense relationship between those two countries. Living in an all-white neighborhood was different, to say the least. All my friends in the neighborhood were Caucasian. I really didn't know any different, I guess you could say, it was just the way it was and I never really questioned it. They included me in anything they were playing or getting into, and were nice to me for the most part, just the usual teasing and things like that but it really never got into any sort of racist type of comments to me. In elementary school, I was teased and bullied with racial comments. It was a different time, where fighting was the way you stood up to the bullying and name-calling. A side story I need to mention, my mother and her family were interned during WWII losing all their possessions, except what they could carry in a suitcase. So tragic I can't even begin to imagine what that was like.

My true spiritual journey didn't start until I became a disciple of Jesus Christ in 2009, much later in life than most. I spent half my life living a worldly life before I became a disciple eleven years, which really opened my eyes to so many things that I thought I already knew. I had just come through a very difficult time in my life going through a divorce, becoming a single father with custody of my then 7-year-old son which was an incredibly challenging time. It's always those darkest times in your life that make you open your eyes to see the way the worldly life you are living is broken and unfulfilling. I met men such as Kirk Nascimento, John Thorne, Mike Newman, Gene Loveland initially from The Westside church who invited me into their Men's discipleship group to study the Bible, and then some other brothers George Yang, and Troy Kendall, who also helped get me through that difficult time in my life. I saw in them what it was like to live a righteous life, and they also re-instilled my faith in marriage again after seeing their spiritual, God-centered marriages. I think that was truly a blessing for me at my darkest time and the lowest moment in my life to help me see and understand that there is hope. That inspired me to be open to meeting Lupe, a God-centered single mother, in 2012. We built a spiritual friendship that grew into love and we were married in October 2014. It was unique for Lupe and me to have a spiritual relationship before we were married since we had not experienced it in our past. This was very important to both of us as disciples, and it helped us both realize having God as the center of our relationship above all else was paramount to a healthy spiritual marriage. (continued on the next page)

Favorite Asian Food:

Thai - Pad Thai

Thai Dishes M.B.

Vietnamese-

Banh Mi

My Tho Asian Bakery

Pho - Saigon Dishes



(Continued from the previous page) Being a Christian in a diverse church was refreshing. Initially, I felt a bit intimidated by how friendly everyone was and all that hugging! I was really uncomfortable for quite some time, I wondered if anyone felt that I was unfriendly toward them. But as I learned it wasn't fake or forced, I realized how much I appreciated how loving, caring, and compassionate everyone was to me even though most didn't know me. I never experienced this growing up in my family. It was inspiring to see everyone treat one another the same regardless of color and that we were all there for the same purpose, to worship the Lord.

The past year has been an eye-opener and I know I'm not the only one who feels this way. I'm sure none of us dreamt about trying to survive a deadly pandemic and having to wear face masks all the time or face our own biases as we did last year. But we realize that God knows what we can endure and to not rely on ourselves but turn to Him for strength. 2 Corinthians 1:8-9. I love our church and all our brothers and sisters, which makes it even more challenging to open up a dialogue with my brothers and sisters of color out of fear. The fear of being insulting unintentionally or lack understanding in how they must feel with their ongoing personal struggles of racism, hatred, and discrimination. The fear that I won't fully understand the depth of feelings associated with the shootings, riots, and civil unrest. I can't even begin to understand or feel what our black brothers and sisters have felt about systemic racism. We need to have conversations and discussions about racism, hatred, and discrimination, as uncomfortable as they may be, this can be the start of racial healing. Stephanie Funabashi and I had a great discussion regarding this recognizing that we need to have these uncomfortable conversations.

Watching "The Chosen" has been so incredibly cathartic. It made me realize we cannot expect change unless we're going to be part of the solution - speaking up. That's what Jesus did to open the eyes and minds of people who witnessed what they did. The Pharisees were judging Jesus and his disciples because they felt threatened, scared, and resentful that Jesus was exposing their archaic laws. Isn't that what's still happening today? As Christians, we need to open our eyes to what this world needs today. Newby Newbill reminded me of this scripture in Proverbs 31:8-9. We need to speak up for injustice. We have to start believing we can be the change that's needed to begin racial healing. What can we do? Let's start by having a conversation with a brother or sister even if it's uncomfortable - listen, learn, empathize, be a shoulder to lean on, whatever it takes to be kind, compassionate, caring, and loving, because without love what are we doing? We need to replace complacency with love, opinions with love, judgment with love, have talks with love. "We speak in the tongues of men, but do not have love, we're just a resounding gong or clanging cymbal." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Have a conversation - maybe that is what it will take to start racial healing.

BILLY HUYNH

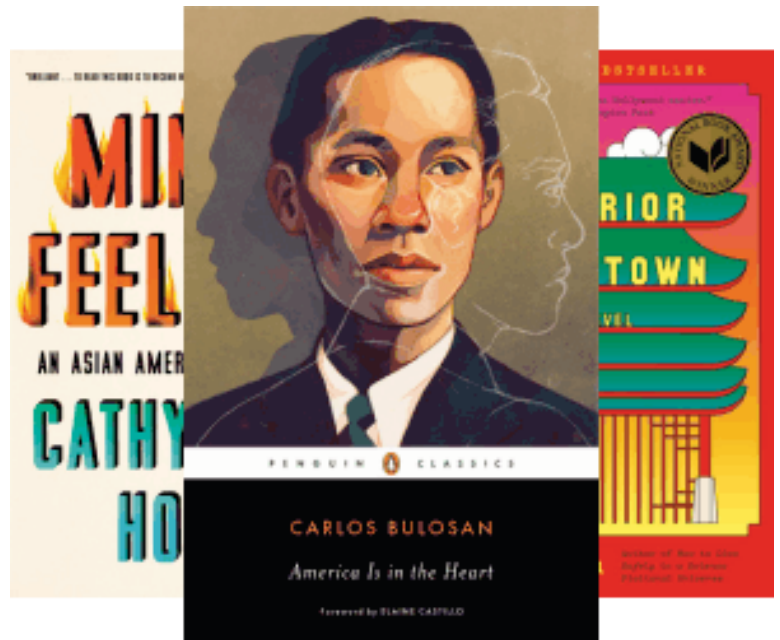


Favorite Asian dishes: Xiao
Long Bao (Taiwanese soup
dumplings), Pho



THE BOOKS TO UNDERSTAND ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/the-read-down/understand-the-asian-american-experience>



THE MOVIES ABOUT ASIANS & ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE



RACIAL PREJUDICE TOWARDS ASIAN-AMERICANS

By Billy Huynh

The past year's uptick of anti-Asian American hate speech and violence towards them has made Americans wonder about the reasons why there is venom towards this minority group in the country.

The United States has a long dark history of xenophobia (dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries). Asian Americans have been the unjust target of these sentiments. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first law in America that barred immigration solely based on race. Congress passed the exclusion act to appease white worker demands and ease prevalent concerns about maintaining white "racial purity."

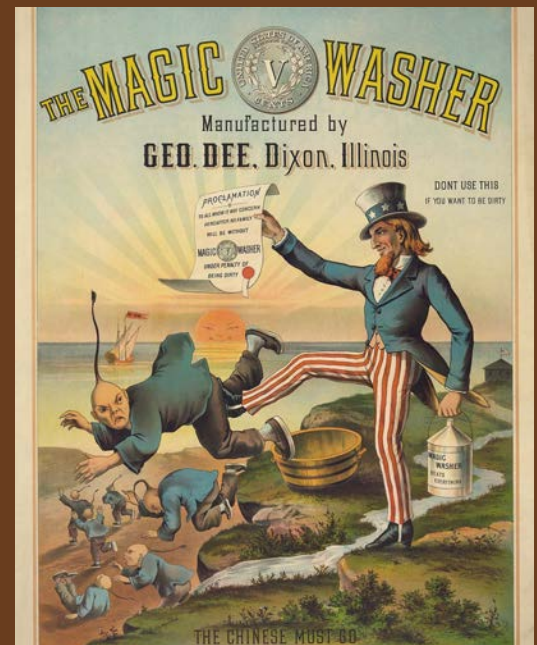
Many other laws were in place that were anti-Asian in nature. By 1924, all Asian immigrants except Filipino "nationals", including Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Indians were fully excluded by law, denied citizenship and naturalization, and prevented from marrying whites or owning land.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This ordered the removal of "resident enemy aliens" from the West Coast and they were transferred to internment camps. There was long-standing racism against Japanese Americans, motivated in part by jealousy over their economic success and after Pearl Harbor, it led to demands to remove them to remote and barren sites with crude and cramped living conditions. Many Japanese Americans lost businesses, homes, farms, and loved ones as a result of the executive order.

Throughout the immigration story of Asians, many have come to America to escape from war, social chaos, discrimination, and economic hardship. Often, they would keep quiet and avoid reporting acts of racism due to language barriers, especially among immigrant communities, or a fear of being sent back to their native country. There is a strong distrust of the government among the Asian communities.

I was born in Vietnam and my family emigrated to the United States during the tail end of the Vietnam War. As refugees, we endured many hardships including trying to learn a new language and culture. I have always appreciated my family's resilience, work ethic, and devotion to staying a close-knit unit despite the obstacles immigrants face upon coming to America.

(Continued on the next page)



An 1886 advertisement for "Magic Washer" detergent: The Chinese Must Go



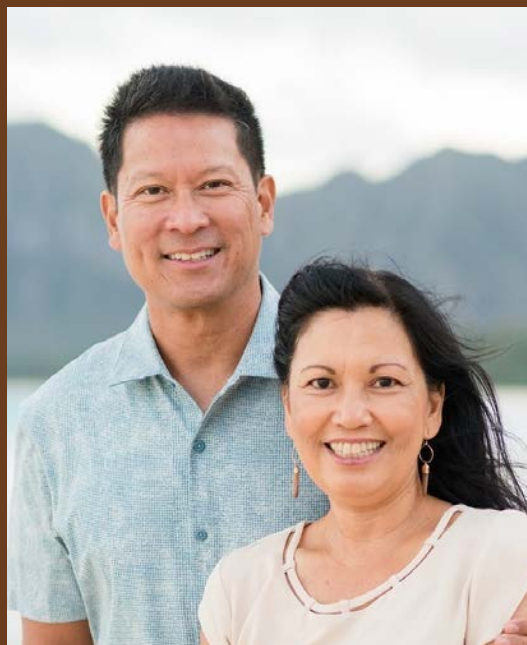
Japanese American Internment Camp



A boat with refugees from Vietnam



Ken and Lina Chau spent years in Vietnam as missionaries. They were the lead ministry couple for The Westside Church from 2014-2019.



Anthony and Saun Galang served in The Westside Church for many years. They are currently the lead minister couple for the Oahu Church of Christ.

(Continued from the previous page) In my upbringing as a youngster, I was teased for having "slanted eyes", made fun of eating "gross" Asian food, and often felt shame for my family's cultural roots. I had to assimilate quickly to American culture and it often meant treating my Asian heritage as inferior. In addition, the mainstream media typecasted Asians in stereotypical roles: the geeky mathematician/scientist or the passive foreigner which perpetuated false images. This is what the image of Asians was portrayed to me as I grew up in America.

Unfortunately, when I became a Christian in the Los Angeles Church of Christ, these stereotypes were often demonstrated by others either as subtle or even outright obvious. On many occasions, I have been part of the first-person experience and witnessed Asian disciples be asked to serve dutifully, but not asked to be involved in key decision-making plans. It felt like, "We are grateful that you serve, but we really don't want to hear your ideas." Many times I have wrestled with the idea that my fellow brothers and sisters have viewed Asians with the media's help, as dutiful servants but lack passion and assertive stances on important matters. I don't harbor any resentment towards those who have expressed these words or actions because I don't think it's intentional. However, I do know that words and actions can have an impact on countless others including me.

I am proud of the American Asian evangelists that the Westside has hired and the missionaries that have been sent out to my birthplace, Vietnam. These Christians have sacrificed so much to serve the Lord and His people. I delight in my Asian heritage, the value for community above the individual, the respect for elders, the food, and many more other things.

We all harbor stereotypes that need to be eradicated. To do this we really need to get to know one other better. The Hebrew word for "know" is "yada" which is much more than intellectual knowledge. An article that was written by Dr. Glenn Giles, a Teacher in the ICOC, stated, "For the Hebrews, yada is more by the heart than by the mind, and the knowing arises not by standing back from in order to look at, but by active and intentional engagement in lived experience." The apostle Paul wrote, "But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?" -Galatians 4:9

We are more unified and loving as a Church and community when we truly know each other through lived experiences in embracing our different cultures, backgrounds, and physical appearances. We are meant to be "holy", to be set apart, from the world. May the Body of Believers truly embrace each other as image-bearers of the Lord Almighty.

ANGIE NAKAMOTO

Favorite scripture:

Jeremiah 29:11-13

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.



OUR STORY

It was the summer of August 1990 where everything changed. I sat in the dark, looked out the patio window of Room 122 at the Executive Inn, and cried out in tears and anguish, "God this really hurts. Please get me out of this relationship. I can't take it anymore." My daughter Kayla was 4 months old; I was a single mom in a difficult, oft times violent relationship. The next day, I told my brother about the ugly truth of my relationship with Kayla's dad. That evening he just said, you're going to the Philippines to be with mom and dad.

My parents were in the Philippines at that time working on a business project. They left us - my older brother Cesar, and older sister Gina, and me to run the family business - hotels and restaurants, here in LA. We were in our early twenties. Can you imagine?

A little background. In 1964, my father, Cesar Lopez, Sr. arrived in Los Angeles from Laoag, Ilocos Norte, the most northern tip of the Philippines. His family was extremely poor. He had to work cleaning and doing odd jobs for other families growing up. Determined, he made his way to here to LA accompanying an associate for business. When their plans fell through, he stayed in LA. In a matter of months, he met my mom, Esmeralda Molina Aquino, a US Citizen. They fell in love and got married.

Dad was an immigrant with big dreams, a visionary, and the hardest worker I've ever known. Mom was also an Ilocano from Vintar, Ilocos Norte. Her family was very poor, too. Her father went to Hawaii and eventually divorced her mother when she was very young. A few years later, her mom had a pen pal from Hawaii. Her stepfather, Lazaro adopted her and her brother and brought the family to Hawaii. Mom was raised in Hawaii. She also had big dreams and worked hard. After college, she moved to LA for work and met my dad. Within the first three years, they had 4 kids. Dad had 3 jobs simultaneously, as a waiter, busboy and cook. Grandma and grandpa came to LA to help with the kids. Mom worked at a shipping agency. Despite all the work and raising kids, they always helped families or anyone in need, and opened their home to all. This practice remained even with their businesses. We always had a relative or their friend that stayed with us until they could get on their feet. My parents invested their savings in properties and then businesses. Their American dream was realized. We attended a private school.

My dad always said, anyone can take your money, but they can't take away your brain. Get a good education. The mantra of immigrant families.

Back to the summer of 1990. While I was away, my older brother Cesar was dating Jennifer DePerio. She started studying the Bible while attending San Francisco State. She broke up with him and told him he needed God. Ken Chau reached out to Cesar and took him to Willie Flores' Bible talk in Manhattan Beach. Cesar called me and told me I need to check out a church in Manila. He said, "I love you." Our family was never really expressive. This broke me. I went into the bathroom and cried. The next day I got a call from a very persuasive, Sabrina Gonzalez. (Continued on the next page)

OUR STORY

(Continued from the previous page) I attended midweek and met Anthony and Saun Galang, Kevin Agot, Ally (now Deperio), studied the Bible and got baptized a few weeks later. I returned home to LA in January 1991. My brother and Jennifer became disciples. My sister, Gina was baptized a week after I arrived. That year I witnessed many friends, family, customers, and employees get baptized. Zenaida “Nida” Morales was one of them!

In late 1991, Cesar and Jennifer became ministry leaders in the West sector. Mom got baptized in Keith and Maryann Rose’s hot tub, and became a disciple in the West, February 1992. Cesar and Jennifer trained in the LA and OC ministries, and in 1993 went on to lead the Manila Church for 19 years. That year, Dad studied the Bible with Preston Shepherd, Koko Enrile, and many other pillars in the Manila church and made Jesus Lord. He died in 1996, a faithful disciple. God’s dream became his dream.

Back in LA, I was a single mom raising two Samoan-Filipino kids, Kayla and Kody. I worked my regular job and side jobs doing flowers for weddings to make ends meet. The weight of the world, raising kids, work, loneliness, frustration, fatigue, bitterness, resentment, guilt, always being broke, hurt, grief, getting happy, showing up at leaders meetings, going to church, helping, serving, smiling, giving to kids, giving at work/church, and more giving. This is how some of those 11 years as a single mom felt when I was alone. But when I count my blessings, in retrospect, I am so grateful for God’s wisdom and the amazing village he gave me. Never could I have made it without borrowing the faith and accepting the love of my physical and spiritual families, especially my mom, Lopezes and Alexanders, Funes, Ridenours, Beth Upham, Dr. Francine Atterberry, Ruth Chao, the Newmans, Yangs, Nagakuras, Billy Huynh, Sherlett Newbill, Rick and Nicole Stebbins, Hiddlesons, Yolanda Ornelas, Lallensacks, Eula (McKinney) Ramroop, Jennifer Becknell, Michelle Tinti, Angelique Wyatt, Van Shepherd, and so many, many more. The richness of the cultures, people, backgrounds, and spirits of our village – priceless! Along with people, I needed prayer. I would take the kids to “my hill” the Palisades bluffs and offer up many bold, specific prayers. I prayed for a husband who loved God, knew how to be a great father, had a similar culture, and #1 – could fix a car. I always had car problems!

In January 2001, I was engaged to Eric Nakamoto, a man of God, a single, devoted dad to Nicole. He was a mechanic for the City of LA, Okinawan, raised in Hawaii. He is Sansei – 3rd generation. His father was caretaker of a small island in Kaneohe Bay where Eric grew up. Eric’s mother Shizuko was the homemaker extraordinaire who finished with an 8th grade education and successfully raised a teacher, photographer, engineer and mechanic. Both parents were interned at camps in Hawaii during WWII. They were both hard workers that loved their family and emphasized education as the key to a successful life. Mom Nakamoto is our centenarian matriarch currently residing in Washington.

ANGIE NAKAMOTO

Favorite Asian
dishes: Mama's
Limpia, Hamachi
Kama





OUR STORY

Continued from the previous page) Eric and I got married in May 2001 and were in the throes of a full-on blended family! It was NO joke! We were Japanese, Filipinos, Samoans under one roof. Think about that. There were not too many blended families at that time in our church. We even went to counseling. All the craziness was “normal”. You’ll feel “normal” in about 7 years they said. It took about 9. We had his, mine and ours – EJ was born in 2002. We are grateful for the many families and couples that supported us emotionally and spiritually through that time. Mama was with us every step of the way. I’m grateful for a culture and for God’s tenet to honor our parents and take care of them. Mom has been with us since we married, and has been a source of strength, wisdom, and stability for our children, and even us. Trust God. Continued on the next page)

It will be 20 years on May 12th since Eric and I married. Most of our village still here, with us. Still faithful and grateful for God’s unconditional love, unending patience, and mercy. By God’s amazing grace, our families – Cesar & Jennifer Lopez, leading marrieds in the North region of LA, and their children, Brianna, CJ (married a disciple, Destiny) and Daniel are disciples. Gina and Richard Alexander are disciples in Lifeway. Our son, Kody was baptized in the West, who one year ago, married Alexis Bond, a disciple in Santa Clarita. Kayla is a single mom to our beautiful, spunky granddaughter, Kalia. EJ is a graduating senior at Culver City HS. We are blessed with an incredible family from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. We are Okinawan, Filipino, Spanish, American, African American, Japanese, Caucasian, Thai/Puerto Rican. We’ve got it all! God has woven this deep, colorful tapestry of family to help us hold it all together.

God has given me so much more than I could have ever asked or imagined from that dark, solitary night in the summer of 1990. From that one cry, all this.

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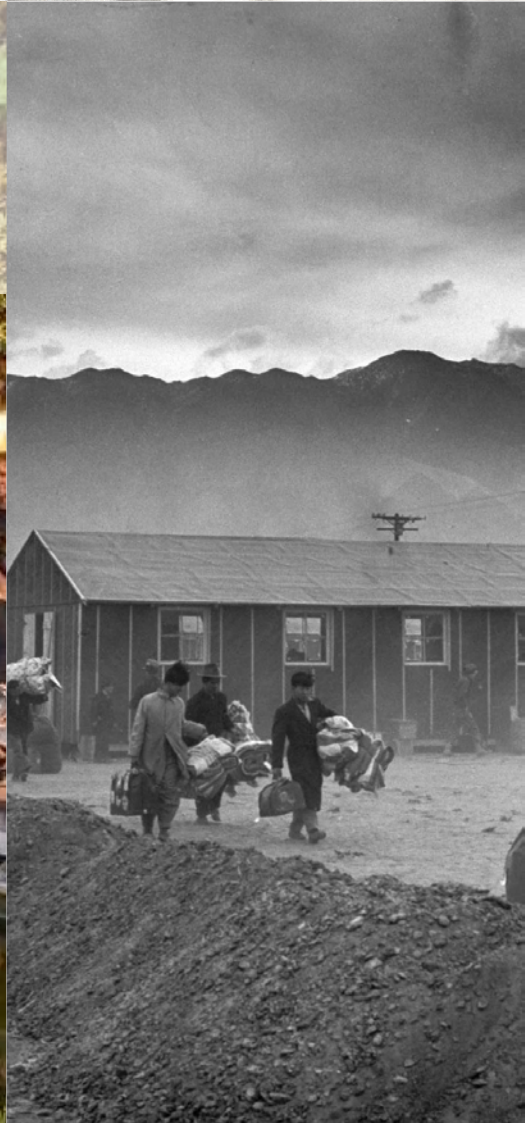
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REVELATIONS 7:9-10

After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar,
“Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne
and from the Lamb!”