

# 2018 APAWLI Faculty and Staff Bios



## *Audrey Buehring*

Audrey Buehring is the Deputy Director of Operations for Seattle's Human Services Department. In this role, Audrey manages the department's day-to-day business: people, processes, budget, and internal strategy. She's a public service veteran who previously worked as Chief of Staff to Seattle City Councilmember John Okamoto, as Deputy Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and as a Presidential Management Fellow at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Before joining the public sector, Audrey was an engineer at General Motors OnStar, where she first learned the elegance of a simple process and the importance of moving people to action.



## *Courtney Chappell*

Courtney Chappell has over 15 years of experience supporting the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community and advancing social justice. Most recently, as Deputy Director at the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Courtney created a regional interagency working group that brought the federal government to the farthest corners of the country, linking local AAPI communities with federal services and programs, and becoming one of the Initiative's strongest legacies.

Courtney has spent most of her career in the public interest sector, advocating for women of color and vulnerable populations on a variety of issues through community organizing, coalition building, training programs, and policy advocacy. She served as the Deputy Director at the DC Employment Justice Center where she worked in coalition to help the District to pass comprehensive unemployment insurance legislation and a "ban the box" bill that prohibited discrimination against workers with criminal records. Courtney also served as the first Policy & Programs Director at the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, where she spearheaded the organization's reproductive justice program and developed a multi-pronged action agenda that included lobbying, grassroots organizing, and public education. Courtney was also an associate at James & Hoffman, P.C., where she represented unions and individual employees in all matters relating to labor and employment law.

Courtney graduated magna cum laude from the American University Washington College of Law, where she was a staff member of the American University Law Review. She has served on the boards of the Third Wave Foundation, the Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project, and the DC Chapter of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. She is a recipient of a New Voices Fellowship and a Georgetown Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship. Courtney currently lives in Seattle, WA with her husband and two daughters.



## *Toby Chaudhuri*

Toby Chaudhuri has more than two decades of experience working with high-profile leaders and major organizations in the high-stakes arena of politics and with inspiring movements around the world. He has designed and implemented a full range of strategies to inspire and engage people and motivate action.

Toby most recently served as vice president at PBS, America's largest public media enterprise. Prior to PBS, Toby worked for President Barack Obama, advising the White House's race-based initiatives and projects internationally for the U.S. State Department. He also co-founded Social By Design, a strategy-consulting firm, where he works with forward-looking organizations to rethink the way they mobilize their stakeholders. At Social By Design, his clients have included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, PBS, the DNC, AARP and Morehouse College.

Toby also served as a political appointee to President Bill Clinton and worked to elect several principled candidates, including serving as deputy press secretary to Vice President Al Gore's 2000 presidential campaign. He helped Dilma Rousseff become the first female president of Brazil and helped re-elect Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in major upset elections.

Toby has appeared in many major daily newspapers, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune and The Times of India, as well as in Time Magazine, and as a commentator on National Public Radio, the BBC, MSNBC and CNN.



## *Kevin Fong*

Kevin Fong is a nationally recognized and respected facilitator, trainer and speaker in leadership and executive development and organizational systems, philosophy and design. Kevin has extensive experience in working with clients in the public and private sector, especially with diverse, multicultural/multi-lingual groups. He serves as lead faculty in several leadership training programs and fellowships, facilitates board, executive and team building retreats, coaches corporate and nonprofit executive leaders, and plans and facilitates seminars and conferences on governance and leadership.

Prior to creating his consulting practice in 1995, Kevin spent five years in executive management at Macy's CA, and eight years directing a clinical HIV program and teen clinic at Asian Health Services, a community health center in Oakland, CA. In addition, Kevin was awarded a three-year fellowship from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. During his assignments in East Africa, Brazil, Guatemala, Turkey, Central and Eastern Europe, and throughout the U.S., Kevin paid particular attention to the effects of globalization on families, neighborhoods and villages from the context of community and citizen leadership. He has served on numerous community and national boards, and has played a key role in the development of several social service organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. A third-generation Asian-Pacific American, Kevin earned his degrees in Physiology and East Asian Studies at the UC Berkeley.



## *Tammy Higa-Seaver*

Tammy joined State Farm® in 1992 and has served in a variety of leadership positions including Subrogation Section Manager, Auto Underwriting Section Manager, Director and Assistant Vice President of the Customer Care Center. In addition, she has recently took on the role of an executive in their Enterprise Change Management department, overseeing the organization change management strategies for people migration impacts in large operations.

Tammy has a long history of supporting Diversity and Inclusion at State Farm including a pioneer member of the Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Board for Shared Services, advancing efforts of the AsiaNet Employee Resource Group and most recently assuming the Executive Sponsor role for the Pride Employee Resource Group. She is now taking on a new adventure of serving as an executive mentor to the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) Mentorship Program.

Tammy is an alumni of the APAWLI program and former learning project coach. She is a proponent for educating young women on safety on college campuses. She has a long history of mentoring women in leadership roles including balancing home life, navigating environments, and establishing a strong and influential presence. She is passionate about developing impactful women for our future.

With her husband Jason, they are preparing to be empty nesters and embark on the next journey of life when their daughter, Lauren heads to college in the Fall of 2018.



## *Kay Iwata*

Kay Iwata is an internationally recognized diversity & inclusion leadership and organizational development consultant, researcher and author. Her approach is global, strategic and systemic. It focuses on building from a strong business case that is anchored in the values and culture of the organization and its leaders. Ms. Iwata's book, *The POWER of Diversity: 5 Essential Competencies for Leading a Diverse Workforce* provides a researched based focus on what specific behaviors and actions diversity and inclusion competent leaders and managers consistently demonstrate. The results also appear in the ASTD Leadership Handbook 2010 edition.

She has been named a Pioneer of Diversity by the Diversity Journal and published articles with SHRM and Diversity Central. Ms. Iwata has consulted in the UK, Japan, China and Latin America. She has served on the Leadership California Board and currently is a member of their Executive Advisory Council and faculty. She has also served as an advisor for GEWEL and was instrumental in the creation of the first conference on diversity held in Japan. Her client list includes Sodexo, Walmart, Johnson & Johnson, Sacramento Kings, County of Alameda, Texas A&M San Antonio and California State University Fresno.



## *Esther Y. Kang*

Esther Y. Kang is founder and principal at studio eyk – a strategy group that partners with teams in the social and public sectors to tackle hairy, complex problems. Recent collaborators include OpenGov Foundation, AARP, and U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs. Esther’s currently serving as an Advisor to Creative Reaction Lab – a design organization based in St. Louis committed to social justice.

Additionally, Esther recently served a one-year term as the inaugural Designer-in-Residence at the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) under the Obama Administration. In this capacity, she applied human-centered design to several internal projects focusing on organizational and programmatic design and implementation. Prior to joining the Initiative, Esther worked in philanthropy, public administration, and arts management creating community-centric programs in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. She has also served on advisory councils and steering committees of national and regional nonprofit organizations, in addition to being Adjunct Faculty at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA. Esther received her M.A. in social design from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and her B.F.A. in photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Esther is currently based in Brooklyn, New York, and has spent time in California, Illinois, Texas along with a gap year overseas.



## *Alissa Ko*

Alissa Ko has built a career that spans high-level national community organizing, fundraising, coalition building, and successful legislative campaigns. Alissa is the founder and principal of KO Strategies, a firm that advises clients on strategic partnerships, structuring political programs, and building constituency outreach programs.

Alissa most recently served as the Senior Associate Director at the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Office of Public Affairs, where she worked with attorneys general, state legislators and the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

Prior to working at the White House, Alissa served as the Deputy Director of Ready for Hillary, a groundbreaking national organization that raised over \$14 million and comprised 3 million supporters and over 100,000 donors. At Ready for Hillary, she oversaw the day-to-day operations and managed the field, constituency, data, and digital departments. Alissa also worked on the 2012 Obama for America campaign as the National Asian American and Pacific Islander Vote Director, where she helped increase the AAPI vote by 11 percent. She has been recognized as a Rising Star by Campaigns and Elections and has been included on 40 under 40 lists by the American Association of Political Consultants and the National Association of Asian Pacifics in Politics and Public Affairs.



## *Christina Lagdameo*

Various losses in Christina's life brought her back over and over again to the practices and teachings in meditation and yoga. The words of the young Buddha in Hermann Hesses's *Siddharta* resonated deeply with her, “[God] has robbed me, yet he has given me something of greater value . . . he has given to me myself.”

Her spiritual quest catapulted Christina into rigorous spiritual training at the Chozen-ji Zen Dojo in Honolulu and in Ashtanga yoga in South India. It was when she lived in Mysore, India for 3 years that Christina witnessed the transformative powers of yoga and meditation. Working with the nonprofit organization Odanadi, Christina shared the practices of yoga and meditation with survivors of human trafficking and was humbled by the experience. With this life-changing awakening, she made the vow to do her best to pass on the teachings to aid in others' journeys in self-realization.

Before focusing on yoga full-time, Christina served the White House for 9 years in the White House Office of Management and Budget; and then served as President Obama’s Deputy Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. She helped establish the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Maryland and received her Masters in Public Policy from the New School for Social Research in New York City.

Christina and her husband Vajra live in Olympia and opened True Self Yoga to help people realize their full potential.



## *Helly Lee*

Helly Lee has over 13 years of national policy analysis and advocacy experience in nonprofit organizations and government. Most recently, she served as advisor to the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI), leading their technical assistance work to engage communities and the federal government. Helly has worked at a number of national nonprofit organizations to advance federal policies and programs that affect low-income Americans, immigrant and refugee communities. She is an advocate for progressive policies around immigration, refugee resettlement, nutrition, education, health, and resources for low-income individuals. She is passionate about ensuring that

individuals and local communities are a part of policy making. Helly has also led the efforts of a national organization in building organizational and policy shifts to be more intentional about race equity. She was previously vice-chair of the board of directors for Legacies of War, a U.S. based non-profit that advocates for the removal of cluster munitions from Laos. Helly holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from the University of St. Thomas and a Masters of Social Work with a focus in Social Policy and Evaluation from the University of Michigan.



## *Dana Paredes*

For over 18 years, Dana has played a strategic role in positioning organizations for growth and success. Her experience on management teams coupled with on-the-ground campaign/electoral organizing, training, and technical assistance has led her to develop a deep understanding of what it takes to cultivate dynamic organizations. It was not until she was introduced to Forward Stance that she understood there was so much more possibility and potential when we utilize our whole selves— the mind-body-spirit.

Dana learned of Forward Stance while at Forward Together, a national multi-racial organization that works with community leaders and organizations to transform culture and policy to catalyze social change. Forward Stance is a mind-body physical practice that unleashes our full potential for leadership, organizational growth, and strategic movement building. During this time, she coordinated the Forward Stance Leadership Institute and coached individuals and organizations – from throughout California to Albuquerque, New Mexico, Portland, Oregon, Atlanta, Georgia, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin – to develop and deepen their practice.

In 2013, Dana started Momentum Institute. Momentum Institute is designed to provide access to those seeking to learn Forward Stance, create pathways for current practitioners to deepen their practice, and align different leaders and organizations who are teaching Forward Stance and integrating it into their social change efforts.

Before starting Momentum Institute, Dana has worked with Forward Together, the Center for Third World Organizing, and Californians for Justice. She is a co-author of *Looking Both Ways: Women's Lives at the Crossroads of Reproductive Justice and Climate Justice*. She currently serves as the board treasurer for Mobilize the Immigrant Vote, is a 2008 fellow of the National APAWLI Program of the Center for Asian Pacific American Women, and a 2007 fellow of the Women's Policy Institute, a program of the Women's Foundation of California. Dana holds a BA in Political Science from the University of California, at Berkeley.



## *Doua Thor*

Doua Thor currently supports the Center in building its leadership programming. She also supports other institutions in different roles serving as the Senior Advisor for the AAPI Civic Engagement Fund. Most recently, she was a political appointee in the Obama Administration as the Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Initiative) from 2015-2017. Prior to that she served as the Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Initiative where she worked to build public private partnerships between federal agencies and philanthropic organizations such as the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation. In the past she also served as a Senior Fellow with the

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD) and was the Executive Director of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) for nearly 9 years. She was selected as a New Voices Fellow in 2002, a German Marshall Memorial Fellow in 2008, an Asian Pacific American Women's Leadership Institute Fellow in 2009, and a Health and Aging Policy Fellow in 2013. Doua Thor and her family were among the many thousands of Hmong refugees who were resettled in the United States after supporting and fighting alongside the U.S. during the Vietnam War. Over the years, Doua has gained a wealth of experience working with national, grassroots, and refugee serving organizations. She earned her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Michigan and her Bachelor of Arts from Wayne State University.



## *Norma Timbang*

Norma Timbang provides private consulting and facilitation toward transformative and transitional processes for human and health service, policy advocacy, grassroots, academic, community, and social justice organizations. Her consulting work includes and is often centered on integration of values and principles of equity and social justice. She has decades of experience in organizational leadership and administrative oversight, including as one of the founding mothers and former executive director of Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center (now merged as API Chaya), and former Community Programs Manager at International Community Health Services. She

has served as a member of such organizations as the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum's national governing board, the Washington State Task Force on Human Trafficking, the LGBTQ Allyship Intergenerational program, and is currently a board member of the Filipino Community of Seattle and of API Chaya.

Norma is also a lecturer at the University of Washington and Seattle University, teaching courses on organizational development, community and coalition building, policy advocacy and development, community collaborative program evaluation, and social justice and racial equity. Additionally, she has a private practice as a mental health therapist and organizational healer, provides conflict mediation from a framework of equity and social justice, and is a co-founder at The Well on Beacon, a multicultural, multi-service, holistic wellness clinic.