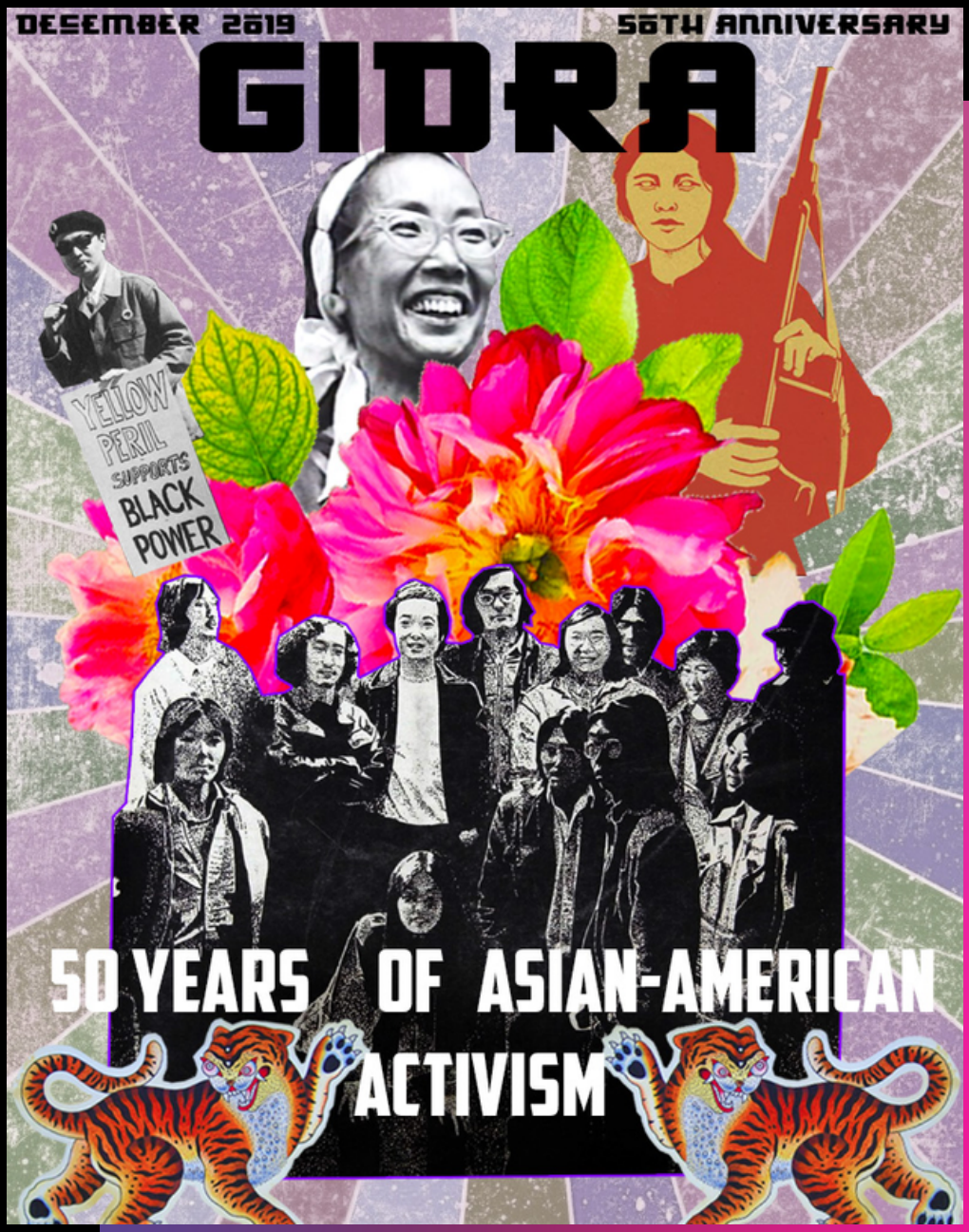
# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

A Curriculum for Secondary School Students

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Developed by Karen Lau
2022 Holster Scholar
University of Connecticut

With support from
Dr. Jason O. Chang
Dr. Grace D. Player

# Table of Contents

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to my parents and grandparents for teaching me to have pride in my identity as a first-generation Chinese American and for showing me that community is synonymous with belonging. This curriculum was borne out of my love for our family, culture, and history.

Thank you to my mentors, Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player, for constantly supporting me as a researcher and an advocate, reassuring and empowering me when I felt lost, and showing me to lead by their example of creating more equitable spaces for students of color in academia. By critically examining my writing and sharing resources about pedagogical approaches and historically responsive literacy strategies, they raised intriguing questions that motivated me to investigate history deeper and challenged me to think conscientiously about colonialism and imperialism. Furthermore, Dr. Chang and Dr. Player have transformed the impetus for my research, a curiosity in Asian American studies, into an ambition to utilize education policy to bolster the mental health of students of color. My mentors will collaborate with me during my fellowship at the UConn Humanities Institute, another adventure I am thrilled and endlessly grateful to share with them.

Thank you to the following service members and veterans who participated in oral history interviews: U.S. Army Major Kimberly Brutsche, USCG Lieutenant Andrew M. Ellis, USCG Lieutenant Commander Christine T. Igisomar, Fmr. USCG Instructor Pilot Mara H. Langevin, and Ret. USCG Captain Jeffrey Lee, USCG Admiral Andrew M. Sugimoto, USAF Lieutenant Colonel Leonardo Tongko, USCG Captain Eva Van Camp, and U.S. Army Major Seth Varayon. Engaging in conversations with them about the "bamboo ceiling," their challenges and aspirations, and their families was as gratifying as it was astoundingly inspiring; documenting their stories of heroism for future generations was an honor.

Thank you to Dr. William H. Thiesen, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Historian, for connecting me with Asian American and Pacific Islander trailblazers in the Coast Guard. Dr. Thiesen was invaluable in helping me learn about their enduring legacy of sacrifice and service.

Thank you to Dr. Vin Moscardelli for his kindness, compassion, and humility. Dr. Moscardelli has been instrumental in helping me start my research career. More so, his willingness to listen and offer advice has helped me build confidence, resilience, and personal growth.

Lastly, thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Carlotta Holster for funding the Holster Scholars Program. Their support has helped undergraduate students like myself develop independent research skills, build connections with academics in our fields, discover new career paths, and create friendships with our cohorts, all of which we will carry for the rest of our lives.

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

**Proposed Syllabus**

**Spring 2023**

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## Course Description

Due to the advocacy of Make Us Visible[1], educators, parents, and students, Connecticut became the first state to include Asian American and Pacific Islander studies[2] in the K-12 public school curriculum, requiring boards of education to offer AAPI studies by the 2025-2026 school year. This curriculum intends to support the state's efforts to teach students about Asian American history with a focus on Connecticut and other New England states.

During this six-week program, students will learn about the transnational immigration of Asian indentured workers, the legacy of the Chinese Educational Mission, the heroism and resistance of Japanese Americans during World War II, the role of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the armed forces, and the activism of past and present Asian American civil rights leaders.

Students will meet weekly to engage with the material, participate in discussions with peers, and complete independent research projects. This interdisciplinary course will compel students to think critically about the socioeconomic and political forces that impact their communities. For instance, they will learn about local connections to Asian American history in Cornwall, CT and Norwich, CT. They will be challenged to identify often-overlooked ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, and South Asians and learn about their histories.

This program will feature a culturally sustaining and historically responsive curriculum both in content and delivery that responds to students' needs and affirms their identities. This curriculum utilizes the K-12 Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks and Guiding Principles by using inclusive, intersectional lenses that counteract racial stereotypes, teaching local and global issues through diverse perspectives, and reinforcing learning through local connections.

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[1] Make Us Visible
[2] Senate Bill No. 1, signed into law on May 24, 2022

## Course Framework

| Learning Objectives (LO) | Essential Questions (EQ) |
|---|---|
| **LO1 DEVELOP** research, critical thinking, and storytelling skills and synthesize historical data from digital databases and archives.<br><br>**LO2 EVALUATE** primary and secondary source documents that represent a range of views to critically respond to compelling and supporting questions. | **EQ1 STORYTELLING** Which perspectives dominate the telling of stories that are available about Asian American history today and who are the marginalized voices?<br><br>**EQ2 DOCUMENTATION** How did Asian Americans document their experiences of migration, refugee resettlement, labor, activism, and community building? |
| **LO3 ANALYZE** local and global geopolitical, economic, and human rights issues through multicultural and multinational lenses. | **EQ3 ADVOCACY AND RESISTANCE** How did Asian Americans resist unjust government policies and laws and how did they advocate for change? |
| **LO4 EXERCISE** critical thinking, independence, and initiative to complete a research project about Asian American history and the local and regional community. | **EQ4 COMMUNITY** Which Asian American communities are present in Connecticut and what does their presence look like e.g. businesses, military service, culture, art/music, food, religious groups? |
| **LO5 APPLY** tools of civic engagement and communicate ideas to others. Examples include writing a testimony in support of or in opposition to a bill, writing a mock Supreme Court argument, writing an editorial, writing a letter to an elected official or state agency about a local issue, and writing a policy brief to solve a global conflict. | **EQ5 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** How have Asian Americans historically and presently responded to crises in their communities e.g. Civil War, Great Depression, World War II, Vietnam War, COVID-19 pandemic? |
| **LO6 INTERPRET** how American foreign policy, military action, and judicial rulings impacted Asian American immigration, citizenship, international relations, trade, and the economy. | **EQ6 IMPERIALISM** How has the American government and military been complicit in wars, genocide, and geopolitical violence in Asian countries? What happened to the refugees following these military conflicts in their countries? |
| **LO7 INVESTIGATE** the evolution and development of the Asian American and Pacific Islander identities, including intersections with other communities. | **EQ7 DIASPORA** What cultures, stories, and traditions do the Asian American and Pacific Islander diaspora include? |

**Required Texts**

1. Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History*
2. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Scott Wong, and Jason Oliver Chang, *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*
3. Monica Chiu, *Asian Americans in New England: Culture and Community*
4. Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America*

**Optional Texts**

1. Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*
2. Michelle Zauner, *Crying in H Mart*
3. Senator Mazie K. Hirono, *Heart of Fire: An Immigrant Daughter's Story*

**Course Expectations**

1. **Attendance and participation in in-class discussions and activities**

Students must be prepared to participate in group activities, discussions, and presentations. Students are expected to contact the instructor for any excused absences and make up the readings and in-class assignments by the next class.

2. **Completion of reading assignments**

Students are expected to read the weekly required texts and engage in course content including but not limited to newspaper articles, podcasts, memoirs, videos, and legislation.

3. **Completion of written assignments, research projects, and oral history projects**

Students are expected to complete a written reflection each class. In addition, they will complete individual multimedia projects in which they will demonstrate their research skills by using digital databases, archives, and library resources. They will also engage with their local community by interviewing an Asian American community leader or visiting an Asian American historical site, for example.

**Course Schedule**

**Module 1: Undocumented, Exploited, and Excluded: The Coolie Trade and Chinese Immigration During the Gold Rush**

**Essential Question:** How did economic conditions and labor demands allow for the immigration of Asians to the U.S. and their eventual exclusion?

**Vocabulary and figures to know:** Coolie trade, Gold Rush, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Naturalization Act of 1790, the Page Act, segregation, *United States vs Wong Kim Ark*, *Ozawa v. United States*, *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, transnational migration, assimilation, Pacific barred zone, xenophobia, and confinement

**Week 1**

- Self-introductions
- **Required Reading:** "Coolies," Chapter 2 of *The Making of Asian American History*, pp. 34-59, "Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain" and "'The Chinese Must Go!'": The Anti-Chinese Movement", Chapters 3 and 4 of *The Making of Asian American History*, pp. 59-109
- **Optional Reading:** What Archaeologists Are Learning About the Lives of the Chinese Immigrants Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad
- **Assessment:** Pre-survey about students' prior knowledge of Asian American history

**Module 2: They Walked So We Could Run: The Chinese Educational Mission and Asian Students in New England**

**Essential Question:** How did the opportunity for education change the relationship between China and the United States, allowing for Asian male students to attend American schools?

**Vocabulary and figures to know:** Yung Wing, the Chinese Educational Mission, the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, the Foreign Mission School, the Canterbury Female Boarding School

**Week 2**

- **Required Reading:** Chapter 17 (pp. 180-190) and Chapter 19 (pp. 197-215) of *My Life in China and America*
- **Required Reading:** Chapter 1 of *Asian Americans in New England*, "Copying and Conversion: An 1824 Friendship Album 'from a Chinese youth'" (pp. 1-31)
- **Required Reading:** "NFA, Slater Museum and China Connection has Deep Roots"

- **Required Reading:** "A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair"
- **Assignment:** Friendship album art project
    - Recreate a friendship album by creating collages from magazines. At the end of class, they will briefly share their designs with their peers.
        - View examples here.

**Module 3: Fighting Oppression At Home and Abroad: Japanese Incarceration, Resistance, and the Legacy of Nisei Soldiers During World War II**

**Essential Question:** What factors contributed to the U.S. government's incarceration of Japanese Americans following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and in what ways did Japanese Americans resist?

**Vocabulary and figures to know:** Fred Korematsu, Executive Order 9066, Gentleman's Agreement, *Korematsu v. United States, Hirabayashi v. United States, Ex parte Mitsuye Endo,* the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, redress movement, reparations, restitution

**Week 3**

- **Watch:** Japanese-American veteran receives a hero's welcome in French village he helped liberate (0:55-5:56), President Reagan's at the Japanese-American Internment Compensation Bill signing on August 10, 1988 (0:47-6:43)
- **Required Reading:** "'Military Necessity': The Uprooting of Japanese Americans During World War II", Chapter 10 of *The Making of Asian American History*, pp. 211-229, "'Grave Injustices': The Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II", Chapter 11 of *The Making of Asian American History*, pp. 229-252
- **Required Reading:** "Interview with Yuri Kochiyama (2006)", *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*, (pp. 274-277), The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*, (pp. 278-283)
- **Optional Reading:** Gifts From Japanese Internment Camp Survivor Support Future Generations
- **Assignment:** Japanese postcard art project
    - Students will design Japanese postcards inspired by the craze for postcards due to the mass distribution of postcards by the Japanese government to promote the war effort during the Russo-Japanese War, the development of the postal service, and growth of the printing industry.
        - Examples from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts
    - Debate
        - Students will debate the following questions:

1. Does national security justify the forced relocation, interrogation, and incarceration of American citizens? How about non-citizens?
2. Should the Constitution be interpreted differently in wartime versus peacetime? Why or why not?

**Module 4: From the Cutter Muster Rolls to O-10: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the Armed Forces**

**Essential Question:** What is patriotism? How have Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders shown their patriotism by answering the call to serve during the Spanish-American War, World Wars I & II, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and current conflicts?

**Vocabulary and figures to know:** patriotism, the Long Blue Line, Asian American Cuttermen, Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPARs), Executive Order 9066, Japanese incarceration, Executive Order 9981, integration of the armed forces, Spanish-American War, Vietnam War, annexation, imperialism, colonialism, self-determination, sovereignty

**Week 4**

- **Required Reading:** Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States (1898), Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain, Executive Order 9066, Executive Order 9881, Oral History Questionnaire by Ms. Florence Finch
- **Listen:** Oral History Interviews with U.S. Coast Guard, Air Force, and Army Veterans
- **Assignment:** Oral History Interview
    - Students will develop questions for an oral history interview with a figure of their choice and submit a recording of a 30-minute interview

**Module 5: "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power": AAPI Activists During the Civil Rights Movement and 1992 L.A. Uprising**

**Essential Question:** How did activists in Asian American Movement of the 1960s fight for an end to the Vietnam War, ethnic studies, affordable housing, labor rights, gender equality, and LGBTQ rights?

**Vocabulary and figures to know:** 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act/the Hart-Celler Act, Grace Lee Boggs, Philip Vera Cruz, Helen Zia, Yuri Kochiyama, Vincent Chin, Congresswoman Patsy Mink, Title IX, model minority myth, monolith, the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton, Fred Hampton, Bobby Seale, Malcolm X, the Red Guard, Third World Liberation Front, Vietnam War, anti-war movement

**Week 5**

- **Watch:** "Yuri and Malcolm"
- **Watch:** "Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs Changed the World"
- **Watch:** "How San Francisco erased a neighborhood"
- **Required Reading:** "The Wheel of Justice: The Killing of Vincent Chin and the Death of the Motor City", *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*, pp. 286-298
- **Required Reading:** "Korean American Businessman Recalls L.A. Riots", *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*, pages 298-302
- **Optional Reading:** In 1968, These Activists Coined the Term 'Asian American'—And Helped Shape Decades of Advocacy
- **Optional Reading:** After 50 years of 'Asian American,' advocates say the term is 'more essential than ever'
- **Assignment:** written reflection about the history and legacy of AAPI activism during the 1992 L.A. Uprising and the Civil Rights Movement.

**Module 6: Stop Asian Hate: Anti-Asian Violence and Hate Crimes in the Twenty-First Century**

**Essential Question:** How did the AAPI community respond to crises during the '90s and the twenty-first century, including the 1992 L.A. Uprising, 9/11, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Stop Asian Hate movement?

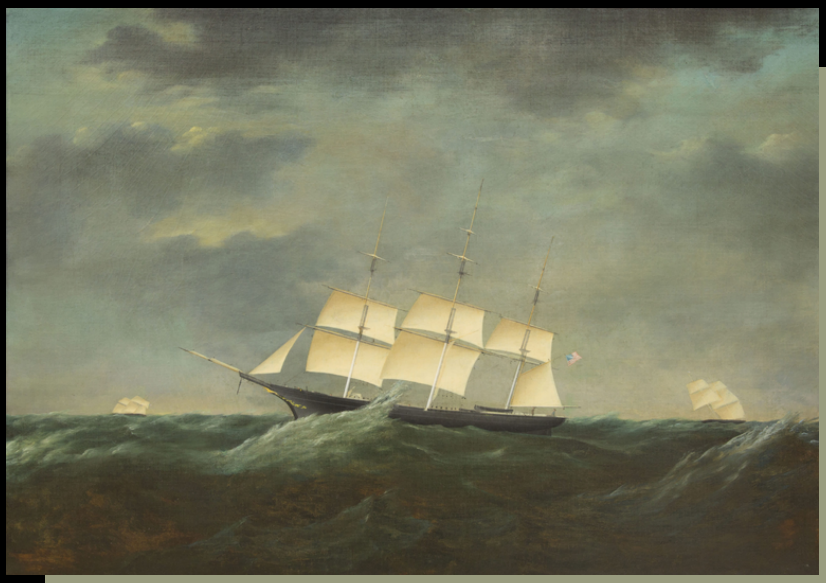
**Vocabulary and figures to know:** Arab Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, Muslim Americans, Sikh Americans, South Asian Americans, Patriot Act, 9/11, War on Terror **,** I.C.E., Islamophobia, police brutality

**Week 6**

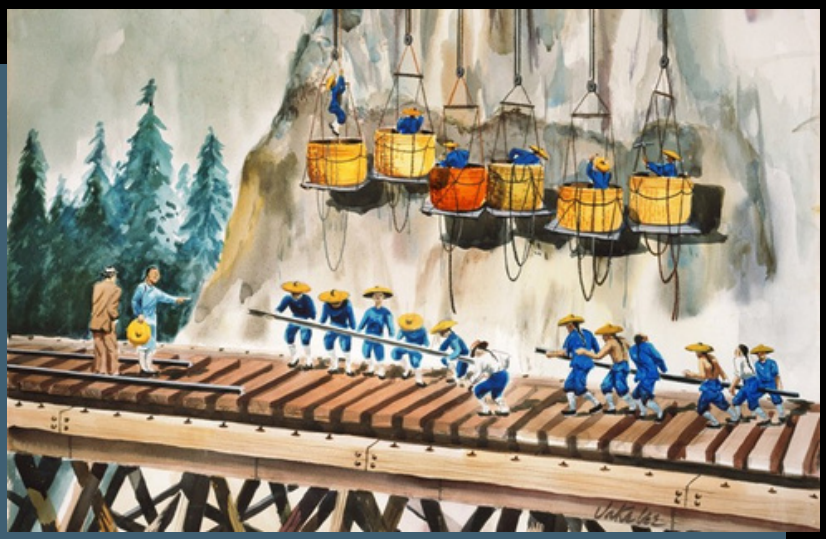
- **Discuss:** the Asian American experience post-9/11, the rise in hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the growing AAPI electorate and presence in local, state, and federal government, Stop Asian Hate Movement
- **Watch:** Daniel Dae Kim testifies before U.S. Congress about Anti-Asian hate in America.
- **Watch:** Representative Grace Meng testifies about anti-Asian hate.
- **Read:** Asian American groups rally for racial and social equality.
- **Read:** March protesting anti-Asian hate urges mobilizing for elections and inclusive education.
- **Read:** 'Awoken' By N.Y. Cop Shooting, Asian-American Activists Chart Way Forward
- **Read:** Why This Wave of Anti-Asian Racism Feels Different
- **Listen:** Michelle Wu elected as Boston's first woman mayor in historic victory
- **Assignment:** Post-program survey about students' knowledge of Asian American history

# Module 1

Undocumented, Exploited, and Excluded: The Coolie Trade and Chinese Immigration During the Gold Rush



*Hound*. Oil painting. © Mystic Seaport Museum, 1945.326.



Laborers Working on Central Pacific Railroad, ca. 1950s.
Image by Jake Lee via the Chinese Historical Society of America

**Essential Question:** How did economic conditions and labor demands allow for the immigration of Asians to the U.S. and contribute to their eventual exclusion?

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

| Module 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title** | Undocumented, Exploited, and Excluded: The Coolie Trade and Chinese Immigration During the Gold Rush | **Timeframe** | Early-Mid February (1 week) |
| **Developed By** | Karen Lau (with support from Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player) | **Revision Date** | September 8, 2022 |

## Background

**Summary:** Module 1 centers on the origins of Asian immigration to the United States, beginning with the Coolie trade and the Gold Rush, and ending with exclusionary laws and judicial rulings. Learning about the labor of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian immigrants will provide students with the information they need to critically understand the contributions of these immigrant groups to American society and its infrastructure. Begin this module with the introduction to the program, an overview of the scope and sequence of content, and orientation of students to the learning expectations and goals.

### Coolie Trade

The Coolie trade was the migration of East and South Asian workers to plantations in the Americas as part of the system of indentured labor in the British colonies. The term “Coolie” became a derogatory term that stereotypes Asians as laborers who compete with Americans for jobs and work for cheap wages. This term fueled anti-Asian violence and discrimination in the U.S. and abroad. Called “Coolies,” they were indentured workers bound by contracts to perform hard labor. These indentured workers labored in Cuba, Peru, British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Panama, Mexico, Brazil, and Costa Rica. The system of South Asian indentured labor was governed by British regulation and imperialism. After the African slave trade was abolished by Great Britain in 1807 and by the U.S. in 1808, plantation owners sought to replace the diminishing free or cheap labor by importing indentured workers from China and South Asia. Free Africans remained able to provide their labor, but the plantation owners were unwilling to

sacrifice their profits, deciding to outsource labor from impoverished individuals in other countries. This labor shortage was occurring while the West Indies, Cuba, Brazil, and Peru were expanding their agriculture-based economies. Governments were seeking laborers to maintain the output of resources and materials, including coffee, cotton, rum, tobacco, and guano fertilizer. The migration of Chinese men to Cuba and Peru was not government-regulated. These workers were frequently abused, exploited, and forcefully recruited through kidnapping and deceit. They were often placed onto the same ships used during the African slave trade and sailed to sugar plantations in the United States, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, where they performed hard labor for low wages. These ships had high mortality rates as a result of disease spreading in close quarters and unsanitary conditions.

The Coolie trade began in the British West Indies. The first group of 396 Asian indentured workers arrived in British Guiana in May 1838. The South Asian laborers were diverse in their social backgrounds, religions, languages, and economic classes. They struggled to survive the conditions of hard labor and adjust to life in the Americas as their contracts were frequently violated. Under their contracts, they were usually bound to five years of labor, nine to ten hours a day, six days a week with a wage of 16 to 24 cents and the promise of transportation to their countries of origin after the expiration of their contracts. However, in colonies in Trinidad and British Guiana, these workers were only granted return transportation after they worked five extra years past their contracts' expiration. Similar to the treatment of African slaves, South Asian indentured workers were abused and convicted for insufficient work. Some of these workers were militant; they organized strikes, marches, and violent demonstrations to protest their abuse. Between 1886 and 1889, these workers carried out one hundred strikes. In 1847, the first Chinese indentured workers arrived in Cuba. By 1874, 142,000 Chinese workers were transported to Cuba. They were working in Cuba while the African slave trade was still in effect. The Coolie trade became profitable quickly, leading recruiters to use lies and deception to fill ships with laborers.

Critics have opposed the Coolie trade since its inception. Between 1900 and the onset of World War I, opposition to the suffering of indentured workers and the discrimination they faced grew in South Asia, Britain, and other countries. Although the British government defended the Coolie trade, the colonial government of India advocated for its abolition. The Indian government suspended the emigration of Indians to other countries in 1917. Three years later, in 1920, the trade of Asian indentured workers was abolished. During the Civil War, the Republican-led Congress wanted to prevent plantation owners in the south from replacing African slaves with Chinese indentured workers. Both abolitionists and people who defended slavery scrutinized the Coolie trade. Plantation owners believed the labor of Chinese indentured workers was vital to the southern economy. Federal officials and Louisiana plantation owners and merchants argued about the status of indentured Chinese workers. As a result of a nationwide

outcry against Chinese labor, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Act to Prohibit the Coolie Trade, banning Coolie labor and U.S. involvement in the Coolie trade in 1862. This law preceded the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Local Connections: New Haven, CT and Stonington, CT

Connecticut has two connections to the Coolie trade: New Haven and Stonington. In 1852, Lesley Bryson, a businessman from New Haven, Connecticut, transported a ship of 400 indentured workers from Xiamen, China. These workers were deceived into believing they were headed to San Francisco, California, when in fact, they were headed towards the Chincha Islands of Peru, a destination where they would likely die extracting guano fertilizer, a dangerous, ammonia-based substance. During the journey, Bryson's crew cut the queues, or the braided hair of the Chinese workers, an important cultural distinction. This assault, which broke Chinese imperial law, prompted the workers to organize a mutiny aboard the ship. They killed the captain, two officers, and four crew members during this mutiny. The mutineers tried to sail the ship back to China, but they hit a coral reef in the East China Sea, forcing them to land on the Yaeyama Islands. Some mutineers perished at sea. The surviving mutineers were captured by British and American forces and returned to China as prisoners whereas some were re-indentured. Since the mutiny occurred overseas, U.S. and Qing dynasty officials were in disagreement over whose jurisdiction the crime occurred in. The Americans alleged that the mutineers were criminals who should be tried for piracy whereas the Qing officials argued that the Americans kidnapped and deceived the workers. The interests of multiple nations, including China, Japan, the U.S., and Britain were embroiled in the case of the *Robert Bowne*. The U.S. government did not pursue this case in the courts because it did not want to expose its complicity in Asian indentured servitude.

Another local connection to the Coolie trade is the *Hound*, a ship that was constructed on the grounds of the Mystic Seaport Museum. The *Hound* was built by Charles Mallory & Sons in Mystic, CT in 1853 and chartered in New York in 1854. It was owned by Captain Amos Peck from Stonington, Connecticut. On July 23, 1855, Peck transported 230 Chinese indentured laborers to Havana, Cuba. In a written communication to William Robertson, the Acting American consul in Havana, Peck compared the Coolie trade to the African slave trade and expressed regret in his involvement. Initially, Peck was supposed to go to Macao for these passengers in September 1854. However, Peck only allowed 230 indentured workers to embark on the ship, breaking the charter agreement that the ship would carry up to 470 passengers. In the 1850s, Peck purchased a young boy from China named Joseph Pierce when he was ten years old and brought him to live with his family in Berlin, Connecticut. During the Civil War, Pierce became the only Chinese American soldier in the Army of the Potomac, the main Union Army in the Eastern Theater.

## The Gold Rush and Chinese Exclusion

Between the California Gold Rush and the War of 1898, Asian immigrants from China and Japan migrated to the west in search of jobs created by westward expansion. However, the immigration of Asian laborers to the west was met with malice and hostility; lawmakers passed legislation to exclude Asian immigrants from civic life and American society. For instance, the California legislature passed laws that raised taxes for Chinese residents, discouraged immigration, restricted education, and limited due process. During the Gold Rush in 1849, Chinese immigrants arrived in California to become miners. As the federal government accelerated the construction of the transcontinental railroad, American companies hired thousands of Chinese laborers. Chinese merchants established shops at railroad sites. In 1868, the U.S. and China created the Treaty of Trade, Consuls, and Emigration, establishing a relationship for migration and trade between the countries. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 caused many Chinese laborers to return to the West Coast. Tensions increased between the white population and Chinese residents. In October 1871, a violent mob killed 17 Chinese people in Los Angeles, the largest mass lynching in U.S. history.

## Exclusionary Laws

The government passed further legislation to limit Chinese immigration by negotiating a new treaty that allowed Congress to "regulate, limit, or suspend" the number of Chinese laborers immigrating to the U.S. In 1881, Congress passed a bill that ended Chinese labor immigration for two decades and prevented Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens. Although President Chester A. Arthur vetoed this bill, he signed the Chinese Exclusion Act into law in 1882, establishing the first immigration restrictions in American history. This bill ended Chinese immigration for ten years. Congress extended the bill's provisions every decade and restricted civil rights even further for the Chinese people. By 1892, Congress enforced deportation procedures and required Chinese immigrants to carry proof of their residence. Congress also banned Chinese laborers residing in Hawaii from immigrating to the continental U.S. The ban on Chinese immigration became permanent in 1904. Following the exclusion of Chinese immigrants, many Japanese immigrants moved to the U.S. to attend American schools and seek work. The Japanese government frequently monitored the living conditions of Japanese residents in the U.S. By 1900, however, hostility and discrimination against Japanese immigrants increased, causing the Japanese government to halt passports for laborers. The anti-Japanese sentiment in California increased as immigration increased. In 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education announced that all Japanese students would attend segregated schools, leading to a war scare that forced the city to rescind the measure.

Exclusion Laws Upheld by the Judiciary

Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917 which created an "Asiatic Barred Zone" that excluded about 500 million people from immigrating to the U.S. The national origins quota system was codified on May 19, 1921, setting total annual immigration at 355,000 immigrants. On May 26, 1924, President Calvin Coolidge signed the Johnson-Reed Act into law. This law limited annual immigration to the U.S. to 165,000 and barred all Japanese men, women, and children from immigrating to the U.S. In contrast, this law did not place the same restrictions on the west. California enforced strict anti-Asian policies that restricted the property rights of Japanese immigrants. In 1913, California passed an act prohibiting undocumented citizens from owning land. Filipino immigrants were eligible to enter the U.S. but were ineligible for naturalization. In 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld California's alien land laws, allowing California to seize land and assets from Japanese Americans during World War II. Federal courts began reversing anti-Asian rulings by the late 1940s. On April 17, 1952, in *Sei Fujii v. California*, the California Supreme Court declared the land laws unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court issued two rulings that impacted the citizenship of Asian immigrants. In 1922, in *Ozawa v. United States*, the court ruled that Japanese immigrants could not classify as "white" and could not become naturalized citizens. In 1923, in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the court upheld the citizenship ban against South Asian immigrants.

In this unit, students will:

- Understand the Coolie trade as the catalyst for Asian immigration to the Americas.
- Compare and contrast the experiences of Chinese and South Asian indentured workers and enslaved Africans.
- Examine the impact the Civil War and emancipation had on the American economy and demand for labor.
- Analyze the factors that contributed to the exclusion of Asian immigrants.
- Determine how the human rights of Chinese and South Asian indentured workers and residents were violated.
- Analyze the competing national interests of the U.S., Great Britain, China, and India in the Coolie trade.

**Compelling Questions:**

- How did U.S. economic conditions and desires for low-cost labor shape the immigration and eventual exclusion of Asians to the U.S.?
- What impact did the people of China and South Asia have on American civilization in the 19th century?

**Supporting Questions:**

- What were the reactions of Americans to the influx of Chinese laborers in California?
- How did Asian immigrants challenge the exclusionary laws in the courts? What was the judiciary's role in upholding the exclusion of Asian immigrants?
- What are the similarities and differences between how Chinese and Japanese immigrants were treated?
- In what ways did events and policies during the Civil War and the Gold Rush impact the social and economic mobility of Asian migrants?
- In what ways did the institutions of slavery and indentured servitude persist after their abolition? Does indentured servitude exist today?
- How did the relationship between the British colonies and the Asian indentured workers change over time?
- What level of resistance or protest existed on plantations and what was the response to resistance?
- How did abolitionists and defenders of slavery react to the Coolie trade? Compare and contrast the abolition movement to the opposition to the Coolie trade.

| Desired Results | |
|---|---|
| **Relevant Content Standards** | **Related Supporting Standards** |
| **From Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework**<br><br>**Dimension 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools**<br><br>HIST 9–12.1 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.<br><br>HIST 9–12.3 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.<br><br>HIST 9–12.8 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.<br><br>HIST 9–12.10 Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.<br><br>HIST 9–12.11 Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.<br><br>GEO 9–12.2 Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other | **From CT Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects)**<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing |

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| representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how globalization, competition for scarce resources, and human migration contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among countries. | the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Critical Consciousness** |
| **Overarching Learning Objectives** | **Overarching Essential Questions** |
| **LO1 DEVELOP** research, critical thinking, and storytelling skills and synthesize historical data from digital databases and archives.<br><br>**LO2 EVALUATE** primary and secondary source documents that represent a range of views to critically respond to compelling and supporting questions.<br><br>**LO3 ANALYZE** local and global geopolitical, economic, and human rights issues through multicultural and multinational lenses. | **EQ1 STORYTELLING** Which perspectives dominate the telling of stories that are available about Asian American history today and who are the marginalized voices?<br><br>**EQ2 DOCUMENTATION** How did Asian Americans document their experiences of migration, refugee resettlement, labor, activism, and community building?<br><br>**EQ3 ADVOCACY AND RESISTANCE** How did Asian Americans resist unjust government policies and laws and how did they advocate for change? |

| Theme/Content-Specific Enduring Understandings | Theme/Content-Specific Inquiry |
|---|---|
| **For this Module, students will know and be able to…**<br><br>**Knowledge:**<br>● Understand the similarities and differences between the Atlantic slave trade and the Coolie trade.<br>● Understand the economic motivations for the Coolie trade and the key role that imperialism played in its persistence.<br>● Understand labor as a commodity and an institution.<br>● Compare the experiences of the "Coolies" to the experiences of Asian workers whose labor is exploited in the twenty-first century, including but not limited to Filipino workers on cruise ships, Thai workers in sweatshops in California, and workers in garment factories in Myanmar.<br>● Write legislation in response to the exclusion of Asian immigrants during the Gold Rush era or to fix the ramifications of legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924.<br><br>**Skills:**<br>● Evaluate primary and secondary source documents to compare and contrast beliefs and stereotypes of early Asian immigrants.<br>● Contribute to classroom discussions about the definition of citizenship, the violence and xenophobia that immigrants faced, and their struggle for equality. | **For this Unit of Study, to support self-discovery, identity development, and civic preparedness/actions, students will explore...**<br><br>● In what ways did Asian American contribute to the economic development of the U.S.?<br>● How have the criteria for citizenship been widened over time?<br>● What role has power and imperialism played in conflicts involving American military presence in Asian countries?<br>● How do workers who are oppressed or exploited show resistance? |

| Evidence of Learning | | |
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| **Pre-Assessment/ Common Misconceptions** | **Formative Assessments/ Checks for Understanding** | **Performative Tasks and Criteria/Project-Based Applications (Aligned to Compelling Question)** |
| **Pre-Assessment:**<br>Students will complete an assessment to gauge: their interest in Asian American history, existing knowledge of Asian American history, cultural competency, topics and issues they would like to explore more, research skills, and what they hope to gain from the program.<br><br>**Common Misconceptions:**<br>● Model minority myth<br>● Asian Americans are a monolith<br>● Asian Americans face less discrimination than other minorities<br>● Slavery was limited to the Atlantic slave trade and ended after the Civil War | ● Class discussions/Socratic Seminars<br>● Short answer reflections<br>● Exit tickets<br>● Research assignment<br>● Oral history interview<br>● Art/creative assignment | This module concludes with an assignment in which students will apply their research skills to create their own definitions of American citizenship and act as a defense to an Asian immigrant seeking citizenship. |

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Learning Plan/Lesson Sequence</th></tr>
<tr><th>Lesson 1.1</th><th>Duration: 1 day</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Big Ideas/ Topics to be addressed, including Key Concepts and Terms<br><br>● Anti-racism<br>● Citizenship<br>● Culture<br>● Diaspora<br>● Discrimination<br>● Labor<br>● Transnational Immigration<br>● Colonialism<br>● Racism<br>● Nationalism<br>● Capitalism<br>● Nativism<br><br>Vocabulary: Coolie trade, Gold Rush, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Naturalization Act of 1790, the Page Act, segregation, United States vs Wong Kim Ark, Ozawa v. United States, United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, transnational migration, assimilation, Pacific barred zone, birthright citizenship, indentured servitude</td><td>Materials/Resources<br><br>Source #1<br>● Title: Naturalization Act of 1790<br>● Source type: Legislation<br>● Institution: National Archives and Records Administration<br>● Author: Congress<br>● Link: America's first immigration law.png<br><br>In March of 1790, Congress debated its first immigration law, the Naturalization Act of 1790. This bill allowed a “free white person” to petition for citizenship after two years of residency. It became law on March 26, 1790.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Source #2<br>● Title: Deportation Order<br>● Source type: Case document<br>● Institution: National Archives and Records Administration<br>● Author: U.S. government official<br>● Link: Deportation Order.png</td></tr>
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| | District courts enforced the Chinese Exclusion Act by deporting Chinese residents. This 1906 record for Lee San states that he resided in and worked in the U.S. without holding a certificate of residency, ordering him to be deported. |
| | Source #3<br>● Title: The Immigration Act of 1924<br>● Source type: Legislation<br>● Institution: National Archives and Records Administration<br>● Author: Congress<br>● Link: Immigration Act of 1924.png<br><br>The Immigration Act of 1924 established a national origins quota system that limited the number of immigrants and barred immigration from most of Asia except for Japan and the Philippines. |
| | Source #4<br>● Title: Chinese Miners in California<br>● Source type: Political Cartoon<br>● Institution: Library of Congress<br>● Author: Harper's Weekly newspaper<br>● Link: Chinese Miners in California.jpg<br><br>The cartoon, published in 1857, depicts Chinese miners at a mining site in California. |

Source #5

- Title: “The Chinamen Must Go”
- Source type: sheet music
- Institution: Library of Congress
- Author: Alvah Pendleton
- Link: The Chinamen Must Go 2.jpg

This sheet music, published in 1880, shows how the white community responded to the influx of Chinese laborers in California.

Source #6

- Title: The *Hound*
- Source type: Painting
- Institution: Mystic Seaport Museum
- Author: Unknown
- Link: Hound_Mystic_Seaport.jpg

This painting depicts the *Hound*, a ship used to transport indentured Asian workers to plantations.

Source #7

- Title: More on the Story of Joseph Pierce
- Source type: Research Paper
- Institution: None
- Author: Irving Moy

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| | • Link: The Story of Joseph Pierce Continues.pdf<br><br>This paper is about the story of Joseph Pierce, a Chinese American Civil War soldier. |
| **Learning Activities**<br><br>**Course Pre-Assessment:** Students will complete the pre-survey on what they know about Asian American history and what they will learn throughout the program.<br><br>**Week 1 Course Introduction**<br><br>**Initiation:** Introduce students and instructor, discuss program expectations, and provide an overview of learning objectives and essential questions.<br><br>**Activities:**<br><br>• Community-building exercise: "Tell Our Name Stories" (From *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*)<br>  ○ Initiate an activity about the intersections of identity: gender, race, ethnicity, ability, language, and age. Have students form pairs and answer these questions about their names and stories. | **Reflections to Affirm Identity**<br><br>Discuss with a family member what you learned about the experiences of Asian people who served as indentured workers, laborers on the Transcontinental Railroad, and gold miners. What role does the institution of forced labor play in our society today and how has this impacted different communities?<br><br>How does your analysis of the lives of Asian American immigrants, especially their battle for citizenship, belonging, and survival as well as their resistance to American imperialism, reflect the issues that our country is facing today? |

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| • In pairs or small groups, students will read about the history of the Coolie trade and the experiences of the indentured workers in Chapter 2 of Erika Lee's *The Making of Asian America*. They will discuss why the Coolie trade was created as an alternative to African slave labor and the economic ramifications of outsourcing labor from Asian countries.<br>• In pairs or small groups, students will examine several pieces of anti-Asian legislation passed by Congress, including the Naturalization Act of 1790 (Source #1), the Immigration Act of 1924 (Source #3). They will discuss why Congress passed these pieces of legislation and the impact that immigration quotas had on the American populace and the relations between Asia and the west.<br>• In pairs or small groups, students will examine a deportation order (Source #2), a political cartoon of Chinese miners in California (Source #4), and sheet music (Source #5) to understand the xenophobia and discrimination faced by Asian laborers in the U.S. predating the Chinese Exclusion Act and its aftermath.<br>• In pairs or small groups, students will learn about Connecticut's connections to the Coolie trade and read the story of Joseph Pierce, a Chinese American Civil War soldier (Source #6). They will also examine the painting of the *Hound* (Source #7) and discuss the role that New England states played in facilitating the Coolie trade and the Atlantic Slave Trade. | |

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| **Evidence of Learning:** Students will share understandings of legislation passed during the 19th century that impacted citizenship, immigration, and naturalization, shaping the fabric of communities across the U.S. Students will also submit a written reflection at the end of class.<br><br>**Closing:** Discuss: What is the meaning of citizenship? Who was allowed to become a citizen in the past and who is allowed to become a citizen today? What characteristics make up these differences? How has the rhetoric towards undocumented immigrants changed and how has it stayed the same? | |
| **Options for Content Continuity Across History Courses and Interdisciplinary Integration**<br><br>● English<br>● Humanities<br>● Political Science<br>● Economics<br>● Geography | **Extensions/Experiential Opportunities**<br><br>● Visit the Mystic Seaport Museum is located at 75 Greenmanville Ave, Mystic, CT 06355. |

# Module 2

They Walked So We Could Run: The Chinese Educational Mission and Asian Students in New England

Image of Yung Wing by Today in Connecticut History

The "Orientals" Baseball Club at the Chinese Educational Mission Headquarters, Hartford, Connecticut, 1878. Thomas La Fargue Papers, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).


Postcard of Slater Memorial Museum and Norwich Free Academy provided by The Day

**Essential Question:** How did education transform the relationship between China and the U.S., allowing for AAPI male students to attend American schools?

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

| Module 2 | | | |
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| **Title** | They Walked So We Could Run: The Chinese Educational Mission and Asian Students in New England | **Timeframe** | Early-Mid February (1 week) |
| **Developed By** | Karen Lau (with support from Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player) | **Revision Date** | September 6, 2022 |

**Background**

**Summary:** Module 2 centers on the experiences of Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students at New England institutions during the 19th century, including the Foreign Mission School. Learning about the Chinese Educational Mission and the Foreign Mission School's efforts to provide American schooling for Asian children will provide students with a better understanding of education as a vehicle for diplomacy between nations and cultural assimilation.

An 1824 Friendship Album "From a Chinese Youth"

In 1824, a Chinese student at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut produced a "friendship album," a book that contains a mix of drawings, poems, and short prose compositions (Sánchez-Eppler 1). The friendship albums that students at the Foreign Mission School produced demonstrate how students expressed themselves and their community. These students were diverse for their time as they signed their nationality beside their name: "George Fox a native of Seneca," "Miles McKay a Choctaw," "Charles M. Arohekeah a native of Hawaii," "Wm A-lum a little boy of Chinese Youth your friend," "Done by your friend Chinese youth Henry Martyn." The friendship album created as a gift for Cherry Stone by Henry Martyn A'lan (Wu Lan in Cantonese) contains writing in both English and Chinese and watercolor paintings. This album is possibly the earliest surviving Chinese document produced in the U.S., created a generation before Xiao-Huang Yin began his study called *Chinese American*

*Literature since the 1850s* (Sánchez-Eppler 2). Chinese students studied at the Foreign Mission School thirty years before Yung Wing enrolled at the Monson Academy in Massachusetts.

The Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut

The Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut connected the town to the national religious movement, the "Second Great Awakening," a movement that saw religion as a tool for civilizing "heathen" people. The School's mission was to recruit young men of color, convert them to Christianity, provide education, and train them to become preachers, doctors, translators, and teachers (Dwight). This was similar to Native American education programs that intended to civilize or assimilate Indigenous youth. The first student at the School was a Hawaiian refugee named Heneri Opukaha'ia. In the winter of 1810, he was brought to New Haven, Connecticut by a ship captain after being a cabin boy aboard a trading vessel. Reportedly, he was befriended by Reverend Edwin Dwight, the son of Yale president Timothy Dwight after he was found crying about his lack of education on the steps of the Yale chapel. Timothy Dwight and a few ministers taught Heneri English and converted him to Christianity. Heneri worked on farms in Torrington and Litchfield, CT as a student. The Litchfield community encouraged him to write a dictionary to systemize the Hawaiian language. However, he died of typhus fever in 1818. The education given to Heneri coincided with the national movement to train Indigenous men to become Christian missionaries to their communities rather than send white Americans.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions opened the School in 1817. More than half of its first class of twelve students was Hawaiian. The next year, the School had twenty-four students, including Chinese, Hindu, Bengali, and Indigenous students of Choctaw, Abnaki, and Cherokee descent. By 1820, Indigenous students from six tribes comprised half the school population. The presence of diverse students stirred prejudices among the Anglo-Saxon and Puritan communities. For example, after a Cherokee student named John Ridge married the white daughter of the school's steward, Sarah Northrup, they fled to Georgia to avoid angry mobs. The violence that students of color faced and other factors such as expenses and lack of support for Indigenous missionaries led to the School's closure in 1826. The School taught over 100 students, including 43 Indigenous students and 20 Hawaiian students. "The ideology of colonization has a long history in the United States, but the educational institutions created to effect such a policy are peculiar to these years" (Sánchez-Eppler 4).

## Yung Wing and the Chinese Educational Mission

Yung Wing was the first Chinese student to graduate from an American university. He was a resident of Avon, a political activist, and an educational pioneer. He came to America under the sponsorship of a missionary and attended Yale University. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen. He established the Chinese Educational Mission in Hartford, CT in 1872. Unfortunately, the Mission failed due to deteriorating diplomatic relations and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Born in 1828, he grew up in poverty near Macao, a Portuguese colony in China. Reverend Samuel Robbins Brown, the headmaster of a school in Hong Kong brought Wing and two students with him to the U.S. in 1847. He graduated from Yale in 1854. When he returned to China, he lobbied the Chinese government to establish a program allowing Chinese students to study overseas. The Chinese Educational Mission sent 120 Chinese boys to the U.S. over four years. One of the goals of the Mission was to help "the rising generation of China enjoy the same educational advantages that [Yung] had enjoyed" (Railton). The living conditions that the Mission students enjoyed significantly differed from the conditions other Chinese immigrants faced at the time. The Mission students lived with host families and in college dormitories, whereas other immigrants worked low-wage, dangerous jobs and lived in crowded tenements in Chinatown. The Mission ended when the first potential group of Annapolis and West Point students was refused entrance. The Chinese government withdrew support for the Mission and forced the students and Yung to return to China. The U.S. government broke from the Burlingame-Seward Treaty which contained a provision that citizens of both countries have reciprocal rights to education when living within the other's borders. The Mission students led lives that uniquely bridged the American and Chinese cultures. One example is their formation of a baseball team called the Celestials. They developed a reputation as a talented team. Before boarding a steamship back to China, they won their final game against an Oakland team with a score of 11-8.

## Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program

In 1908, Congress passed a bill that established a scholarship program for Chinese students to attend American universities using funds from the Boxer Indemnity that were reparations for American losses during the Boxer Uprising in Beijing in 1900. In 1909, the program sent five cohorts of students to the U.S. Many attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In this unit, students will:

- Learn about the legacy of the Chinese Educational Mission and the opportunities it provided for students from Asia and Hawaii to attend American schools.

**Compelling Question:**

- How did the opportunity for education change the relationship between China and the United States, allowing for Asian male students to attend American schools? What remained the same about these relationships even with the changes?

**Supporting Questions:**

- How has schooling been used as a tool of settler colonialism?
- Why was cultural assimilation a necessary component of these educational programs?
- Who was selected for these educational missions and why? What roles did class and gender play in these decisions?
- Why were students at the Foreign Mission School forced to undergo assimilation to American society and culture? Why did ministers and stewards repress their cultural identities?
- What did the American ministers and stewards of the Foreign Mission School stand to gain from educating its first groups of students?
- What were the surrounding communities' reactions to the students at the Foreign Mission School and how did this lead to the school's demise?
- What similarities and differences can you draw between segregation in American schools and the treatment of students at the Foreign Mission School?

| **Desired Results** | |
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| **Relevant Content Standards** | **Related Supporting Standards** |
| **From Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework**<br><br>**Dimension 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools** | **From CT Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects)** |

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| HIST 9–12.1 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.<br><br>HIST 9–12.3 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.<br><br>HIST 9–12.8 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.<br><br>HIST 9–12.10 Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.<br><br>HIST 9–12.11 Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.<br><br>GEO 9–12.2 Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions. | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |

| **Learning Outcomes** | **Critical Consciousness** |
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| **Overarching Learning Objectives** | **Overarching Essential Questions** |
| **LO1 DEVELOP** research, critical thinking, and storytelling skills and synthesize historical data from digital databases and archives.<br><br>**LO2 EVALUATE** primary and secondary source documents that represent a range of views to critically respond to compelling and supporting questions.<br><br>**LO3 ANALYZE** local and global geopolitical, economic, and human rights issues through multicultural and multinational lenses.<br><br>**LO7 INVESTIGATE** the evolution and development of the Asian American and Pacific Islander identities, including intersections with other communities. | **EQ1 STORYTELLING** Which perspectives dominate the telling of stories that are available about Asian American history today and who are the marginalized voices?<br><br>**EQ2 DOCUMENTATION** How did Asian Americans document their experiences of migration, refugee resettlement, labor, activism, and community building?<br><br>**EQ3 ADVOCACY AND RESISTANCE** How did Asian Americans resist unjust government policies and laws and how did they advocate for change?<br><br>**EQ7 DIASPORA** What cultures, stories, and traditions do the Asian American and Pacific Islander diasporas include? |
| **Theme/Content-Specific Enduring Understandings** | **Theme/Content-Specific Inquiry** |
| **For this Module, students will know and be able to…**<br><br>**Knowledge:**<br>● Examine the history of Asian exchange students immigrating to America to study at schools and colleges by starting with the Chinese Educational Mission. | **For this Unit of Study, to support self-discovery, identity development, and civic preparedness/actions, students will explore...**<br><br>● How did the first Asian and Pacific Islander exchange programs develop in the U.S.? What was the impact of |

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| Students will explore the impact of this initiative on schools in New England, including Norwich Free Academy in Connecticut.<br>● Evaluate the relationship between communities in New England and Asian American and Pacific Islander students who were educated by the Foreign Mission School and other seminaries.<br>● Analyze the impact of the forced cultural assimilation of these groups. Think about how American schools have been founded upon the need for assimilation and how this history has played into the model minority myth. Draw comparisons between educational programs for Native American and Indigenous youth and Asians and Pacific Islanders.<br>● Analyze why the Chinese Educational Mission failed and what role racism and xenophobia played in its failure.<br>● Investigate what roles gender, race, and class played in the selections of students for educational missions.<br><br>**Skills:**<br>● Evaluate primary and secondary source documents, including friendship albums, memoirs, and photographs, to learn about the experiences of students at the Foreign Mission School.<br>● Analyze primary and secondary sources, such as census data, newspaper archives, attendance records, and enrollment data, to discover the scope of the Chinese Educational Mission. | these programs and how does their legacy endure in American society today?<br>● How did these Asian and Pacific Islander students demonstrate their artistic freedom and agency during this period? |

| Evidence of Learning | | |
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| **Pre-Assessment/ Common Misconceptions** | **Formative Assessments/ Checks for Understanding** | **Performative Tasks and Criteria/Project-Based Applications (Aligned with Compelling Question)** |
| **Pre-Assessment:**<br>Students will respond to a discussion question about their understanding of school segregation and integration.<br><br>**Common Misconceptions:**<br>● All schools were segregated until the Civil Rights Act of 1965.<br>● School segregation ended after *Brown v. Board of Education.*<br>● Asian American and Pacific Islander students do not experience discrimination or harassment.<br>● Because of affirmative action, it is easier for Asian Americans to be accepted into colleges. | ● Class discussions/Socratic Seminars<br>● Short answer reflections<br>● Exit tickets<br>● Research assignment<br>● Oral history interview<br>● Art/creative assignment | This module concludes with an assignment in which students will apply their research skills to examine the challenges that students and educators faced at the Foreign Mission School and the Canterbury Female Boarding School. |

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Learning Plan/Lesson Sequence</th></tr>
<tr><th>Lesson 2.1</th><th>Duration: 1 day</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Big Ideas/ Topics to be addressed, including Key Concepts and Terms<br><br>● School Segregation<br>● Desegregation<br>● Assimilation and Religious Conversion<br>● Higher Education<br>● Religion and Saviorism<br>● Colorism<br><br>Vocabulary: Yung Wing, the Chinese Educational Mission, the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, the Foreign Mission School</td><td>Materials/Resources<br><br>Source #1<br>● Title: Friendship Album, Page 303<br>● Source type: Primary Source Document<br>● Institution: Cornwall Historical Society<br>● Author: Henry Martyn A’lan<br>● Link: Cornwall Seminary.pdf<br><br>This photograph depicts a friendship album created by a Chinese student at the Foreign Mission School, likely the earliest surviving Chinese document produced in the U.S.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Source #2<br>● Title: Portrait of Yung Wing<br>● Source type: Photograph<br>● Institution: Norwich Free Academy<br>● Author: Unknown<br>● Link: Yung Wing.jpg<br><br>Yung Wing was the first Chinese student to graduate from an American university. He was a resident of Avon, a political activist, and an educational pioneer.</td></tr>
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| | Source #3<br>• Title: Chinese Educational Mission Headquarters in Hartford, CT<br>• Source type: Photograph<br>• Institution: Connecticut Historical Society<br>• Author: Unknown<br>• Link: Chinese Educational Mission Photo.jpg<br><br>This photograph depicts the Chinese Educational Mission headquarters in 1887. It was located in Hartford, CT before the Chinese Exclusion Act led to the CEM's disbandment. |
| | Source #4<br>• Title: Portrait of Henry Obookiah, Hawaiian Refugee and First Foreign Mission School Student<br>• Source type: Photograph<br>• Institution: Cornwall Historical Society<br>• Author: Unknown<br>• Link: Henry Obookiah.jpeg<br><br>Henry Obookiah, born in Hawaii in 1792, was a student under the tutelage of Reverend Edwin Dwight, a Yale alum. His education contributed to the founding of the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, CT. As a student in Cornwall, he worked on farms in Torrington and Litchfield. |

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| | Source #5<br>● Title: The First Chinese Students on Their Arrival, 1872.<br>● Source type: Newspaper clipping<br>● Institution: Connecticut Historical Society<br>● Author: Unknown<br>● Link: Chinese Educational Mission.jpg<br><br>This photograph depicts the first Chinese students brought to the U.S. by Yung Wing and the Chinese Educational Mission in 1872. The CEM later expanded to 120 students. |
| | Source #6<br>● Title: "A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair"<br>● Source type: a variety of primary and secondary source documents, including letters, legislation, and legal arguments<br>● Institution: Yale Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition<br>● Authors: Prudence Crandall et. al<br>● Link: A Canterbury Tale_ A Document Package for Con…<br><br>These documents detail Prudence Crandall's experiences and legal battles to keep her school open and educate girls of color in Connecticut. |

Source #7

- Title: “NFA, Slater Museum and China Connection has Deep Roots”
- Source type: Article
- Institution: Norwich Free Academy
- Provided by: Dayne Rugh
- Link:
  Lead article Yung Wing & Asian Gallery_gsedit3.pdf

This article describes the relationship between Yung Wing and Norwich Free Academy, one of the first schools in America to educate Chinese exchange students.

Source #8

- Title: Asian Students at MIT
- Source type: Photograph
- Institution: China Comes to MIT
- Photographer: Mei Zhou, 1905
- Link: MIT Students.png
  First Graduates — China Comes To MIT

This article profiles the first Chinese government-sponsored students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) following the disbandment of the Chinese Educational Mission.

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| | Source #7<br>• Title: Boxer Indemnity Fund<br>• Source type: Congressional Document<br>• Institution: Law Library of Congress<br>• Author: 69th Congress, 1st Session, Committee on Appropriations<br>• Link: Boxer Indemnity Fund.pdf<br><br>This House document is a communication from President Calvin Coolidge estimating the appropriation for Boxer Indemnity Fund, amounting to $92,029.41. |
| **Learning Activities**<br><br>**Week 2 Themes of Assimilation and School Integration**<br><br>**Initiation:** Students will share what they know about the history of school segregation and integration in New England pre-*Brown vs. Board of Education*. Ask students to think about cultural similarities and differences between schools in New England and schools in the South during this time period.<br><br>**Activity:**<br><br>• Individually or as a class, students will read Chapter 1 of *Asian Americans in New England*, "Copying and Conversion: An 1824 Friendship Album 'from a Chinese | **Reflections to Affirm Identity**<br><br>Students will examine their own experiences attending schools in Connecticut and reflect on what previous students of color may have experienced in these schools and in their communities. Students will ask a family member who has attended school in New England before them about their experiences and interactions with the community. |

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| youth'" (pp. 1-31) by Karen Sánchez-Eppler (Source #1). They will complete an art activity in which they form a friendship album by creating collages from magazines. At the end of class, they will briefly share their friendship albums with their peers.<br>○ View examples here.<br>● Individually or in pairs, students will read Chapter 17 (pp. 180-190) and Chapter 19 (pp. 197-215) of Yung Wing's autobiography *My Life in China and America*. Students will view the photographs of Yung Wing (Source #2), the Chinese Educational Mission headquarters (Source #3), and the first Chinese students in the CEM (Source #5). By reading Yung Wing's autobiography, students will learn about how Yung Wing founded the Chinese Educational Mission and why it ultimately failed. Using the Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool worksheet or the SOAPSTone technique, students will record the information they discover from the article and their questions.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will examine the primary and secondary source documents located in "A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair" and "(H)our History Lesson: Prudence Crandall, Sarah Harris, and a Struggle for Black Women's Education." Then, they will compare and contrast the experiences of Asian immigrant children to the experiences of African American and Indigenous students who also attended schools in New England, | |

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| including the Foreign Mission School and Prudence Crandall's Canterbury Female Boarding School. By comparing the experiences of Asian and Pacific Islander, male students compared with the experiences of African American, female students, students will gain a clearer understanding of New England communities' attitudes towards school integration pre-Civil Rights Movement. Students will also investigate why both schools were eventually shut down and the reactions of surrounding communities to the school's inclusion of students of color. In this research process, students will utilize databases and archives to draw connections between the Foreign Mission School, Canterbury Female Boarding School, and the students who attended both academies, including Henry Obookiah and Sarah Harris, and the communities surrounding the schools, Cornwall and Canterbury. Additionally, they will examine the intentions and work of educators at these schools and the role of education as a stepping stone for racial equality.<br>• In pairs or small groups, students will read "NFA, Slater Museum and China Connection have Deep Roots" (Source #7) and First Graduates — China Comes To MIT (Source #8). They will learn about the local connection between Yung Wing and New England institutions such as Norwich Free Academy and MIT. Students will also read about affirmative action in today's higher education system and draw connections between the plight of the Chinese students at American universities in the 1800s vs | |

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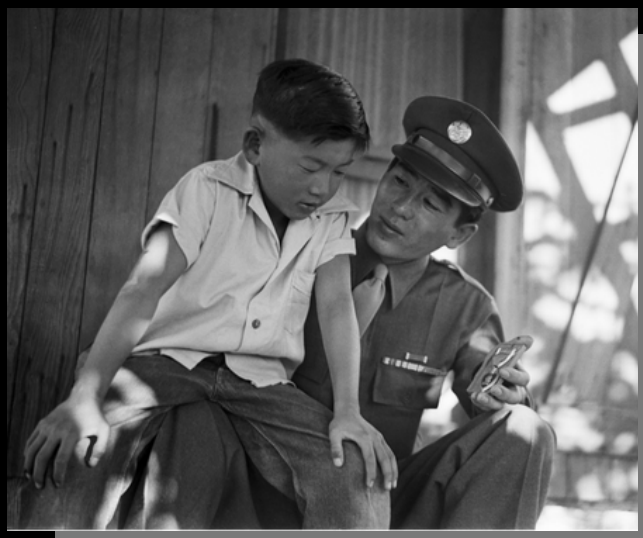
| now. Students will read a NYTimes article about cases for and against affirmative action and discuss how the CEM relates to the modern makeup of American universities.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will examine the case of Hartford segregation in *Sheff v. O'Neill* and its settlement in 2021. Students will research the legacy of school segregation and the school-to-prison pipeline in urban cities in Connecticut, including Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and New Haven. They will examine the quality of education between wealthier, suburban counties and low-income, urban counties. Students will also examine the factors contributing to the historical under-resourcing and over-policing of schools in these cities.<br><br>**Evidence of Learning:** Students will discuss what they learned about the history of school segregation and integration in New England. They will create a timeline with historical milestones relevant to the inclusion of Asian and Pacific Islander students in American schools.<br><br>**Closing:** Students will think about accessibility, inclusion, and diversity initiatives at their school. They will make a list of what diversity, equity, and inclusion characteristics they would like their future institution or employer to have. | |

| Options for Content Continuity Across History Courses and Interdisciplinary Integration | Extensions/Experiential Opportunities |
| --- | --- |
| • English<br>• Humanities<br>• Political Science<br>• Economics | • Visit the Prudence Crandall Museum located at 1 South Canterbury Road Canterbury, CT 06331.<br>• Visit the Cornwall Historical Society located at 7 Pine Street Cornwall, CT 06753.<br>• Visit the James L. Smith and Sarah Harris Fayerweather Mural located at 4 Broadway Norwich, CT 06360. |

# Module 3

Fighting Oppression At Home and Abroad: Japanese Incarceration, Reparations, and the Legacy of Nisei Soldiers During World War II

President Obama salutes Tommie Okabayashi, a Japanese American WWII veteran (Photo by Pete Souza via Obama White House Archives)



Army Sergeant Kazuo Komoto shows his Purple Heart to his brother at the Gila River internment camp (Photo by the FDR Library)

Fred T. Korematsu and Attorney Ellen Godbey Carson at the Supreme Court in April 1987 (Photo by Doris Sato via National Museum of American History)

**Essential Question:** What factors contributed to the U.S. government's incarceration of Japanese Americans following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and in what ways did Japanese Americans resist?

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

| Module 3 | | | |
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| **Title** | Fighting Oppression At Home and Abroad: Japanese Incarceration, Resistance, and the Legacy of Nisei Soldiers During World War II | **Timeframe** | Late February (1 week) |
| **Developed By** | Karen Lau (with support from Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player) | **Revision Date** | September 11, 2022 |

## Background

**Summary:** Module 3 centers on the immigration history of Japanese Americans and the effects of World War II on the Japanese American community. Learning about the federal government's enforcement of Executive Order 9066 and the creation of incarceration camps will provide students with an understanding of government officials' discrimination against Japanese Americans. Students will also learn about several Japanese Americans' attempts to resist injustice by challenging the federal government in court.

### The Arrival of Japanese American Immigrants

Between 1861 and 1940, 275,000 Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii and the mainland U.S. The majority of these immigrants arrived between 1898 and 1924 before quotas excluded Asian immigration. Many Japanese immigrants in Hawaii worked in sugarcane fields as contract laborers and later started businesses. Other immigrants settled on the West Coast, becoming farmers, fishermen, and small business owners. They settled in ethnic neighborhoods and established schools, churches, and cultural institutions. However, real estate agents would not sell homes to Japanese Americans outside of existing ethnic neighborhoods, and the California Assembly restricted land ownership to people eligible to be citizens in 1913.

## The Attack on Pearl Harbor

On December 7, 1941, the Empire of Japan attacked the Pearl Harbor Naval Base in Hawaii. The attack deepened fears about national security threats, economic competition with Japanese Americans, and anti-Asian racism. Lobbyists, many representing competing economic interests or nativist groups, urged Congress to remove Japanese people from the West Coast.

## Incarceration Camps

Before World War II began, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) surveilled groups suspected of being potential adversaries, including German, Italian, and Japanese non-citizens. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the government became increasingly suspicious of all Japanese people, including those born in Japan, issei, and American citizens, nisei. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, authorizing the Secretary of War and military commanders to forcibly remove Japanese Americans and incarcerate them in incarceration camps, termed “relocation centers.” On March 21, 2022, Congress passed Public Law 503, establishing violations of EO 9066 as a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison and a $5,000 fine. Although the Department of Justice had ethical concerns, the U.S. Army treated the presence of Japanese Americans as a national security issue, dividing the West Coast into military zones. While the Executive Order did not explicitly state Japanese Americans as its target, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt announced curfews that only included Japanese Americans and encouraged voluntary evacuation by Japanese Americans. Next, on March 29, 1942, he began the forced evacuation of Japanese American residents of the West on a 48-hour notice.

As a result of these forced evacuations, thousands of Japanese Americans lost their homes, farms, businesses, belongings, and property forever. The total property loss is an estimated $1.3 billion, and the net income loss is an estimated $2.7 billion. From March to August 1942, 112,000 Japanese Americans, including 70,000 American citizens, were forcibly evacuated from their homes to “assembly centers,” often located on racetracks or fairgrounds. The government never brought charges of disloyalty against any of these citizens, and they could not legally appeal their loss of property and liberty. Ten incarceration camps were located in California, Idaho, Utah, Arkansas, Wyoming, Arizona, and Colorado. In Hawaii, where Japanese Americans comprised over one-third of the labor force, the incarceration rates were much lower. In these incarceration camps, four or five families shared army-style barracks for nearly three years or until the war ended. The government later added insulation and partitions to the

barracks. People who showed resistance were sent to a camp at Tule Lake, California that housed dissidents. As the war ended, the incarceration camps were gradually evacuated and Japanese Americans returned to their communities or moved to different places.

## 442nd Regimental Combat Team

In 1943 and 1944, the government assembled a combat unit of Japanese Americans, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. It became known as the most decorated unit in the history of the U.S. military. Encompassing about 18,000 servicemen, the unit amassed over 4,000 Purple Hearts, 4,000 Bronze Stars, 560 Silver Star Medals, 21 Medals of Honor, and seven Presidential Unit Citations. In 2010, they were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for their heroism and sacrifices in World War II.

## Resistance and the Legal Fight Against Incarceration

During World War II, three Japanese Americans challenged the constitutionality of the incarceration camps and curfew orders through the law, including Fred T. Korematsu, Mitsuye Endo, and Gordon Hirabayashi. Although the courts did not rule in favor of Hirabayashi and Korematsu, Mitsuye Endo was deemed "loyal" and allowed to leave the incarceration camp at Topaz, Utah.

Fred T. Korematsu was a Japanese American born in San Francisco. During the war effort, he tried to join the U.S. Navy but could not serve due to health reasons. He got a job in the defense industry as a welder. However, on May 30, 1942, Korematsu was arrested for refusing to report to an Assembly Center. He was convicted of violating Civilian Exclusion Order No. 34 which required all Japanese people in Military Area No. 1 to relocate to incarceration camps. During his imprisonment, the American Civil Liberties Union asked Korematsu if he would be willing to be the petitioner in the case against Japanese incarceration. In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that Korematsu's imprisonment was constitutional. Justice Hugo Black, in the majority opinion, wrote that "military urgency," not racial prejudice, justified incarceration. He argued that the possibility of an invasion by Japan and espionage justified the government's imprisonment of Japanese Americans.

However, Justice Frank Murphy's dissent challenged the racist and xenophobic sentiment behind the Executive Order. He wrote, "This exclusion goes over 'the very brink of constitutional power' and falls into the ugly abyss of racism…I dissent from the legalization of racism. Racial discrimination in any form and in any degree has no justifiable part whatever in our democratic way of life. It is unattractive in any setting, but it is utterly revolting among a free people who have embraced the principles set forth in the

Constitution of the United States. All residents of this nation are kin in some way by blood or culture to a foreign land. Yet they are primarily and necessarily a part of the new and distinct civilization of the United States. They must, accordingly, be treated at all times as the heirs of the American experiment, and as entitled to all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution."

Murphy was the first Justice to use "racism" in a Supreme Court decision, and it would not be used again by a Justice until 1966. He argued that the incarceration of Japanese Americans was based on "disinformation, half-truths, and insinuations" that racially and economically prejudiced people have directed against Japanese Americans. In the 1980s, attorneys discovered archival evidence that the Solicitor General's office failed to report evidence that Japanese American citizens did not pose a security threat, and the military had zero evidence of espionage or sabotage committed by Japanese Americans. Korematsu challenged his detention again, and his conviction was overturned in 1983.

In *Ex parte Endo*, the Court decided that the government must free loyal citizens from incarceration. The petitioner, Mitsuye Endo, a stenographer in the California Department of Motor Vehicles who did not speak Japanese, maintained that she was a loyal citizen that had reported for processing and should be released since she did not pose a national security threat. She argued that she was being unconstitutionally held under armed guard and filed for a writ of habeas corpus. In his concurrence, Justice Murphy wrote, "…detention in Relocation Centers of persons of Japanese ancestry regardless of loyalty is not only unauthorized by Congress or the Executive, but it is another example of the unconstitutional resort to racism inherent in the entire evacuation program."

On June 21, 1943, in *Hirabayashi v. United States*, Chief Justice Harlan F. Stone articulated the opinion of the Court, stating, "Congress and the Executive…[may take into account] those facts and circumstances which are relevant to measures for our national defense…and which may in fact place citizens of one ancestry in a different category from others." Although he concurred, Justice Murphy wrote about the Court's obligation to uphold the Constitution in both peacetime and wartime; "While this Court sits, it has the inescapable duty of seeing that the mandates of the Constitution are obeyed. That duty exists in time of war as well as in time of peace, and in its performance, we must not forget that few indeed have been the invasions upon essential liberties which have not been accompanied by pleas of urgent necessity."

Release and Reparations

Before the Court ruled in *Korematsu* and *Endo*, President Roosevelt announced that the government would release all interned Japanese Americans in January 1945. The Japanese-American Claims Act allowed detainees to receive compensation. However, the government paid only 25 percent of the claims. During the 1970s, Japanese American activists campaigned for an official apology and reparations from the U.S. government for detaining them and their families in incarceration camps in World War II. In 1976, President Gerald Ford declared that the forced displacement and relocation of Japanese Americans was a "tragedy." He stated, "we now know what we should have known then–not only that evacuation was wrong but that Japanese Americans were and are loyal Americans" (Lee 349). In 1980, Congress established the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians which held investigations and congressional hearings in twenty cities. Over 500 Japanese Americans testified in hearings about their experiences in incarceration camps. In 1982, the commission released a report titled *Personal Justice Denied* which included testimonies of formerly incarcerated Japanese Americans and declassified government documents discovered by activist Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga and her team of researchers. The report stated, "A grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident nationals of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed, and detained by the United States during World War II" (Lee 349).

The commission recommended that Congress pass a resolution to apologize for Japanese American incarceration, establish a humanitarian fund, and compensate surviving Japanese Americans who were incarcerated. In 1985, the government designated the Manzanar camp as a National Historical Landmark. Forty-four years after *Korematsu v. United States*, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 into law, apologizing for the removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and paying $20,000 in reparations to every person imprisoned in an incarceration camp. The government paid the reparations three years later. President George H.W. Bush also signed a letter of apology.

In this unit, students will:

- Analyze the events leading to World War II and following the attack on Pearl Harbor to determine the causes and effects of Japanese American incarceration.
- Examine the constitutionality of forced relocation, incarceration camps, suspension of habeas corpus, and the denial of personal liberties.

**Compelling Question:**

- What factors contributed to the U.S. government's incarceration of Japanese Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor and in what ways did Japanese Americans resist?

**Supporting Questions:**

- Why did the U.S. government exclusively force Japanese Americans into incarceration camps instead of German and Italian Americans?
- Does national security justify the forced relocation and incarceration of American citizens and non-citizens?
- Should the Constitution be interpreted differently in wartime and peacetime?
- Why and how did Fred T. Korematsu resist Japanese incarceration? What other figures from U.S. history have shown resistance to unjust government policies?
- How did the Supreme Court's ruling in *Korematsu v. United States* contradict the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and *Plessy v. Ferguson* decisions*?*
- How did Japanese American codebreakers and other service members defend the U.S. during World War II?
- Compare the U.S. government's incarceration of Japanese Americans to the actions of other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes during World War II. What similarities and differences are there?
- Why did many Japanese American veterans serve in the U.S. military during World War II when their community was being incarcerated by the same government at home?
- Why did the U.S. government issue an apology and offer reparations to former incarcerated Japanese Americans? Who were the central figures in the redress movement that made this possible?
- How do U.S. government agencies, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Central Intelligence Agency, treat and surveil non-citizens and suspected enemy agents today?

- What similarities can you draw between Executive Order 9066 and the Patriot Act? What similarities can you draw between World War II and the War on Terror?
- How does the U.S. government's treatment and surveillance of Japanese Americans in World War II compare with its treatment of Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian Americans in the aftermath of 9/11?
- Compare and contrast the arguments for reparations for Japanese Americans and descendants of enslaved individuals.

| **Desired Results** | |
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| **Relevant Content Standards** | **Related Supporting Standards** |
| **From Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework**<br><br>**Dimension 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools**<br><br>HIST 9–12.1 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.<br><br>HIST 9–12.3 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.<br><br>HIST 9–12.8 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time. | **From CT Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects)**<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. |

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| HIST 9–12.10 Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.<br><br>HIST 9–12.11 Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.<br><br>GEO 9–12.2 Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how globalization, competition for scarce resources, and human migration contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among countries. | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Critical Consciousness** |
| **Overarching Learning Objectives** | **Overarching Essential Questions** |
| **LO5 APPLY** tools of civic engagement and communicate ideas to others. Examples include writing a testimony in support of or in opposition to a bill, writing a mock Supreme Court argument, writing an editorial, writing a letter to an elected official or state | **EQ5 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** How have Asian Americans historically and presently responded to crises in their communities e.g. Civil War, Great Depression, World War II, Vietnam War, COVID-19 pandemic? How has the Asian |

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| agency about a local issue, and writing a policy brief to solve a global conflict.<br><br>**LO6 INTERPRET** how American foreign policy, military action, and judicial rulings impacted Asian American immigration, citizenship, international relations, trade, and the economy.<br><br>**LO7 INVESTIGATE** the evolution and development of the Asian American and Pacific Islander identities, including intersections with other communities. | American electorate expanded from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 to now?<br><br>**EQ6 IMPERIALISM** How has the American government and military been complicit in wars and genocide in Asian countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, and Laos? What happened to the refugees following these military conflicts in their countries?<br><br>**EQ7 DIASPORA** What cultures, stories, and traditions do the Asian American and Pacific Islander diaspora include? |
| **Theme/Content-Specific Enduring Understandings** | **Theme/Content-Specific Inquiry** |
| **For this Module, students will know and be able to…**<br><br>**Knowledge:**<br>● Analyze the methods Congress and the U.S. military used to surveil and incarcerate Japanese Americans.<br>● Analyze the legal arguments against incarceration camps by Fred T. Korematsu, Mitsuye Endo, and Gordon Hirabayashi and the Supreme Court's response.<br>● Critique the actions and policies of General John L. DeWitt and Colonel Karl Bendetsen.<br>● Analyze the majority opinions and dissents of Supreme Court Justices Harlan F. Stone and Frank Murphy.<br>● Distinguish the treatment of Japanese Americans versus German and Italian Americans. | **For this Unit of Study, to support self-discovery, identity development, and civic preparedness/actions, students will explore...**<br><br>● Why did anti-Asian sentiment worsen after the attack on Pearl Harbor?<br>● What methods did Japanese Americans use to resist forced relocation and incarceration during World War II?<br>● What methods did advocates use to urge Congress to pay reparations to Japanese Americans who served in incarceration camps? |

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| ● Compare and contrast the U.S. government's treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II and their treatment of Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) Americans during the War on Terror.<br><br>**Skills:**<br>● Use databases and archives to analyze Supreme Court oral arguments, legal briefs, majority opinions, and dissents.<br>● Use databases and archives to analyze legislation, executive orders, military policies, and petitions by civilians.<br>● Develop a strong, fact-based argument with a thesis statement, multiple sources of evidence, explanations of evidence, and citations.<br>● Participate in a Socratic seminar discussion with peers and work together to share conclusions. | |

| **Evidence of Learning** | | |
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| **Pre-Assessment/ Common Misconceptions** | **Formative Assessments/ Checks for Understanding** | **Performative Tasks and Criteria/Project-Based Applications (Aligned with Compelling Question)** |
| **Pre-Assessment:**<br>Students will discuss their existing knowledge of the causes of World War II and the beginning of American | ● Class discussions/Socratic Seminars<br>● Short answer reflections<br>● Exit tickets<br>● Research assignment | This module concludes with a debate in which students will return to the compelling and supporting questions. These questions will guide students as they prepare for the debate. |

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| involvement in the European Theater and the Pacific Theater.<br><br>**Common Misconceptions:**<br>● Japanese Americans were double agents during World War II.<br>● Japanese Americans did not serve in the military during World War II.<br>● The U.S. government had credible evidence of espionage by Japanese American traitors. | ● Debate<br>● Art/creative assignment | Debate Topic 1:<br>1. Does national security justify the forced relocation, interrogation, and incarceration of American citizens? How about non-citizens?<br><br>Debate Topic 2:<br>2. Should the Constitution be interpreted differently in wartime versus peacetime? Why or why not?<br><br>One affirmative group and one negative group will participate in each debate topic. Students will also provide constructive feedback on the strengths of their peers' arguments. |

| **Learning Plan/Lesson Sequence** | |
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| **Lesson 3.1** | **Duration: 1 day** |
| **Big Ideas/ Topics to be addressed, including Key Concepts and Terms**<br><br>● World War II<br>● Japanese American incarceration camps<br>● Reparations<br>● Resistance<br>● Military service of Japanese Americans | **Materials/Resources**<br>Source #1<br>● Title: An Awe-Inspiring Chapter of America's History<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: Obama White House Archives<br>● Author: Hess Lee<br>● Link:<br>An Awe-Inspiring Chapter of America's History _ … |

<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Vocabulary: Fred Korematsu, Executive Order 9066, Gentleman’s Agreement, Korematsu v. United States, Hirabayashi v. United States, Ex parte Mitsuye Endo, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Secretary Norman Mineta, Arab Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, Muslim Americans, Sikh Americans, South Asian Americans, reparations, redress movement, Patriot Act, 9/11, War on Terror</td>
<td>This article describes the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony for the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team at the White House.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source #2<br>● Title: Fred Korematsu’s Story<br>● Source type: Biography<br>● Institution: Fred T. Korematsu Institute<br>● Author: Fred T. Korematsu Institute<br>● Link: Fred's Story - Korematsu Institute.pdf<br><br>This biography describes the life of Japanese American activist Fred T. Korematsu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source #3<br>● Title: Executive Order 9066<br>● Source type: Executive Order<br>● Institution: DocsTeach<br>● Author: President Franklin D. Roosevelt<br>● Link: EO 9066 (1/3).jpg EO 9066 (2/3).jpg EO 9066 (3/3).jpg<br><br>Executive Order 9066 enabled the U.S. Army to forcibly relocate and incarcerate Japanese Americans.</td>
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| | Source #4<br>● Title: Army-Navy Screen Magazine, No. 45<br>● Source type: Video<br>● Institution: DocsTeach<br>● Author: Army-Navy Screen Magazine<br>● Link: Army-Navy Screen Magazine, No. 45 \| DocsTeach<br><br>This video highlights the Japanese American 100th Infantry Battalion's heroic actions during World War II. |
| | Source #5<br>● Title: Reagan on the Japanese-American Internment Compensation Bill<br>● Source type: Video<br>● Institution: DocsTeach<br>● Author: DocsTeach<br>● Link: Reagan on the Japanese-American Internment Compensation Bill \| DocsTeach<br><br>This video shows President Ronald Reagan's remarks at the signing of the Japanese American Internment Compensation Bill. |

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| | Source #6<br>● Title: FDR and Japanese American Internment<br>● Source type: Letters, Maps, and Memos<br>● Institution: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum<br>● Author: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum<br>● Link: FDR Library Internment.pdf<br><br>These documents include communications between FDR and military officials, maps, and policy memoranda. |
| | Source #7<br>● Title: Four Nisei Jazz Stars You've Probably Never Heard Of<br>● Source type: Music<br>● Institution: Densho<br>● Author: Jonathan van Harmelen<br>● Link: Four Nisei Jazz Stars<br><br>This article contains music recordings and biographies of four Japanese American musicians who used music as an outlet during the era of incarceration in World War II. |

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| | Source #8<br>● Title: Tide Goes Out<br>● Source type: Comic Book<br>● Institution: Densho<br>● Author: Molly Murakami<br>● Link: Tide Goes Out – Digital Edition - Densho: Japanese American Incarceration and Japanese Internment<br><br>This semi-biographical comic book describes a Japanese American family's life in Terminal Island, their incarceration in the Manzanar War Relocation Center in southern California during World War II, and their return to Terminal Island. |
| | Source #9<br>● Title: Sites of Shame<br>● Source type: Map<br>● Institution: Densho<br>● Author: Densho<br>● Link: Sites of Shame<br><br>This map traces the routes taken by Japanese Americans who were relocated to incarcerated camps around the U.S. by producing geodata for the exclusion orders from satellite imagery and archival materials. |

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| | Source #10<br>● Title: One Man Seeks Justice from a Nation: *Korematsu v. United States*<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: Asian Americans Advancing Justice L.A.<br>● Authors: Eric Yamamoto, Dale Minami, and May Lee Heye<br>● Link: One Man Seeks Justice from a Nation: Korematsu v. United States<br><br>This article describes the legal challenge to the Japanese American incarceration camps by Fred Korematsu. |
| | Source #11<br>● Title: Redress and Reparations for Japanese American Incarceration<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: National WWII Museum<br>● Author: Helen Yoshida<br>● Link: Redress and Reparations for Japanese American Incarceration \| The National WWII Museum \| New Orleans<br><br>This article describes the provisions of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and the path to its passage. |

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| | Source #12<br>• Title: Transcript of Oral History Interview with Admiral Andrew M. Sugimoto<br>• Source type: Oral History<br>• Institution: UConn<br>• Author: Karen Lau<br>• Link:<br>USCG Admiral Andrew Sugimoto Transcript.pdf<br><br>In this oral history interview, Admiral Sugimoto describes his life and career as the first Japanese American Admiral in the U.S. Coast Guard and as a descendant of and Japanese Americans detained in incarceration camps during World War II. |
| | Source #13<br>• Title: Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga: The Activist Who Discovered the Truth About WWII Internment<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Politico Magazine<br>• Author: Lorraine Bannai<br>• Link: Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga: The Activist Who Discovered the Truth About WWII Internment - POLITICO Magazine<br><br>This article describes archival researcher-activist Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga's leading role in the redress movement for Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. |

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| | Source #14<br>● Title: Herzig Yoshinaga (Aiko) Papers<br>● Institution: California State University Dominguez Hills, Gerth Archives and Special Collections<br>● Author: Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga<br>● Link: Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga Papers<br><br>This digitized collection contains the "correspondence, media, publications, photographs, manuscripts, documents, and other materials related to Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga's life and work related to activism and social justice." |
| | Source #15<br>● Title: Long Road to Redress<br>● Institution: U.S. House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives<br>● Author: U.S. House of Representatives<br>● Link: Long Road to Redress \| US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives<br><br>This article describes the movement for Japanese Americans to receive an official apology and restitution from the government for their relocation and incarceration in World War II. |
| | Source #16<br>● Title: Personal Justice Denied<br>● Institution: Internet Archive |

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| | • Author: U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians<br>• Link: Personal Justice Denied<br><br>This report includes recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians that investigated the incarceration camps and initiated a presidential apology and reparations to Japanese Americans and Alaskan Aleuts. |
| **Learning Activities**<br><br>**Week 3 Theme of Japanese American Resistance and Reparations**<br><br>**Initiation:** Ask students to share what they know about reparations and the movement for Congress to pay restitution to Japanese American survivors of incarceration camps and the descendants of enslaved individuals.<br><br>**Activity:**<br><br>• In pairs or small groups, students will read primary source documents about Japanese American internment, including Executive Order 9066 (Source #3) and FDR and Japanese American Internment (Source #6). Students will discuss the federal government's role in defending allied countries against fascism and totalitarianism | **Reflections to Affirm Identity**<br><br>Talk with a family member or community member about their recollection of World War II and how the treatment of Asian Americans in their community has evolved from that era to now. |

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| overseas while incarcerating citizens without due process.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read Supreme Court arguments and opinions in *Korematsu v. United States*, Fred Korematsu's Story (Source #2), and One Man Seeks Justice from a Nation: Korematsu v. United States (Source #10) to learn about the legal challenges to Japanese American incarceration brought by activist Fred Korematsu. Students will share reflections on methods of resistance against unjust executive orders, policies, and court rulings. Following this discussion, they will choose one perspective to write from and respond to the RAFT Essay Writing Prompt in 300-500 words. They will use the RAFT Essay Rubric as they write their responses.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read "Tide Goes Out" (Source #8) and learn about a Japanese American family that lived on Terminal Island and their incarceration in Manzanar. Students will discuss their thoughts and reactions with each other. They will answer the discussion questions in the lesson plan.<br>● As a class, students will read about the heroism of the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team (Source #2), watch the Army-Navy Screen Magazine, No. 45 video (Source #4), and read the oral history transcript or watch the interview with Admiral Andrew M. Sugimoto (Source #12). Students will discuss the experiences of Japanese American veterans who served in the U.S. military as the government was | |

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| incarcerating their community. In this discussion, students will think about the role of war in a globalized society and questions of patriotism, sacrifice, injustice, colonialism, and imperialism.<br>● As a class, students will watch President Reagan's remarks on the Japanese-American Internment Compensation Bill (Source #5) and read "Redress and Reparations for Japanese American Incarceration" (Source #11). Students will discuss the historical significance of an apology and reparations from the federal government to an oppressed group.<br>● In small groups, students will view the Sites of Shame Map (Source #9) to trace the routes taken by Japanese Americans who were relocated to incarceration camps. Using Sites of Shame, the Trail of Tears Map, and Land Grab CT, students will discuss the government's role in the forced displacement, relocation, and migration of minority groups. Students will also discuss the importance of remembrance and the usage of maps to preserve the experiences of forced migrants, refugees, incarcerated individuals, and Indigenous people.<br>● In small groups, students will read "Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga: The Activist Who Discovered the Truth About WWII Internment" (Source #13) and "Long Road to Redress" (Source #15) to learn about the redress movement. Students will also peruse the Herzig Yoshinaga (Aiko) Papers (Source #14) to learn about | |

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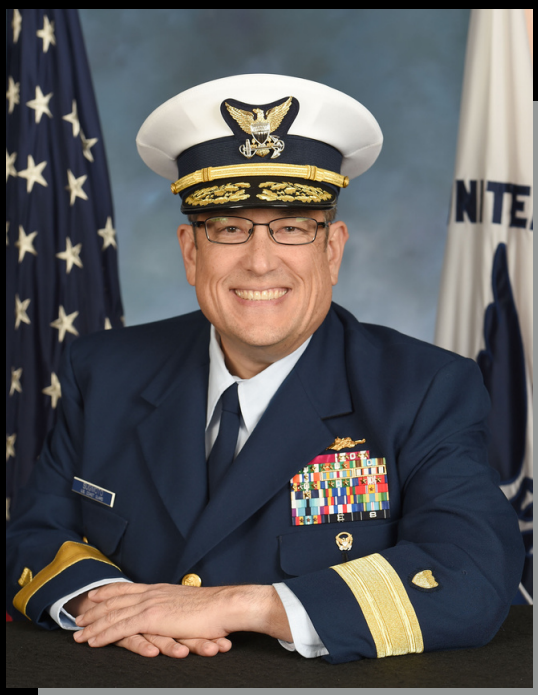
| how evidence found during an investigation by researchers pushed the government to provide restitution.<br>● In small groups, students will read the recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in Personal Justice Denied (Source #16) and evaluate the federal government's implementation of these recommendations. They will engage in a Socratic seminar to share conclusions with peers, discuss whether an apology and reparations were sufficient to atone for the incarceration camps and propose their own solutions in response to the demands of the redress movement.<br><br>**Evidence of Learning:** Students will write a response to the compelling question and one supporting question.<br><br>**Closing:** Students will research the debate topics, form strong, fact-based arguments, and deliver their arguments to the class. | |
| **Options for Content Continuity Across History Courses and Interdisciplinary Integration**<br><br>● English<br>● Humanities<br>● Political Science<br>● Economics<br>● Geography | **Extensions/Experiential Opportunities**<br><br>● Visit the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II located at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.<br>● Visit The National World War II Museum located at 945 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130.<br>● Visit the Japanese American National Museum located at 100 N Central Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90012. |

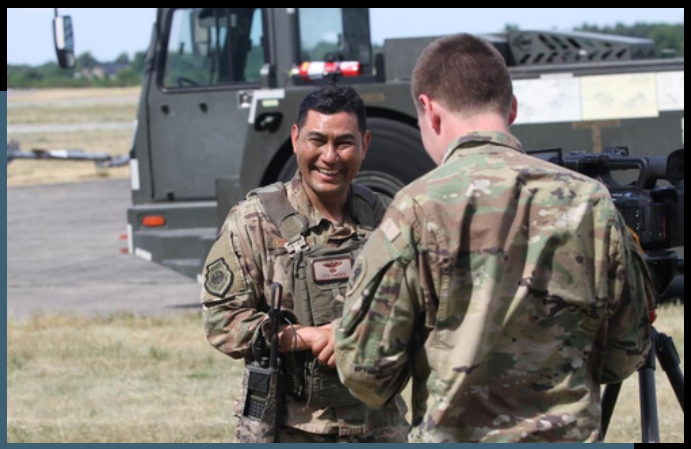
# Module 4

From the Cutter Muster Rolls to O-10: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the Armed Forces

Photograph of U.S. Army Major Kimberly Brutsche in Afghanistan (Provided by Kimberly Brutsche)



Portrait of Admiral Andrew M. Sugimoto, the first Japanese American Admiral in the Coast Guard (Photo by USCG)



Photograph of Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Leonardo Tongko at the Miroslawiec Air Base in Poland (Photo by Sgt. Ashley Terpsma)

**Essential Question:** How did Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders show their patriotism by serving during the Spanish-American War, World Wars I & II, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and current conflicts?

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

| Module 4 | | | |
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| **Title** | From the Cutter Muster Rolls to O-10: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the Armed Forces | **Timeframe** | Late February (1 week) |
| **Developed By** | Karen Lau (with support from Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player) | **Revision Date** | September 11, 2022 |

## Background

**Summary:** Module 4 centers on the service of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the Armed Forces with an emphasis on the U.S. Coast Guard. Learning about the stories and experiences of AAPI servicemembers and veterans will contour students' understanding of patriotism and military history. This module features transcripts from oral history interviews with nine veterans.

### The Origins of Asian Cuttermen

Asian Americans have served in the United States Coast Guard for over 170 years. In 1853, the revenue cutter Argus rescued the only surviving crew member of a Japanese boat that was dismasted during a storm. This survivor became the first Asian man to enlist in a Coast Guard crew. The cutter's commanding officer, Lieutenant William Pease, spelled his name as "Dee-Yee-Noskee." During the Civil War, Asian names appeared on cutter muster rolls. When Alaska became a U.S. territory after the Louisiana Purchase in 1867, revenue cutter operations in the Pacific Ocean expanded, enabling Chinese and Japanese men to enlist in the Coast Guard. Muster rolls from 1878 indicate that 10 Chinese nationals and three Japanese nationals served aboard the Revenue Cutter Corwin based in San Francisco. By the late 1800s, most western cutters employed Asian service members to fulfill food service and domestic positions. The first minority Coast Guardsman to be awarded a Silver Lifesaving Medal was one of these cuttermen, F. Miguchi of Kobe, Japan. The number of Asian service members grew in the early 1900s. In 1901, following the Spanish-American War and the annexation of Guam and the Philippines, President William McKinley signed an executive order

allowing the U.S. Navy to recruit native Filipinos to serve in domestic roles. Consequently, hundreds of Filipinos and Asian nationals sought employment in the Revenue Cutter Service. During the interwar period, the Filipino Officers' Steward 3rd Class Ramon Jasalim died in the line of duty, becoming the first Asian service member to do so.

## Japanese Americans in the Coast Guard

In February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order Number 9066, prompting the internment of 112,000 Japanese Americans and discharging Japanese workers from the federal government. As a result, this order ceased the 85-year tenure of Japanese service members in the Coast Guard. This order had a devastating impact on the thousands of Japanese Americans and servicemen who were interned. After the policy was rescinded, Japanese Americans returned to serving in the Coast Guard before the end of World War II. Another policy that impacted the enlistment of Asian servicemen was the Nationality Act of 1940 which allowed foreign nationals who served honorably in the U.S. military for three years to become citizens.

## The Bataan

After Japan captured the Philippines in 1942, President Manuel Quezon relinquished the Philippine patrol boat Bataan and its crew to the Coast Guard, allowing the Bataan to serve as CG-68009 for the duration of the war. Quezon stated, "The Filipino officers and crew who will man this vessel are now regular members of the Coast Guard Reserve. They, and this Coast Guard patrol boat, represent the desire of every one of the 17 million Filipinos, whether under enemy domination or on free soil, to go into action again in the fight for freedom." These crewmembers became the first to receive pay, rank, and authority granted to senior enlisted officers. During World War II, Filipinos were the largest Asian group to serve in the Coast Guard. In 1971, Filipinos were able to enlist in any position according to their education, experience, and qualifications.

## Asian American Women SPARs

In November 1942, Congress created the Coast Guard Women's Reserve which adopted the term SPAR, an acronym for "Semper Paratus–Always Ready." From 1942 to 1946, 12,000 women served as SPARs, including the Coast Guard's first women of color. Florence Ebersole Smith Finch, a Filipina American, was the first Asian American woman to serve in the Coast Guard. She became a member of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPARs) in the final year of World War II. She worked for General Douglas

MacArthur's intelligence office before the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. When Japan invaded the Philippines, she joined the Filipino underground and smuggled food and medicine to Allied prisoners of war (POWs) and Filipino guerrillas. Finch was arrested and imprisoned in three prison camps before the U.S. liberated the Philippines in 1945. During this time, she was beaten and tortured. In 1945, American forces freed her. Following the liberation, she enlisted in the Coast Guard to "avenge the death of her late husband" who was killed aboard a Navy patrol torpedo boat. Finch received the Pacific Campaign Ribbon and the U.S. Medal of Freedom for her heroism in the Philippines, one of few Asian Americans and women to receive these honors.

## Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the Coast Guard Academy

Asian Americans were the first minorities to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT. Jack Ngum Jones, a Chinese American, became the first Asian American to graduate from the USCGA in 1945. Kwang-Ping Hsu, a mainland China native, was the first officer to graduate from the USCGA who was not born in the U.S. He was one of the first minority aviators and became known for his polar aviation missions. Monyee Smith, a Japanese American, was the first minority, female officer to graduate from the USCGA in 1980. In 2013. Joseph M. Vojvodich became the first Asian American flag officer in the Coast Guard. Juan T. Salas was the first Pacific Islander to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy in 1968, the first Chamarro to graduate from a military academy, and the first Pacific Islander to receive a Coast Guard officer's commission. Salas became the first Pacific Islander to command a cutter, reach the rank of captain, and command the Coast Guard base at Guam. He and his son Matthew J. Salas were the first Pacific Islander father-son duo to attend the Coast Guard Academy. Laura H. O'Hare was the first Native Hawaiian and female Pacific Islander to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy.

## Pacific Islanders in the Coast Guard

With the western expansion to the Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard began to attract Pacific Islanders. Pacific Islander Americans are the third longest-serving minority group in the Coast Guard. Seventeen Native Hawaiians became the first Pacific Islanders to serve in the USCG aboard the Revenue Cutter C.W. Lawrence, the first cutter in the Pacific. In 1898, Congress passed the Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. During the same year, the signing of the Treaty of Paris ended the Spanish-American War, ceding the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States and granting independence to Cuba. As a result, more native Pacific Islanders enlisted in the Coast Guard. Revenue Cutter Thetis became the first cutter stationed in Honolulu in 1904, serving the Hawaiian Islands and Midway Island. Native Hawaiians became leaders in the U.S.

Lighthouse Service where they participated in rescues and served as keepers of lighthouses. Pacific Islanders also served in the Coast Guard during World War I and World War II. On December 7, 1941, Radioman First Class Melvin Kealoha Bell, a native Hawaiian, manned the Diamond Head radio station and warned commercial vessels of an imminent attack on Pearl Harbor. He was promoted the Chief Radioman and eventually master chief petty officer, the first Pacific Islander to earn the rank of chief petty officer. Serving the U.S. Navy's intelligence office, he helped crack the Japanese Navy's codes. He was also the first Pacific Islander to have a Coast Guard cutter named after him.

## The Coast Guard in World War II

In December 1941 at Pearl Harbor, Coast Guard cutters carried out anti-aircraft barrages against Japan and performed anti-submarine patrols with the Navy. When enemy forces attacked two Coast Guard vessels in Iceland and Singapore, the Coast Guard suffered its first wartime combat casualties. The Secretary-Class Cutter Alexander Hamilton was the first American warship lost to the Axis forces off the coast of Iceland on January 30, 1942. The USS Wakefield was refueling in Singapore when a Japanese bomb attacked the ship. However, it survived the air raid and delivered the civilian refugees aboard the ship to India. During the Battle of the Atlantic, the Coast Guard's cutters, destroyer escorts, and patrol frigates protected Allied convoys, safeguarding the arrival of personnel, food, and military cargo to Europe. In May 1942, the cutter Icarus sank a U-boat off the North Carolina coast, capturing the first German POWs by Americans. By the end of the war, the Coast Guard sank 11 U-boats. The Coast Guard also led the development of technology such as long-range navigation, the use of radio waves to help planes and ships determine their location in any weather scenario. The Coast Guard also helped develop helicopters into military aircraft. During search and rescue missions, the Coast Guard saved the lives of almost 2,800 survivors from both the Allied and Axis powers. Their lifeboats rescued survivors from torpedoed tankers and cargo vessels while their aircraft guided ships to survivors to perform water rescues.

## Integration of the Armed Forces

On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, abolishing segregation in the armed forces and integrating all military branches. Executive Order 9981 stated that "there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed forces without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin." It also established the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services to implement this policy. Although there was resistance to this executive order, most of the military was integrated by the end of the Korean War.

## The Coast Guard in the Vietnam War

During the Vietnam War, President Lyndon B. Johnson required Coast Guard forces to assist the Navy in preventing the communists from infiltrating South Vietnam. The Coast Guard Squadron One, 26 Point-Class 82-foot patrol boats, were the first American shallow-water boats to patrol South Vietnam's coast. Throughout the war, these patrol boats inspected over 280,000 vessels. Coast Guard cutters helped force the communists to use the Ho Chi Minh Trail instead of the coast. Coast Guard cutters participated in 6,000 naval gunfire support missions. 8,000 Coast Guardsmen served in Vietnam.

## The Vietnam War

During the 1800s, European countries were colonizing countries in Southeast Asia. France colonized countries that were later known as French Indochina: Saigon, Vietnam in 1859, Cambodia in 1863, and Laos in 1893. In World War II, Japan occupied French Indochina and France attempted to recolonize Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Vietnamese nationalist movement, tried to free the colonies in French Indochina from colonial rule and turned to communism. Following the First Indochina War in which France surrendered Indochina, the 1954 Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into two regions: North Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh government, and South Vietnam led by Ngo Dinh Diem, an anti-communist leader. Under President Dwight Eisenhower and President John F. Kennedy, the U.S. government created the government in South Vietnam and became increasingly involved in anti-communism efforts for twenty-one years. When the National Liberation Front challenged Diem's government, Kennedy sent more military advisors to South Vietnam. After North Vietnamese ships fired on the *U.S.S. Maddox*, Congress enabled the military to bomb North Vietnam and deploy troops to South Vietnam.

Between the first American soldiers deploying to Vietnam in 1965 and 1968, 540,000 soldiers were in Vietnam. The U.S. government dropped over a million tons of bombs on North Vietnam and four million tons of bombs on South Vietnam. The total tonnage of bombs dropped on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia exceeded the amount dropped on Nazi Germany in World War II. The government also used napalm, a highly flammable gel, and Agent Orange and Agent Blue, herbicides that destroyed trees and vegetation. The war displaced twelve million people in South Vietnam. During the Tet Offensive, two weeks of intense battle and death, more of the American public shifted its opinion against the war. On January 27, 1973, the U.S. and North Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Accords, ending the Vietnam War.

By 1975, the U.S. government knew that the fall of the South Vietnamese regime was imminent and began forming "Operation New Life," plans for evacuations. The U.S. evacuated 7,500 people daily before the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. 73,000 Vietnamese citizens evacuated on South Vietnamese navy ships and transferred to U.S. ships that brought them to the naval base in the Philippines. These displaced Vietnamese citizens were sent to processing camps in Guam and Wake Island and later refugee centers in the U.S. The U.S. also accepted 4,600 Cambodian diplomats, government leaders, and people that feared political persecution. President Gerald Ford established the Interagency Task Force which managed the refugee resettlement of people from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act designated Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong people as refugees in need of resettlement and enabled Congress to work with NGOs and charities to sponsor refugees. During "Operation Babylift," over 1,700 Vietnamese and Cambodian orphan babies were airlifted to the U.S. By the end of 1975, approximately 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees were admitted to the U.S. Between 1975 and 1980, nearly 443,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were resettled in the U.S.

In this unit, students will:

- Explore how Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders gradually joined the U.S. Coast Guard and other armed forces.
- Examine how international relations and domestic policy impacted the ability of people of color and non-citizens to serve in the military.
- Examine the U.S. government's role in causing the Vietnam War and the refugee crisis in its aftermath.

**Compelling Question:**

- What is patriotism? How have Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders shown their patriotism by answering the call to serve during the Spanish-American War, World Wars I & II, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and current conflicts?

**Supporting Questions:**

- How has the representation of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in the military expanded?
- Consider the role of the American military and Congress in annexing the territories of Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the islands of Samoa. How did imperialism and annexation impact the self-determination and sovereignty of Native Hawaiians

and Pacific Islanders?

- How did the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service and Executive Order 9066 affect Japanese Americans who were serving in the military?
- Does the “bamboo ceiling” in the U.S. military remain today? Why or why not?
- Historically, how has the U.S. military recruited low-income, working-class people of color, and what have been the impacts of this relationship?
- How has the role of women in the U.S. military evolved from the repeal of the combat arms exclusion policy to now?
- Examine the duality of American imperialism and humanitarianism. What was the U.S. military’s role in instigating the refugee crisis during the Vietnam War and what was its consequent role in the refugee resettlement process?
- Historically, what has been the U.S. military’s impact on countries in Asia and what is the current relationship between the U.S. State Department and Asia?

| **Desired Results** | |
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| **Relevant Content Standards** | **Related Supporting Standards** |
| **From Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework**<br><br>**Dimension 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools**<br><br>HIST 9–12.1 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts. | **From CT Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects)**<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text. |

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| HIST 9–12.3 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.<br><br>HIST 9–12.8 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.<br><br>HIST 9–12.10 Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.<br><br>HIST 9–12.11 Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.<br><br>GEO 9–12.2 Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how globalization, competition for scarce resources, and human migration contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among countries. | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |

| Learning Outcomes | Critical Consciousness |
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| **Overarching Learning Objectives** | **Overarching Essential Questions** |
| **LO4 EXERCISE** critical thinking, independence, and initiative to complete a research project about Asian American history and the local and regional community. | **EQ4 COMMUNITY** Which Asian American communities are present in Connecticut and what does their presence look like e.g. businesses, military service, culture, art/music, food, religious groups? |
| **LO5 APPLY** tools of civic engagement and communicate ideas to others. Examples include writing a testimony in support of or in opposition to a bill, writing a mock Supreme Court argument, writing an editorial, writing a letter to an elected official or state agency about a local issue, and writing a policy brief to solve a global conflict. | **EQ5 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** How have Asian Americans historically and presently responded to crises in their communities e.g. Civil War, Great Depression, World War II, Vietnam War, COVID-19 pandemic? How has the Asian American electorate expanded from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 to now? |
| **LO6 INTERPRET** how American foreign policy, military action, and judicial rulings impacted Asian American immigration, citizenship, international relations, trade, and the economy. | **EQ6 IMPERIALISM** How has the American government and military been complicit in wars and genocide in Asian countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, and Laos? What happened to the refugees following these military conflicts in their countries? |
| **LO7 INVESTIGATE** the evolution and development of the Asian American and Pacific Islander identities, including intersections with other communities. | **EQ7 DIASPORA** What cultures, stories, and traditions do the Asian American and Pacific Islander diaspora include? |

| Theme/Content-Specific Enduring Understandings | Theme/Content-Specific Inquiry |
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| **For this Module, students will know and be able to…**<br><br>**Knowledge:**<br>● Evaluate the impact that imperialism and colonialism had on the U.S. military's annexation of the Pacific Islands.<br>● Analyze the treatment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders by their fellow and superior officers in the military before integration.<br>● Analyze how President Truman expanded civil rights with Executive Order 9981 and the resistance to integration from Southern Senators.<br>● Understand the experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders at the Coast Guard Academy and other military academies.<br>● Analyze the U.S. government and military's actions in the Vietnam War and their consequences.<br>● Understand different perspectives about the U.S. government's role in the Vietnam War.<br><br>**Skills:**<br>● Analyze primary and secondary source documents representative of the perspectives and experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander veterans.<br>● Conduct an oral history interview and use resources such as the Veterans History Project to explore oral histories and means of using different media to document history. | **For this Unit of Study, to support self-discovery, identity development, and civic preparedness/actions, students will explore...**<br><br>● How have the identity and cultures of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders shaped their careers in the armed forces?<br>● In what ways have Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders defined patriotism through their service, resistance, and actions? |

| Evidence of Learning | | |
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| **Pre-Assessment/ Common Misconceptions** | **Formative Assessments/ Checks for Understanding** | **Performative Tasks and Criteria/Project-Based Applications (Aligned with Compelling Question)** |
| **Pre-Assessment:**<br>Students will complete an activity where they are asked to picture a member of the armed forces and describe what they see.<br><br>**Common Misconceptions:**<br>● Asian Americans did not contribute to the war effort in World War I and World War II.<br>● Asian Americans have never achieved high ranks in the armed forces.<br>● Asian Americans do not belong in the military.<br>● The military has always been open to all races and ethnicities. | ● Class discussions/Socratic Seminars<br>● Short answer reflections<br>● Exit tickets<br>● Research assignment<br>● Oral history interview<br>● Art/creative assignment | Students will conduct oral history interviews with members of their community. They will use the oral history toolkit and submit a 30-minute recording of the interview. Students who choose to interview a veteran can submit their interview to the Veterans History Project. They will also present what they learned about the significance of documenting oral histories. |

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Learning Plan/Lesson Sequence</th></tr>
<tr><td>Lesson 4.1</td><td>Duration: 1 day</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Big Ideas/ Topics to be addressed, including Key Concepts and Terms<br><br>● Patriotism<br>● The Long Blue Line<br>● Asian American Cuttermen<br>● Coast Guard Women’s Reserve (SPARs)<br>● Executive Order 9981<br>● Integration of the armed forces<br>● Spanish-American War<br>● Vietnam War<br>● Paris Peace Accords<br>● French Indochina<br><br>Vocabulary: annexation, imperialism, self-determination, sovereignty, refugee resettlement, internally displaced people, humanitarian aid</td><td>Materials/Resources<br>Source #1<br>● Title: Oral History Questionnaire by Ms. Florence Finch, Ithaca, New York, 2007<br>● Source type: Oral History<br>● Institution: U.S. Coast Guard Historian’s Office<br>● Author: Florence Finch<br>● Link: Florence Finch Oral History.pdf<br><br>This oral history details Florence Finch’s experiences as the first Asian American in the Coast Guard Women’s Reserve.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Source #2<br>● Title: Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States (1898)<br>● Source type: Legislation<br>● Institution: National Archives<br>● Author: U.S. Congress<br>● Link: Joint Resolution to Annex Hawaii.jpg<br><br>Passed by Congress, this Resolution allowed the U.S. to annex Hawaii on July 7, 1898. It took over half a century for Hawaii to achieve statehood. In March 1959, a Hawaii statehood resolution passed the House and the Senate. President Eisenhower signed it into law on August 21, 1959.</td></tr>
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| | Source #3<br>• Title: Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain; December 10, 1898<br>• Source type: Treaty<br>• Institution: Yale Law Library<br>• Author: U.S. Congress<br>• Link: Avalon Project - Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain; December 10, 1898<br><br>This treaty ended the Spanish-American War, ceded the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States, and granted independence to Cuba. |
| | Source #4<br>• Title: Executive Order 9881<br>• Source type: Executive Order<br>• Institution: National Archives<br>• Author: President Harry S. Truman<br>• Link: EO 9981.jpg<br>This Executive Order abolished segregation in the armed forces, integrating all branches. It was signed by President Truman on July 26, 1948. |
| | Source #5<br>• Title: Asian Americans & the U.S. Coast Guard<br>• Source type: Timeline<br>• Institution: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office |

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| | • Author: Dr. William Thiesen<br>• Link:<br>USCG_ASIAN-AMERICAN_CHRONOLOGY.PDF<br><br>This timeline details significant events accomplished by Asian Americans in the U.S. Coast Guard. |
| | Source #6<br>• Title: Pacific Island Americans & the U.S. Coast Guard<br>• Source type: Timeline<br>• Institution: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office<br>• Author: Dr. William Thiesen<br>• Link:<br>USCG_PACIFIC-ISLANDER_AMERICAN_CH…<br><br>This timeline details significant events accomplished by Pacific Islanders in the U.S. Coast Guard. |
| | Source #7<br>• Title: AAPI U.S. Coast Guard Veterans<br>• Source type: Oral History Interview Transcripts<br>• Institution: UConn<br>• Author: Karen Lau<br>• Link: U.S. Coast Guard |

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| | This folder includes transcripts of oral history interviews with six Asian American and Pacific Islander veterans in the U.S. Coast Guard. |
| | Source #8<br>• Title: AAPI U.S. Army Veterans<br>• Source type: Oral History Interview Transcripts<br>• Institution: UConn<br>• Author: Karen Lau<br>• Link: U.S. Army<br><br>This folder includes transcripts of oral history interviews with two Asian American veterans in the U.S. Army. |
| | Source #9<br>• Title: AAPI U.S. Air Force Veteran<br>• Source type: Oral History Interview Transcripts<br>• Institution: UConn<br>• Author: Karen Lau<br>• Link:<br>USAF Lieutenant Colonel Leonardo Tongko Trans…<br><br>This is a transcript of an oral history interview with an Asian American U.S. Air Force veteran. |

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| | Source #9<br>• Title: Pilot Artifacts<br>• Source type: Photographs<br>• Institution: UConn<br>• Author: Karen Lau<br>• Link: Fmr. USCG Pilot Mara H. Langevin Artifacts<br><br>This document contains photographs of various artifacts from the former U.S. Coast Guard Pilot Mara H. Langevin's career. Langevin is the first minority female pilot in USCG history. |
| **Learning Activities**<br><br>**Week 4 Theme of Patriotism**<br><br>**Initiation:** Ask students what they know about the military and the experiences of minority veterans. Ask students what they know about minority military units including the Buffalo Soldiers, Tuskegee Airmen, and the 442nd Infantry Regiment.<br><br>**Activity:**<br><br>• As a class, students will browse the Veterans History Project to learn about Asian American veterans.<br>• In pairs or small groups, students will read the oral history interview of Florence Ebersole Smith Finch and learn about the U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserves | **Reflections to Affirm Identity**<br><br>Talk with a family member or a community member who has served in the military about their recollection of their enlistment and how the treatment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the military has evolved. |

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| (Source #1). They will examine the questionnaire and the Veterans History Project sample interview questions to learn about how to document stories through oral histories. By reading Finch's responses, students will learn about her efforts to smuggle supplies to American POWs imprisoned by the Japanese in the Philippines.<br>● Individually, students will research important Asian American figures in their community, which may include teachers, elected officials, judges, veterans, and family members, and choose one person to interview. They will create an oral history questionnaire and reach out to the person for an interview. They will practice their interviewing skills and etiquette with a classmate.<br>● Individually, students will read about the Spanish-American War in which the U.S. annexed Puerto Rico and Guam. They will also watch the oral history interview with Lieutenant Commander Christine T. Igisomar (Source #7) to learn about the perspective of a native Chamorro veteran stationed in Guam. As a class, they will discuss the history of American imperialism, including Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, and how these ideals guided American foreign policy and military action.<br>● In groups, students will watch segments of the oral history interviews with Asian American veterans (Sources #7, 8, 9). They will discuss what they learned about oral history documentation and interviewing techniques. They will also compare and contrast these | |

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| veterans' answers to questions and research the historical events mentioned in the interviews.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will discuss the U.S. military's involvement in the Vietnam War and the government's humanitarian aid in the refugee resettlement process. Students will read news articles and coverage of the war to understand different perspectives.<br><br>**Evidence of Learning:** Students will develop questions for an oral history interview with a figure of their choice and submit a recording of a 30-minute interview at the next class.<br><br>**Closing:** Students will discuss what they learned about military history and the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander veterans. | |
| **Options for Content Continuity Across History Courses and Interdisciplinary Integration**<br><br>● English<br>● Humanities<br>● Political Science<br>● Geography | **Extensions/Experiential Opportunities**<br><br>● Visit the Coast Guard Academy located at 31 Mohegan Ave Pkwy, New London, CT 06320.<br>● Watch The Post, a movie about The Washington Post's publication of the Pentagon Papers, classified documents exposing the U.S. government's actions in the Vietnam War. |

# Module 5

## "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power": AAPI Activists During the Civil Rights Movement and 1992 L.A. Riots


Marchers carrying South Korean flags after the beating of Rodney King by LAPD officers (Photo by David Butow via Getty Images)


Photo by Asian Americans Advancing Justice – LA via Twitter

Image of Yuri Kochiyama and Malcolm X by Medium


Photo of Yellow Peril Supports Black Power (Photo provided by Roz Payne via ICP)

**Essential Question:** How did activists in Asian American Movement of the 1960s fight for an end to the Vietnam War, ethnic studies, affordable housing, labor rights, gender equality, and LGTBQ rights?

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

| Module 5 | | | |
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| **Title** | "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power": AAPI Activists During the Civil Rights Movement and 1992 L.A. Uprising | **Timeframe** | Early March (1 week) |
| **Developed By** | Karen Lau (with support from Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player) | **Revision Date** | September 11, 2022 |

## Background

**Summary:** Module 5 centers on Asian American Movement of the '60s, beginning with the impact that immigration reform policies had on the Asian American diaspora. This module discusses the work of three activists, Yuri Kochiyama, Philip Vera Cruz, and Grace Lee Boggs. Lastly, it describes several activist campaigns, including saving the International Hotel, affordable housing, women's rights, LGTBQ Rights, and the work of the Black Panther Party and the Red Guard. By learning about the Asian American movement, students will develop a stronger understanding of their collective struggle for civil rights and cross-racial solidarity.

### Immigration Reform in the 1960s

During the 1960s, Congress passed laws that significantly changed the demographics of Asian Americans. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act allowed new immigrants and refugees from Asia to move to the U.S., diversifying Asian American communities. Calls for immigration reform rose out of political beliefs spread during the Cold War and the 1960s civil rights movement. Activists spoke against the hypocrisy of the American government's rhetoric of democracy against communism and their unfair treatment of immigrants. Support for immigrants came from government leaders, including President John F. Kennedy, who authored a book in support of immigration reform, *A Nation of Immigrants*. President Lyndon B. Johnson advocated for a new immigration law after Kennedy's assassination.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the basis of modern immigration policy, affected Asian Americans more than any other group. The law abolished the national origins quotas, allowing for massive groups of people from different countries to join the American populace. The law also created preference categories based on family reunification and professional skills. Asian immigrants were already coming to the U.S. to find professions and reunite with family members in the U.S. The 1990 Immigration and Nationality Act increased the number of high-wage workers with H-1B visas. As a result, American tech companies have recruited skilled workers from Asia. Asian immigrants receive about 75 percent of H-1B visas. In 2011, Indians received 56 percent of H-1B visas. The 1965 Immigration Act also established a global cap on immigration and restricted immigration from the west for the first time. One consequence of the law is the increase in undocumented immigrants, the center of the debate around immigration.

Asian and Latin American immigration has transformed American society and the workplace. After the 1965 Immigration Act was passed, more immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Pakistan, and Bangladesh migrated to the U.S. whereas Japanese and Chinese migrants made up most of the immigration of the early twentieth century. Asian immigrants with different educational backgrounds changed the labor market. Since the 1980s, engineers and health professionals from India, the Philippines, China, and Taiwan comprised one-third of their professions in the U.S. Simultaneously, more Asians without education or job skills also moved to the U.S. Asians comprised between 10 and 11 percent of the 11 million undocumented immigrant population from 2000 to 2010.

Chinese Immigrants

From job or educational opportunities to family reunification to political freedom, immigrants came to the U.S. for different reasons. Immigrants who became naturalized citizens sponsored their family members in the U.S. and sponsored other relatives, creating a “family-based chain migration” phenomenon. Others fled communism, oppression, and poverty. After the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, a government crackdown on pro-democracy activists, the arrival of Chinese immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong increased substantially. Professional Chinese immigrants became scientists, real estate agents, entrepreneurs, and other skilled occupations. They formed communities with Chinese-owned businesses and newspapers. In New York City, there are multiple Chinatowns while the Monterey Park community in southern California became the “first suburban Chinatown.” Although some immigrants became economically successful, many Chinese immigrants are also low-wage workers who work as waiters, garment workers, cooks, and laundrymen. In 1977, garment workers in New York’s Chinatown became organizers for affordable childcare. When the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), did not answer their demands, the garment workers became activists for daycare, mobilizing 20,000 workers to strike. As a result of this strike, the ILGWU opened its first daycare in 1984.

## Filipino Immigrants

About 665,000 Filipinos immigrated to the U.S. in the two decades after the 1965 Immigration Act passed. Common jobs held by Filipinos included nurses, doctors, teachers, entertainers, and cruise ship workers. Filipino immigration is largely impacted by the U.S. colonization of the Philippines. After colonizing the Philippines, U.S. military bases established firm connections between the countries, causing Filipinos to enter military service for the U.S. Today, Filipinos are the second largest group of foreign-born U.S. veterans. In the 1970s and 1980s, Filipino nurses, doctors, and other medical providers comprised the largest group of health professionals from abroad. However, foreign-born doctors faced challenges as they were required to become recertified to practice medicine in the U.S. When the backlash against foreign-trained nurses in the 1970s and 1980s spread, Filipino nurses collectively organized for fair license requirements for foreign-trained nurses. By 1981, the collective action of Filipino nurses caused the California Board of Registered Nursing to establish non-discriminatory license requirements.

## Korean Immigrants

Since 1965, there has been an influx of immigrants from South Korea due to political instability and economic conditions. During the Cold War, the U.S. invested in the South Korean economy to contain communism. While South Korea was industrializing, the number of laborers increased, but they faced low wages, suppression of strikes, income inequality, departures from rural areas to urban areas, and increased population density. Families of Korean immigrants moved to the U.S., becoming naturalized citizens and professionals. In the 1990s, when South Korea's living conditions and democratization improved, Korean immigration to the U.S. declined. Similar to Chinese immigrants, Koreans are overrepresented in both high-income and low-income populations, having higher median annual personal earnings than the U.S. population and higher poverty rates.

## South Asian Immigrants

Following the 1965 Immigration Act, immigration from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka increased. South Asians are the third largest group of Asian Americans. Compared to other immigrants, Indian immigrants are more educated. As a result of the economic conditions in India and U.S. immigration policies, most Indian immigrants are fluent in English and are highly educated professionals. The influx of educated, skilled workers benefited American industry. For example, by 1998, Chinese and Indian

immigrants started over 25 percent of the tech businesses in Silicon Valley, generating 60,000 jobs. Working-class Indian immigrants worked in grocery stores, gas stations, and motels. Indian Americans own about half of all American motels.

## Asian American Activism

Asian Americans were engaged in activism for civil rights, women's liberation, LGTBQ rights, and ending the Vietnam War. From this political engagement, the Asian American movement united people of Asian ethnicities under the term "Asian American." Before this term was coined, Asian Americans were called "Orientals" and were deemed threats to Americans. This term has allowed Asian Americans to ally themselves with each other across ethnicities and demand political action. Some Asian American activists began fighting for equality immediately following World War II. For instance, Japanese Americans and African Americans united to challenge discrimination in Los Angeles neighborhoods and advance civil rights agendas. New groups of activists that formed in the 1960s and 1970s expanded their work to fight racism and inequities. Three Asian American activists that began their work in the African American civil rights movement were Yuri Kochiyama, Philip Vera Cruz, and Grace Lee Boggs.

## Three Activists: Kochiyama, Vera Cruz, and Boggs

Yuri Kochiyama, the daughter of Japanese immigrants, was incarcerated at a camp in Arkansas during World War II. She suffered anti-Japanese sentiment after the war, being called derogatory names such as "Jap" and having hot coffee thrown at her by customers at her waitressing job. After she met Daisy Bates, the NAACP Little Rock president, Kochiyama immersed herself in the Civil Rights Movement and became a community organizer, working with Malcolm X to fuse the Asian American movement with the African American civil rights movement. She protested against American imperialism in Asia and advocated for ethnic studies in schools. In the 1980s, she testified in the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. After 9/11. She advocated for freeing political prisoners and ending racial profiling.

Philip Vera Cruz was part of the first wave of Filipino immigrants who moved to the U.S. in the early twentieth century. In the 1950s, he joined the Filipino labor movement, coordinating with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee to hold strikes and boycotts. As a result, they formed the United Farm Workers (UFW), which had Filipino and Mexican farm laborers as members. Under the leadership of Cesár Chávez, Vera Cruz served as the UFW's vice president. He left a legacy of teaching new activists about grassroots organizing, defending workers' rights, democracy, and solidarity.

Grace Lee Boggs, the daughter of Chinese immigrant parents, joined the African American civil rights movement by working with West Indian Marxist C. L. R. James. Inspired by labor rights activist A. Philip Randolph's advocacy for fair hiring practices, she joined the movement. In 1953, she married James Boggs, an African American civil rights activist, and they began working on issues, including civil rights, labor, women's rights, campaigns against the war, and environmental issues.

## The Origin of the Term "Asian American"

During the 1960s, Asian American activists ushered in a new era of radical political action that was inspired by existing movements, socialism, and communism. They advocated for unity among communities of color, economic justice, community services, and Asian American studies. Instead of labeling themselves as "Orientals," a term that upheld the model minority myth, they called themselves "Asian Americans," creating a pan-ethnic identity that united the Asian immigrant community and ethnic diaspora. Finally, Asian Americans were able to form unique political, cultural, and community organizations that gave them power in the political sphere. Movements that Asian Americans participated in included the Southern civil rights movement, UC Berkeley's Free Speech movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement.

However, since no movement existed at the time to promote solely Asian American causes, married activists Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee founded the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) at UC Berkeley, the first organization to use "Asian American" as a term for activism. The AAPA had several goals: unite all Asians no matter their ethnicity, critique the U.S. as a racist, imperialist society founded upon and routinely complicit in exploitation, and act in solidarity with Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) by supporting all oppressed groups in their fight for liberation. The "Third World" group encompassed Asian Americans, African Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans. The AAPA launched the "yellow power" movement through its efforts to educate and mobilize UC Berkeley and San Francisco State students. They participated in the "Free Huey" movement to free the founder of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton, and the movement against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Although the AAPA disbanded in 1969 after the TWLF strikes ended, it paved the way for other Asian American groups to form, including Asian Americans for Action (AAA) in New York and I Wor Kuen, the largest Asian American organization connected to the Black Power movement. These groups raised the Asian American consciousness, and their work led to the creation of institutions to benefit the Asian American community.

## Activism on College Campuses

In 1968, the AAPA at San Francisco State University joined the TWLF, which determined the common sources of oppression for communities of color around the world were racism and colonialism. The TWLF organized a strike on the SF State campus on November 6, 1968 that called for ethnic studies curricula reflective of communities of color. After the strike, these students held protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, and occupied buildings for over five months during which over 700 students were arrested. At UC Berkeley, groups led by African American, Chicano, Asian American, and Native American students protested the administration and the lack of relevant, accountable curricula and programs. They formed the Berkeley Third World Liberation Front to strike for "self-determination in education," according to historian Daryl J. Maeda. During the next three months after the strike on January 22, 1969, students protested by blocking campus walkways and forming protest lines on campus. The police used helicopters to dump tear gas onto the protesters and arrested many. As a result of the violence, Governor Ronald Reagan nearly established martial law which would have sent the National Guard to UC Berkeley. The SF State strike was successful, creating the first School of Ethnic Studies in the U.S. UC Berkeley also established an Ethnic Studies Department.

## International Hotel Campaign and Affordable Housing

Asian American activists also worked to establish community-based social services, provide affordable housing and healthcare, and secure the labor rights of working-class citizens. A significant housing campaign centered on the International Hotel, a building in San Francisco's Chinatown and Manilatown occupied by elderly Filipino and Chinese men. When the hotel's owner threatened to evict the residents in 1969, activists leased and renovated the building, renting the space to Asian American businesses and cultural organizations. When the hotel threatened eviction another time in 1972, Asian American activists fought the eviction plans to no avail. On August 3, 1977, 200 activists formed a barricade inside the hotel and 2,000 people created a human chain around the building. However, police officers broke up the protesters, destroyed doors, and forced the tenants outside. Although the building was later demolished, the campaign to save it inspired calls for affordable housing in San Francisco's Chinatown and Japantown.

## Anti-War Campaigns

Asian American activists opposed the Vietnam War and expressed solidarity with citizens of Asian countries impacted by American imperialism. They believed that the Vietnam War was an indicator of American imperialism following the bombings of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki during World War II, the U.S. invasion of Okinawa, and the Korean War. The Bay Area Asian Coalition Against the War visited China, North Vietnam, and North Korea to learn about socialism in these countries for their anti-imperialist movement.

## Women's Rights and LGTBQ Rights

Asian American women formed organizations to combat gender inequality. While male activists were responsible for decision-making, speeches, and serving as the head of the organization, women were often resigned to typing pamphlets, note taking, making coffee, and cleaning. Upon recognizing the "triple oppression" faced by working women of color, they formed groups such as Asian Women United and the Organization of Asian Women. Female Asian American activists translated union rights, fought for the rights of low-income tenants in Chinatowns, and pushed for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Liberation movements were exclusionary towards the LGBTQ community. Activist Helen Zia described the homophobia she suffered from Asian American and Black activists in Boston during the 1970s; she was threatened to be excluded from the liberation community if she came out. Zia and her wife eventually became one of the first same-sex couples to marry in California in June 2008. In October 1979, the Asian American LGBTQ movement began during the First National Third World Gay and Lesbian Conference and the First National March for Gay and Lesbian Rights. Part of this march was the Lesbian and Gay Asian Contingent. The Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays was formed in 1980, advocating for the needs of LGBTQ Asians in Los Angeles. These organizations empowered LGBTQ Asians to eliminate homophobia and support those affected by HIV/AIDS.

## The Black Panthers and the Red Guard

Richard Aoki, a Japanese American, joined the Black Panther Party while he was a student at Merritt College with Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the BPP's leaders. As a field marshall for the BPP, he developed a tight-knit relationship between the BPP and the Red Guard, an Asian American communist group modeled after the BPP that was founded in 1969 and named after Mao Tsetung's revolutionaries. Inspired by the BPP's radical resistance to racial and economic oppression, the Red Guard collaborated with the BPP in demonstrations for justice and an end to oppression. The Red Guard led initiatives to benefit the community in San Francisco's Chinatown. For example, they prevented a tuberculosis testing center from closing. They also defended 1,000 people who resisted the Vietnam War draft by working with the Asian Legal Services. The Red Guard's Breakfast for Children program provided meals to Black children in public housing projects and poor Asian senior citizens.

The Black Panther Party in Connecticut (1969-1972)

Between the 1920s and the 1960s, Black activists in Connecticut formed groups to protest police violence, including the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, the Negro Defense Council, and the Hartford League of Struggle for Negro Rights. Hartford was separated by race and class; poor, Black residents lived downtown while working class, white residents lived in the North End. This racial division caused discrimination in labor, housing, and education and police brutality, leading to a mistrust of law enforcement by the Black community. José Rene Gonzalves organized Connecticut's first Black Panther Party chapter in Bridgeport and later started chapters in New Haven, Waterbury, and Hartford.

On September 18, 1967, John Barber, the leader of the Black Caucus, led a march in Hartford to protest segregated housing which barred Black families from owning homes in the South End of Hartford. Marchers included the Community for Nonviolent Action in Voluntown. However, police prevented the protestors from reaching downtown, causing a riot in Hartford. The Black Panthers' priority in Hartford was to "patrol the police," or prevent them from falsely arresting people or shooting tear gas into homes. They patrolled neighborhoods using civilian patrols. In 1969, New Haven police arrested 14 residents for the murder of Alex Rackley, a Panther. Activists believed that the arrests of Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale were intended to eliminate the Panthers' power.

The Black Panthers' Ten-Point Program, "What We Want, What We Believe," demanded full employment, exemption from the draft, an end to police brutality, "land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace." Among their successful initiatives was the breakfast program for children. In Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Willimantic, children had breakfast and received clothing at the Panthers' kitchen before school. They provided medical services to communities, too. The Panthers also distributed their newspaper, *The Black Panther.* In declassified FBI documents, the FBI estimated that Panthers sold 4,000 newspaper copies per week in Connecticut. The Panthers also protested a new highway that divided the neighborhoods, Route 34. The Black Panthers demonstrated on every college campus and at every anti-Vietnam War protest.

In this unit, students will:

- Identify the issues and needs of the Asian American community during the 1960s.
- Analyze the formation of interracial groups and coalitions for social and economic equality.

- Evaluate the accomplishments, failures, and lasting impacts of the Asian American movement.
- Investigate how the issues of war, ethnic studies, affordable housing, labor rights, gender equality, and LGTBQ rights remained, were exacerbated, or improved today.
- Analyze the role of law enforcement and the federal government in suppressing protests and demonstrations by activist groups on college campuses.
- Analyze how activist groups contributed to the establishment of social services and community programs for low-income, housing insecure residents.
- Analyze how the Asian American Movement demonstrated solidarity with other groups such as the Black Panther Party and the Third World Liberation Front.

**Compelling Question:**

- How did activists in Asian American Movement of the 1960s fight for an end to the Vietnam War, ethnic studies, affordable housing, labor rights, gender equality, and LGTBQ rights?

**Supporting Questions:**

- How was the term “Asian American” coined and what was its impact on creating a multi-ethnic community with a common identity?
- How did imperialism and colonialism contribute to the U.S. military’s involvement in the Vietnam War?
- How did college students demonstrate support of political movements in the 1960s?
- How did socialism and communism inspire the Asian American Movement? Which thinkers and theorists can you trace the movement’s origins to?
- What similarities and differences can you draw between the Asian American Movement of the 1960s and the Stop Asian Hate Movement of 2020-2022?

- What are the effects of immigration reform policies passed in 1965 on the American populace and workforce today?
- In what ways did Asian American, African American, Chicano, and Native American artists and musicians use art to express their political ideologies?
- How has the Asian American electorate expanded from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 to now?

| **Desired Results** | |
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| **Relevant Content Standards** | **Related Supporting Standards** |
| **From Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework**<br><br>**Dimension 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools**<br><br>CIV 9–12.14 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.<br><br>HIST 9–12.1 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.<br><br>HIST 9–12.3 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.<br><br>HIST 9–12.8 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are | **From CT Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects)**<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts. |

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| limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.<br><br>HIST 9–12.10 Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.<br><br>HIST 9–12.11 Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.<br><br>GEO 9–12.2 Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how globalization, competition for scarce resources, and human migration contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among countries.<br><br>**Dimension 4 - Communicating conclusions and taking informed action**<br>INQ 9–12.15 Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |

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| contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.<br><br>CIV 9–12.5 Analyze how societies institute change in ways that both promote and hinder the common good and that protect and violate citizens' rights. | |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Critical Consciousness** |
| **Overarching Learning Objectives** | **Overarching Essential Questions** |
| **LO3 ANALYZE** local and global geopolitical, economic, and human rights issues through multicultural and multinational lenses.<br><br>**LO6 INTERPRET** how American foreign policy, military action, and judicial rulings impacted Asian American immigration, citizenship, international relations, trade, and the economy.<br><br>**LO7 INVESTIGATE** the evolution and development of the Asian American and Pacific Islander identities, including intersections with other communities. | **EQ3 ADVOCACY AND RESISTANCE** How did Asian Americans resist unjust government policies and laws and how did they advocate for change?<br><br>**EQ6 IMPERIALISM** How has the American government and military been complicit in wars and genocide in Asian countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, and Laos? What happened to the refugees following these military conflicts?<br><br>**EQ7 DIASPORA** What cultures, stories, and traditions does the Asian American and Pacific Islander diaspora include? |

| Theme/Content-Specific Enduring Understandings | Theme/Content-Specific Inquiry |
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| **For this Module, students will know and be able to…**<br><br>**Knowledge:**<br>● Gain an understanding of the leadership of Asian Americans in the Civil Rights Movement.<br>● Evaluate the effectiveness of collective organizing and activist groups.<br>● Analyze the role of the federal government in supporting and oppressing Asians in the U.S. and in other countries.<br>● Analyze the role of Asian American women and LGTBQ Asian Americans in the Civil Rights Movement.<br>● Understand how political movements are formed.<br>● Analyze the methods of nonviolent political protest and the response of the federal government and police to these protests.<br>● Evaluate how different communities were excluded from the liberation movement and what biases contributed to their exclusion.<br><br>**Skills:**<br>● Investigate primary and secondary stories to analyze the social, political, and economic issues the Asian American Movement was advocating for and against.<br>● Evaluate the role of art, music, poetry, and dance in the history of nonviolent political protest. Understand how art can be revolutionary. | **For this Unit of Study, to support self-discovery, identity development, and civic preparedness/actions, students will explore...**<br><br>● What are civil rights and civil liberties?<br>● How does racial discrimination manifest in housing, labor, and military action?<br>● How did Asian American and female activists reject the cultural stereotypes that portrayed them?<br>● How have unethical and unjust policies towards Asian Americans and working-class people been established by lawmakers, upheld, and abolished? How have these policies remained or taken other forms?<br>● What are the differences between equity, equality, and justice? |

| Evidence of Learning | | |
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| **Pre-Assessment/ Common Misconceptions** | **Formative Assessments/ Checks for Understanding** | **Performative Tasks and Criteria/Project-Based Applications (Aligned with Compelling Question)** |
| **Pre-Assessment:** Students will describe their thoughts on the experiences of college students in the 1960s during the Vietnam War era.<br><br>**Common Misconceptions:**<br>● Asian Americans were not involved in the Civil Rights Movement.<br>● Asian Americans did not protest the Vietnam War.<br>● Asian Americans were not part of the Black Panther Party.<br>● Asian Americans are not militant or radical.<br>● Asian Americans were never victims of crime. | ● Class discussions/Socratic Seminars<br>● Short answer reflections<br>● Exit tickets<br>● Research assignment<br>● Oral history interview<br>● Art/creative assignment<br>● Reflections on media including photographs, artwork, videos, music, and poetry | Discover how we can use the history of the Asian American movement and struggles for equality in housing, labor, and civil rights to frame twenty-first-century issues. Learn about activists who were critical to the Asian American movement and connect their philosophies to modern movements for social and racial justice. |

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Learning Plan/Lesson Sequence</th></tr>
<tr><th>Lesson 5.1</th><th>Duration: 1 day</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Big Ideas/ Topics to be addressed, including Key Concepts and Terms<br><br>● The Black Panther Party<br>● The Red Guard<br>● Intersectionality<br>● Police Brutality<br>● Third World Liberation Front<br>● Asian American vs. Oriental<br>● Vietnam War<br>● Anti-war movement<br>● Free Huey movement<br>● Asian American consciousness<br>● Interracial solidarity<br>● Ethnic studies<br>● Strike<br>● Labor rights<br>● Militant<br>● Radical<br><br>Vocabulary: civil rights, civil liberties, suppression, protest, reform, Loving V. Virginia, Civil Rights Act of 1964,</td><td>Materials/Resources<br>Source #1<br>● Title: The Black Panther Party Photos<br>● Source type: Photographs<br>● Institution: Newsreel<br>● Photographer: Roz Payne<br>● Link:<br>BPP - the Black Panther Party - photographs by Ro…<br><br>This collection of photographs depicts the Black Panther Party protests and Asian American activists who were present.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Source #2<br>● Title: How San Francisco Erased a Neighborhood<br>● Source type: Video<br>● Institution: Youtube<br>● Author: Vox News<br>● Link: How San Francisco erased a neighborhood<br><br>This video describes the campaign to save the I-Hotel in San Francisco’s Manilatown in the ‘60s and ‘70s.</td></tr>
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| | Source #3<br>• Title: Freeing Ourselves From Prison Sweatshops: Thai Garment Workers Speak Out<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Asian Americans Advancing Justice L.A.<br>• Author: Julie Su<br>• Link: Freeing Ourselves From Prison Sweatshops: Thai Garment Workers Speak Out<br><br>This article details Attorney Julie Su's experience defending 72 Thai garment workers who were working 18 hours a day in sweatshops behind barbed wire and under armed guard. She successfully obtained citizenship and compensation for them. |
| | Source #4<br>• Title: Deconstructing the Model Minority at the University of Michigan - Vincent Chin<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: University of Michigan<br>• Author: University of Michigan<br>• Link: Vincent Chin · Deconstructing the Model Minority at UM<br><br>These articles detail the Asian American activist movement before and after the murder of Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man who was killed by two white men in Detroit, Michigan in June 1982. |

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| | Source #5<br>● Title: The Many Afterlives of Vincent Chin<br>● Source type: Essay<br>● Institution: New Yorker Magazine<br>● Author: Hua Hsu<br>● Link: The Many Afterlives of Vincent Chin \| The New Yorker<br><br>This essay describes the legacy and impact of the killing of Vincent Chin and how it inspired the Asian American civil rights movement. |
| | Source #6<br>● Title: Decades After Infamous Beating Death, Recent Attacks Haunt Asian Americans<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: New York Times<br>● Author: Mitch Smith<br>● Link: Decades After Vincent Chin's Death, Recent Attacks Haunt Asian Americans - The New York Times<br><br>This article describes the connections between Vincent Chin's racially motivated murder and hate crimes against the AAPI community during COVID-19. |

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| | Source #7<br>• Title: Vincent Chin's Story / Lily Chin: The Courage to Speak<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Asian Americans Advancing Justice L.A.<br>• Author: Helen Zia<br>• Link: Lily Chin - The Courage to Speak Out.pdf<br><br>This article describes how Lily Chin, the mother of Vincent Chin, protested the lack of jail time for her son's murderers. |
| | Source #8<br>• Title: Asian American Movement 1968<br>• Source type: Digital Archive<br>• Institution: Asian American Community Center, Kearny St., San Francisco<br>• Author: Asian Community Center History Group<br>• Link: Asian American Movement 1968<br><br>This digital archive contains primary source documents that delineate the history of the Asian American movement in the Bay Area, including a timeline of the Third World Liberation Front Strike at SFSU and UC Berkeley, demands by student groups, and the campaign to save the I-Hotel from demolition. |

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| | Source #9<br>● Title: The Black Panthers' Education Revolution<br>● Source type: Digital Archive<br>● Institution: The Berkeley Revolution<br>● Author: UC Berkeley Students<br>● Link: The Black Panthers' Education Revolution<br><br>This digital archive contains photographs that depict the history and impact of the Black Panthers on the education system, including programs at the Oakland Community School, the Children's House, and the Intercommunal Youth Institute. |
| | Source #10<br>● Title: United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: Asian Americans Advancing Justice L.A.<br>● Author: Kent Wong<br>● Link: United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero<br><br>This article details the activism of Filipino American farmer and workers' rights activist Philip Vera Cruz, who led the Delano Grape Strike, contributing to the founding of the United Farm Workers Union. |

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| | Source #11<br>• Title: The Third World Liberation Front<br>• Source type: Digital Archive<br>• Institution: The Berkeley Revolution<br>• Author: UC Berkeley Students<br>• Link: The Third World Liberation Front - The Berkeley Revolution<br><br>This article describes The Third World Liberation Front, which organized the longest strike in UC Berkeley's history. It called for self-determination in education and the creation of a Third World College that would teach ethnic studies. |
| | Source #12<br>• Title: In the Belly of the Monster: Asian American Opposition to the Vietnam War<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: The Berkeley Revolution<br>• Author: Nina Wallace<br>• Link: In the Belly of the Monster: Asian American Opposition to the Vietnam War - Densho<br><br>This article describes how Asian Americans expressed their opposition to the Vietnam War in the anti-war movement during the '60s and '70s. |

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| | Source #13<br>• Title: In 1968, These Activists Coined the Term 'Asian American'—And Helped Shape Decades of Advocacy<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Time Magazine<br>• Author: Anna Purna Kambhampaty<br>• Link: In 1968, These Activists Coined the Term 'Asian American'—And Helped Shape Decades of Advocacy<br><br>This article describes how two scholar-activists coined the term “Asian American, “ giving multiethnic groups a shared identity. |
| | Source #14<br>• Title: Yellow Power: The Formation of Asian American Nationalism in the Age of Black Power, 1966-1975<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society*<br>• Author: Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar<br>• Link: Yellow Power: The Formation of Asian-American Nationalism in the Age of Black Power, 1966-1975<br><br>This article describes how Asian Americans gained a sense of nationalism during the Black Power movement. |

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| | Source #15<br>• Title: The Black Panther Party: Challenging Police and Promoting Social Change<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: National Museum of African American History and Culture<br>• Author: National Museum of African American History and Culture<br>• Link: The Black Panther Party: Challenging Police and Promoting Social Change<br><br>This article describes the formation of the Black Panther Party as a response to police brutality, their advocacy for community reforms and social programs, and women in BPP leadership. |
| | Source #16<br>• Title: The Rise of the Black Panther Party in Connecticut<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Connecticut History<br>• Author: Steve Thornton<br>• Link: The Rise of the Black Panther Party in Connecticut - Connecticut History \| a CTHumanities Project<br><br>This article describes the Black Panther Party in Hartford, Connecticut and their work to patrol neighborhoods. |

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| | Source #17<br>• Title: The Black Panther Party in Connecticut: Community Survival Programs<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Connecticut History<br>• Author: Steve Thornton<br>• Link: The Black Panther Party in Connecticut: Community Survival Programs - Connecticut History \| a CTHumanities Project<br><br>This article describes the community programs led by the Black Panther Party in Connecticut. |
| | Source #18<br>• Title: Protest Music of the Vietnam War<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: U.S. Foreign Policy<br>• Authors: Anne Meisenzahl and Roger Peace<br>• Link: Protest Music of the Vietnam War - Peace History<br><br>This article contains lyrics from the music of the Vietnam War era and describes how musicians used their art to spread anti-war messages. |

| Learning Activities | Reflections to Affirm Identity |
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| **Week 5 Themes of Political Action and Radical Resistance**<br><br>**Initiation:** Students will discuss what they know about the Civil Rights Movement, which groups were involved, what was achieved, and which pieces of legislation were passed. Students will then be asked what they know about Asian American activists in the Civil Rights Movement.<br><br>**Activity:**<br><br>● Individually or as a class, students will read about the Black Panther Party and the Red Guard (Sources #1, 9, 14, 15, 16, and 17). Students will discuss how the '60s and '70s were a period of racial solidarity between the Black and Asian communities. They will discuss the similar types of community programs and political demonstrations that these two groups led.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will pick one Asian American organization founded during the Asian American Movement and research how the organization was founded, what it achieved, and how it has grown or was disbanded.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read "Freeing Ourselves From Prison Sweatshops: Thai Garment Workers Speak Out" by Julie Su (Source #3) to learn about the experiences of Thai garment workers. They | Read "What It Means to Be Asian in America: the Lived Experiences and Perspectives of Asian Americans in their own words" on the Pew Research Center website.<br><br>What similarities or differences can students draw between their family's culture and experiences in America and the Asian American experience? What revelations or data points in this analysis were surprising to students and why? How has the Asian American identity grown to include more diasporas and diverse cultures, languages, and customs?<br><br>Read "10 Asian American Poems of Protest to Read this April" from Kundiman and "Inventing a Culture: Asian American Poetry in the 1970s" from Stanford's Arcade Blog.<br><br>Students will share how poetry is used as a form of political expression and write their own poems about one political or social issue important to them. Students can choose to present their poems to their classmates. |

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| will determine connections between calls for labor rights during the Asian American movement of the ‘60s and subsequent exploitations of garment workers. Students will answer the questions on the Thai Garment Workers Worksheet.pdf.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read the United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero and the Filipino American Farm Worker History Timeline (Source #10) to learn about the history of the farmers’ rights movement. Students will complete a letter-writing activity in which they imagine that they are farm workers in California writing to their families. They will describe life in California and the corresponding events in the Filipino American Farm Worker timeline.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read about the murder of Vincent Chin and the legacy of his case (Sources #4, 5, 6, 7). They will discuss the anti-Asian sentiment in Detroit as a result of economic insecurity in the auto industry. They will connect Chin’s case to other instances of anti-Asian violence with no repercussions for the perpetrators.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read about Asian American opposition to the Vietnam War and determine the effectiveness of the modes of protest in which anti-war demonstrations took place. They will read and listen to Protest Music of the Vietnam War Era (Source #18) to learn more about art as a vehicle of protest. | |

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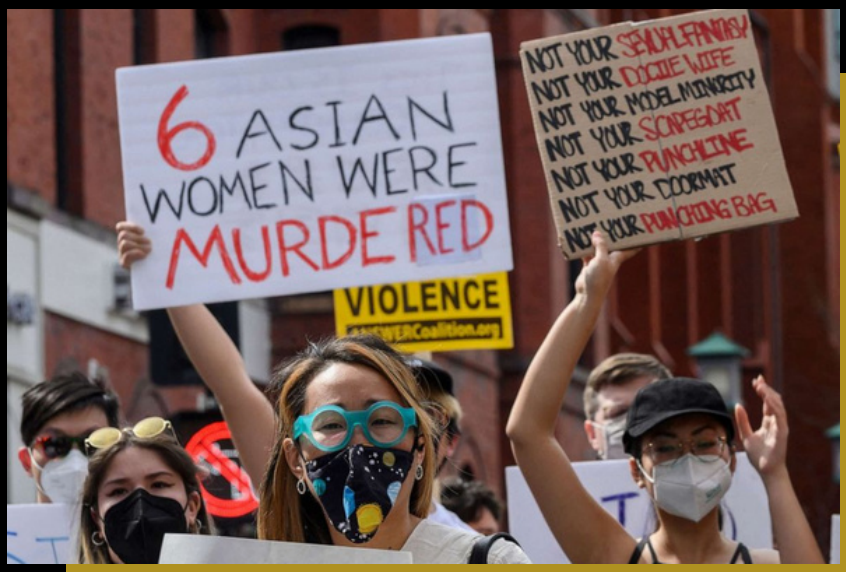
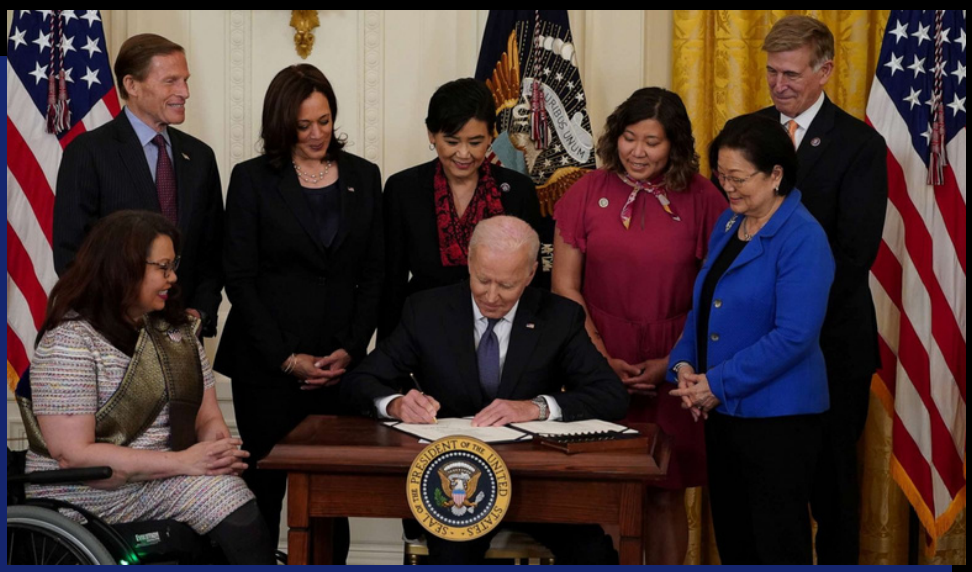
| • As a class, students will watch a video about the I-Hotel campaign (Source #2) and learn about housing discrimination against Asian Americans. They will connect this case to other examples of redlining, redistricting, and housing segregation faced by Asians and other minorities.<br><br>**Evidence of Learning:** Students will choose one political issue of the ‘60s and create a short presentation about how activists responded to this issue in the past and how the issue exists today.<br><br>**Closing:** Students will write a short reflection about the influence of the Black Panther Party and Asian American activists on communities and schools today. | |
| **Options for Content Continuity Across History Courses and Interdisciplinary Integration**<br><br>• English<br>• Humanities<br>• Political Science<br>• Economics | **Extensions/Experiential Opportunities**<br><br>• Watch “Who Killed Vincent Chin?”, a documentary about the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982 and the justice system. |

# Module 6

Stop Asian Hate: Anti-Asian Violence and Hate Crimes in the Twenty-First Century




Marchers at a Stop Asian Hate rally in Chinatown in Washington, D.C. on March 27, 2021
(Photo by Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images)



President Joe Biden signs the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act into law on May 20, 2021
(Photo by Kevin Lamarque/Reuters via ABC News)

**Essential Question:** How did the AAPI community respond to crises during the '90s and the twenty-first century, including the 1992 L.A. Uprising, 9/11, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Stop Asian Hate movement?

# Investigating Asian American History and Its Roots in New England

| Module 6 | | | |
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| **Title** | Stop Asian Hate: Anti-Asian Violence and Hate Crimes in the Twenty-First Century | **Timeframe** | Early-Mid March (1 week) |
| **Developed By** | Karen Lau (with support from Dr. Jason O. Chang and Dr. Grace D. Player) | **Revision Date** | September 11, 2022 |

## Background

**Summary:** Module 6 centers on the modern Asian American experience and challenges faced by the AAPI community during the twenty-first century, from the murder of Vincent Chin to the Stop Asian Hate Movement of the 2020s. This module also discusses the impact of the 1992 L.A. Uprising on the Korean American community and discrimination against South Asians immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the War on Terror that ensued, and the Trump administration's Muslim bans. Lastly, the module discusses the expansion of the Asian American electorate and the elections of prominent Asian American officials.

### The Murder of Vincent Chin

During Japan's economic success in the 1980s, its automobile industry flourished in contrast to the American economy, which had high unemployment and inflation. Auto industry workers in Detroit were unable to find work, blaming the Japanese auto industry for their unemployment which led to increased hate crimes against all Asian Americans. In 1982, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American engineer, was killed by two white autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz. They chased down Chin and beat him with a baseball bat. Witnesses at the scene recalled Ebens calling Chin a "Jap" and exclaiming, "It's because of you [derogatory term] that we're out of work!" Ebens and Nitz pled guilty to manslaughter, but the judge sentenced them to merely three years of probation and $3,800 in fines without jail time for Chin's murder. As a result of this injustice, Asian American civil rights activists, one of whom was Helen Zia, gathered to take action. Called "American Citizens for Justice," a multiracial group of activists formed by Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and African Americans gathered to demonstrate that the murder of Vincent Chin was racially motivated.

They sought to prove that Asian Americans were not the model minority but could also be the victims of racial discrimination. In 1983, American Citizens for Justice launched a civil rights lawsuit on behalf of Vincent Chin. As a result, a federal grand jury indicted Ebens and Nitz for violating Chin's civil rights. In 1984, Ebens was found guilty, and Nitz was acquitted. However, Ebens's conviction was overturned on appeal and he was acquitted in a retrial in 1987.

## The 1992 L.A. Uprising and Korean Americans

The model minority myth, a stereotype that regards Asian Americans as a hardworking minority group with high test scores, success, and strong family structures, led the media to compare Asians with other minorities, particularly African Americans. This racial comparison was especially prevalent during the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising after four L.A. police officers were acquitted of beating Rodney King. During the uprising, over 2,300 Korean businesses were destroyed, forcing 10,000 Korean Americans from their homes and businesses. Korean American business owners bore the brunt of nearly $500 million in property damage. Media coverage of the uprising described them as a conflict between Black Americans and Korean Americans. However, demonstrators included people who were white, Black, Latino, and Asian. According to the media, while the Black residents of South Central L.A. were welfare recipients resentful of the success of local Korean businesses, Korean business owners were diligent immigrants that isolated themselves. The model minority myth contributed to the media's biased comparison of Black and Korean Americans.

## The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks and the War on Terror

After September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. government waged a War on Terror, spreading xenophobic sentiment, racially profiling South Asians, Middle Easterners, and Muslims, and increasing deportations. The War on Terror targeted the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities. Due to racial bias and Islamophobia, they were suspected of being terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. This anti-immigrant sentiment and the arrests of Muslim men paralleled the backlash against Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrant men during World War II. Soon after 9/11, police officers arrested over 1,200 people, and law enforcement officials carried out mass deportations. However, only a few of these arrests had links to terrorism. Forty percent of the detainees were Pakistani nationals because the U.S. government believed Pakistan was producing terrorists. Following 9/11, hate crimes against Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Americans increased by 1,600 percent. These communities were the targets of violence, harassment, vandalism, murder, and attacks on mosques and South Asian businesses. During the eight weeks after 9/11, over 1,000 hate crimes were reported, including nineteen murders, attacks on religious places,

and harassment. South Asians continued to be the victims of hate crimes two decades after 9/11. In August 2012, six Sikh Americans were killed in a shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. In April 2022, eight people, four of whom were Sikh Americans, were killed at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis.

The War on Terror also had implications on immigration in the U.S. and escalated restrictions on immigrants living in the U.S. Government officials enforced immigration policies to surveil and detain immigrants suspected of involvement with terrorism or national security threats. Detainees reported that their civil liberties and human rights were violated by law enforcement and that they were abused in detainment. In June 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft unveiled the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, requiring men from twenty-five countries, twenty-four of which were Arab and Muslim countries, to be fingerprinted, photographed, and registered with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These Department of Justice regulations were similar to the Geary Act of 1892 which required Chinese workers to register themselves with the federal government. These regulations were criticized as racial profiling and violations of civil liberties. From the results of the program, six out of over 83,000 immigrants that were suspected of being potential terrorists were investigated by the Department of Homeland Security. Of these immigrants, almost 13,000 were found to be undocumented.

South Asians responded to this violence in different ways. Over 2,100 Pakistani Americans applied for political asylum in Canada. South Asians organized to provide aid and legal representation to communities and those affected by new immigration policies. The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund represented students who were racially profiled in schools and harassed by their peers. Muslim Americans have fought against the anti-Muslim sentiment and connected the War on Terror to a war on immigrants.

## The Trump Administration and the Muslim Ban

In January 2017, President Donald Trump issued Executive Order 13769, Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the U.S., known as the Muslim ban. This executive order prohibited citizens and refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, from entering the U.S. for 90 days. This suspended the resettlement of all Syrian refugees fleeing the Syrian Civil War. The Trump administration issued two more versions of the ban. The third version banned citizens from Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad, and North Korea from traveling to the U.S. These bans violated international treaties against discrimination based on national origin.

Thousands of people protested the Muslim ban at U.S. airports. Organizations for immigrant rights, refugee resettlement, and civil rights launched lawsuits to challenge the travel bans and the religious discrimination they imposed on Muslim Americans. These lawsuits resulted in court injunctions that temporarily blocked the executive order and the second version of it. However, on June 26, 2018, the Supreme Court allowed a third version of the Muslim ban to go into effect in a 5-4 decision. The third ban included Venezuela and North Korea on the list of banned countries. In 2020, the Trump administration extended visa restrictions to six additional countries, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania, on the grounds of national security concerns. President Joe Biden reversed the Muslim travel bans and instructed the State Department to begin reviewing visa applications from these countries when he entered office.

Executive Order 13769, enacted one century after the Immigration Act of 1917, had similar provisions to its predecessor. The Immigration Act of 1917 was a total ban on immigration from the Asiatic Barred Zone, expanding the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. It was a response to demographic shifts that saw an influx of South Asian migrants that arrived in the Pacific Northwest, Canada, and later the U.S. for higher wages. The 1917 restrictions on immigration from Asia were not lifted until 1965 during the Johnson administration. Newspapers sensationalized their arrival by calling them “dusky Asiatics” and “Hindu hordes.” Canada responded to the rise in Asian immigration to North America by passing the 1908 Continuous Journey Law. This law only allowed immigration from individuals that came directly from their countries of origin. However, since there was no direct transportation from India to Canada, all immigration from India was virtually outlawed.

## The COVID-19 Pandemic and Stop Asian Hate Movement

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, vitriol and violence towards Asian Americans, particularly women and elders, had increased dramatically. This can be attributed to the rhetoric of the Trump administration, which referred to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” and “Kung flu.” A study by the Anti-Defamation League revealed that the pandemic led to a rise in hate speech and harassment targeting Asian Americans. Online harassment of Asian Americans increased by six percentage points from 2020 to 2021. The study states, “The spike in physical violence against Asian-Americans across the nation was whipped up in large part by bigotry and conspiracy theories that grew online, fanned by national leaders.” Racist rhetoric contributed to an increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans. On March 16, 2021, eight people, including six Asian women, were killed in shootings at spas in Atlanta. According to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, New York had the largest increase in anti-Asian hate crimes of any major city with an increase of 833 percent more hate crimes in 2020 than in 2019. In the San Francisco Bay Area, there was a

string of attacks against elderly Asians. Max Leung, a business owner, founded the San Francisco Peace Collective, a group that does neighborhood patrols and distributes whistles and pamphlets with information on reporting hate crimes to senior citizens.

Stop Asian Hate has collected data on 11,467 anti-Asian hate incidents since March 2020. In 2021, Stop AAPI Hate tracked 6,273 reported incidents of harassment, assault, and discrimination against Asian Americans. In 2020, 4,632 incidents were reported. Two-thirds of these reported incidents involved verbal harassment and one in six reports involved physical assault. Women and non-binary people made twice as many reports as men. According to a Stop AAPI Hate mental health report released a few months after the Atlanta spa shootings, a fifth of Asian Americans experienced racial trauma in the forms of anxiety, depression, and hypervigilance. At 42.2 percent, Chinese Americans were the largest group that reported incidents of hate, followed by Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Filipino Americans.

## Asian American History in Schools

Illinois was the first state to mandate the inclusion of Asian American history in its public school curriculum, followed by New Jersey and Connecticut. Ohio, California, New York, and Florida have also pushed for Asian American and Pacific Islander history curricula. Representative Grace Meng introduced the Teaching Asian Pacific American History Act (H.R. 2283) in May 2021 which would teach students about AAPI history nationwide and eliminate discrimination against AAPIs. However, advocacy for AAPI history in schools is coming at the same time as a backlash against critical race theory. Several Southern states, including Texas, South Carolina, and North Dakota, passed legislation that bans critical race theory in schools. In May 2022, Connecticut became the first state to include AAPI history in the k-12 public school curriculum with $100,000 in funding. In 2020, Connecticut required all public high schools to offer a Black and Latino Studies course by the 2022-2023 school year. In 2021, AAPI history was included in the K-8 history curriculum through HB 6619. Connecticut's passage of AAPI history legislation is largely due to the advocacy of Make Us Visible, an advocacy group for inclusive history legislation.

## Asian Americans in Elected Office

The history of Asian Americans in state office and Congress dates back to 1946. Wing F. Ong, a Chinese American, was the first Asian American elected to state office when he became a state representative in Arizona in 1946. Senator Hiram Fong from Hawaii became the first Asian American elected to the U.S. Senate in 1959. Senator Mazie Hirono from Hawaii became the first immigrant

from an Asian country and the first Asian American woman to serve as a Senator. During the late 20th century, the number of Asian Americans elected to office nearly tripled. Senator Daniel Inouye represented Hawaii in the Senate from 1963 to 2012, and served as president pro tempore of the Senate, the highest-ranking Asian American elected official, the most senior Senator, and the second-longest serving Senator. Gary Locke from Washington became the first Chinese American governor and served as the Secretary of Commerce and the ambassador to China under Obama's administration. In November 2021, Michelle Wu became the first woman, person of color, and Asian American elected as Mayor of Boston. Wu, a Taiwanese American, is one of many Asian Americans who was elected to office in recent years. The same year, Bruce Harrell, a Japanese and Black American, was elected as the first Asian American and second Black Mayor of Seattle. Aftab Pureval, an Indian American, was elected as the first Asian American Mayor of Cincinnati and the first Asian American mayor of a major Midwestern city. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans in Congress, Representative Grace Meng, Representative Judy Chu, Senator Tammy Duckworth, and Senator Mazie Hirono, spearheaded the movement to end anti-Asian violence and pass legislation to prevent and punish hate crimes.

Congressman Dalip Singh Saund

Congressman Dalip Singh Saund, an Indian American, was the first Asian American elected to serve in Congress in 1956. He graduated from UC Berkeley, where he served as the president of the Hindustani Association of America. After experiencing challenges from the California Alien Land Law, which prohibited him from owning land since he was not a citizen, he formed the India Association of America in 1942, lobbying to end discrimination against immigrants. Saund became a citizen in 1949 and ran for Congress in California's 29th district. In office, he served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and served on diplomatic missions to countries in Asia. He was reelected twice before he resigned due to health reasons.

Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink

Patsy Takemoto Mink from Hawaii became the first Asian American and woman of color elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1964. She was the first Hawaiian nisei woman to graduate from the University of Chicago Law School. She became a State Senator in Hawaii in 1962. After she was elected to Congress, she served on the Committee on Education and Labor, the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and the Budget Committee. She sponsored the first childcare bill and laws establishing bilingual education, student loans, special education, paid leaves for teachers, and Head Start. She advocated for family reunification policies in immigration reform bills, educated Americans about the incarceration of Japanese Americans, and criticized

America's involvement in the Vietnam War. Mink is best known for her work on promoting equality in education. She co-authored Title IX, which barred sex discrimination in institutions that receive federal funding and created opportunities for female college athletes. Mink also helped pass the Women's Educational Equity Act which provided $30 million per year to promote gender equity in schools, increased opportunities in education and jobs for women, and removed gender stereotypes from curricula. After 9/11, Mink voiced her concerns about the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, fearing it would violate civil liberties.

Secretary Norman Y. Mineta

Secretary Norman Yoshio Mineta was the first Asian American Cabinet member, the first Cabinet secretary to switch from a Democrat to a Republican administration, and the first Asian American mayor of a major city. He served in the Clinton and Bush administrations. Mineta, the son of Japanese Americans, spent two years at the Heart Mountain incarceration camp in Wyoming during World War II. He graduated from UC Berkeley and served as an Army intelligence officer. Mineta served on the San Jose City Council before becoming the Mayor of San Jose. In 1974, he was elected to Congress, where he served ten terms and co-founded the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. He helped pass the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, requiring the U.S. government to apologize for incarcerating 120,000 Japanese Americans in camps and provide reparations of $20,000 each to each person who was incarcerated. As the Secretary of Transportation, he led the Department of Transportation's response to 9/11. On 9/11, he ordered the Federal Aviation Administration to ground all civilian aircraft, the first time an order to ground all civilian aircraft was given. He created the Transportation Security Administration, responsible for aviation security, and helped Americans feel safe traveling again after 9/11. Mineta resigned in 2006 as the longest-serving Secretary of Transportation.

In this unit, students will:

- Analyze how the murder of Vincent Chin catalyzed a movement for Asian American civil rights in the '80s and continues to impact AAPI activism today.
- Examine the impact of the 1992 L.A. uprising on businesses, homes, and communities in L.A.'s Koreatown and the relations between the Black and Korean residents of L.A. before and after the beating of Rodney King by LAPD officers.
- Examine how Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian Americans were impacted by racial profiling, discrimination, and surveillance following the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

- Analyze how rhetoric by elected officials can instigate hate crimes, mistrust, and xenophobia against minority communities.
- Analyze the federal government's response to hate crimes against Asian American elders and women during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Analyze the growth of groups founded to combat the hate towards Asian Americans, including Make Us Visible, Hate Is A Virus, and Stop AAPI Hate.
- Analyze how hate against the Asian American community inspired activists in New Jersey, Connecticut, and Florida to push for ethnic studies legislation to require schools to teach AAPI history.
- Analyze the work of legislators, including Representative Grace Meng, Representative Judy Chu, Senator Tammy Duckworth, and Senator Richard Blumenthal, to pass hate crimes legislation.
- Analyze media coverage of the Stop Asian Hate movement and why data on how many hate crimes and incidents are reported is significant.
- Examine the expansion of the AAPI electorate, voter behavior, voter turnout, and critical issues important to AAPI voters during recent elections.
- Learn about AAPI elected officials who were the first to serve in the House of Representatives, Senate, and Cabinet.

**Compelling Question:**

- How did the AAPI community respond to crises during the '90s and the twenty-first century, including the 1992 L.A. Uprising, 9/11, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Stop Asian Hate movement?

**Supporting Questions:**

- What caused the increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans, particularly women and elders, during the pandemic?
- What are the similarities and differences between anti-Asian violence during the Chinese Exclusion Act era, the period in which the Muslim travel bans were in effect, and the COVID-19 pandemic?

- How did the model minority myth and other stereotypes about Asian Americans influence media coverage of the 1992 L.A. Uprising as a racial conflict between Black Americans and Asian Americans?
- What was the federal government and law enforcement's response to 9/11 and how did this response impact Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) Americans?
- How have South Asians been affected by anti-immigrant laws and policies? What similarities and differences can you draw between immigration laws and regulations from the 20th and 21st centuries?

| **Desired Results** | |
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| **Relevant Content Standards** | **Related Supporting Standards** |
| **From Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework**<br><br>**Dimension 2 - Applying disciplinary concepts and tools**<br><br>CIV 9–12.14 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.<br><br>HIST 9–12.1 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.<br><br>HIST 9–12.3 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context. | **From CT Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects)**<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar |

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| HIST 9–12.8 Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.<br><br>HIST 9–12.10 Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.<br><br>HIST 9–12.11 Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.<br><br>GEO 9–12.2 Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.<br><br>GEO 9–12.4 Evaluate how globalization, competition for scarce resources, and human migration contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among countries.<br><br>**Dimension 4 - Communicating conclusions and taking informed action**<br><br>INQ 9–12.15 Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to | topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.<br><br>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |

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| understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.<br><br>CIV 9–12.5 Analyze how societies institute change in ways that both promote and hinder the common good and that protect and violate citizens' rights. | |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Critical Consciousness** |
| **Overarching Learning Objectives** | **Overarching Essential Questions** |
| **LO3 ANALYZE** local and global geopolitical, economic, and human rights issues through multicultural and multinational lenses.<br><br>**LO7 INVESTIGATE** the evolution and development of the Asian American and Pacific Islander identities, including intersections with other communities. | **EQ3 ADVOCACY AND RESISTANCE** How did Asian Americans resist unjust government policies and laws and how did they advocate for change?<br><br>**EQ7 DIASPORA** What cultures, stories, and traditions does the Asian American and Pacific Islander diaspora include? |
| **Theme/Content-Specific Enduring Understandings** | **Theme/Content-Specific Inquiry** |
| **For this Module, students will know and be able to…**<br><br>**Knowledge:**<br>● Evaluate the ways that Asian Americans organized as a community following the murder of Vincent Chin, | **For this Unit of Study, to support self-discovery, identity development, and civic preparedness/actions, students will explore...**<br><br>● Why have certain groups been targeted under the guise of |

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| advocating for greater protection of civil rights and accountability for perpetrators of hate crimes.<br>● Evaluate the ways that Asian Americans created the Stop Asian Hate movement during the COVID-19 pandemic and pushed for the passage of hate crimes legislation.<br>● Analyze the interactions of law enforcement and news outlets with the Black and Korean communities during the 1992 L.A. Uprising.<br>● Analyze the movement for and against including ethnic studies in public school and college curricula beginning in the ‘60s to now.<br>● Analyze how methods of grassroots organizing and constituent organizing have helped AAPI candidates get elected to public office.<br><br>**Skills:**<br>● Compare and contrast the contributions of different activist groups to the Asian American Movement of the ‘60s and the Stop Asian Hate movement.<br>● Use popular culture, social media, and news to analyze the reactions and experiences of Asian Americans during the Muslim ban era and the COVID-19 pandemic. | national security risk and how have these groups and their allies responded to their treatment?<br>● What methods have activist, legal, and social organizations used to fight discrimination and unjust government policies?<br>● How have Asian Americans used art and culture as a way to express their activism during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries? |

| Evidence of Learning | | |
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| **Pre-Assessment/ Common Misconceptions** | **Formative Assessments/ Checks for Understanding** | **Performative Tasks and Criteria/Project-Based Applications (Aligned with Compelling Question)** |
| **Pre-Assessment:** Students will discuss their knowledge of the 1992 L.A. Uprising and 9/11.<br><br>**Common Misconceptions:**<br>● South Asians are a monolith.<br>● All South Asians have the same cultures, values, and religious beliefs.<br>● South Asians posed a credible national security threat after 9/11 and in 2017.<br>● Asian American activism is dangerous to the U.S.<br>● All Asian American activists have communist or socialist beliefs.<br>● Asian Americans are only focused on self-preservation and do not ally themselves with other groups. | ● Class discussions/Socratic Seminars<br>● Short answer reflections<br>● Exit tickets<br>● Research assignment<br>● Oral history interview<br>● Art/creative assignment<br>● Reflections on media including photographs, artwork, videos, music, and poetry | Analyze political campaigns and advertisements geared to target Asian American voters and the messages that these media portrayed. Examine and interpret the issues key to Asian American voters who participated in surveys or polls.<br><br>Analyze media campaigns, social media videos, and advertisements produced by Asian Americans to raise awareness about the Stop Asian Hate movement. |

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Learning Plan/Lesson Sequence</th></tr>
<tr><th>Lesson 6.1</th><th>Duration: 1 day</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Big Ideas/ Topics to be addressed, including Key Concepts and Terms<br><br>● The 1992 L.A. Uprising<br>● 9/11<br>● The Muslim travel ban<br>● Hate crimes, hate crimes legislation, tracking hate crimes<br>● Stop Asian Hate Movement<br>● COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act<br>● Ethnic studies legislation<br>● Surveillance of racial groups<br>● Title IX<br>● Civil rights<br>● Voting rights<br><br>Vocabulary: Electorate, cross-racial solidarity, xenophobia, Islamophobia</td><td>Materials/Resources<br><br>Source #1<br>● Title: “After Words: September 11, 2001”<br>● Source type: Poem<br>● Institution: UCLA Asian American Studies Press<br>● Author: Russell Leong<br>● Link: “After Words: September 11, 2001”<br><br>This poem describes the effect of 9/11 on South Asians.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Source #2<br>● Title: A Citizen Fights for His Civil Rights after 9/11: Amric Singh Rathour<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: Asian Americans Advancing Justice L.A.<br>● Author: Karen K. Narasaki<br>● Link: A Citizen Fights for His Civil Rights after 9/11: Amric Singh Rathour<br><br>This article describes the experiences of Amric Singh Rathour, a Sikh American who was fired by the NYPD for violating the dress code by wearing a turban.</td></tr>
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| | Source #3<br>• Title: After Indianapolis shooting, a Sikh activist on why we need to accept realities of racism in America<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: PBS NewsHour<br>• Authors: Amna Nawaz, Joshua Barajas, Wyatt Mayes<br>• Link: [After Indianapolis shooting, a Sikh activist on why we need to accept realities of racism in America \| PBS NewsHour]<br><br>This article describes the shooting at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis in which four Sikh Americans were killed in April 2021. |
| | Source #4<br>• Title: Executive Order 13769<br>• Source type: Executive Order<br>• Institution: Federal Register<br>• Author: President Donald Trump<br>• Link: [Federal Register: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States]<br><br>This Executive Order banned the travel of individuals from seven Muslim-majority countries to the U.S. |

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| | Source #5<br>• Title: Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States<br>• Source type: Proclamation<br>• Institution: White House Briefing Room<br>• Author: President Joe Biden<br>• Link: Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States - The White House<br><br>This proclamation reversed the Muslim travel bans by ending the restrictions enacted by the Trump administration. It also directed the State Department to process visa applications from people from the countries affected by the ban. |
| | Source #6<br>• Title: Beyond the Muslim Ban<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: South Asian American Digital Archive<br>• Author: Sherally Munshi<br>• Link: Beyond the Muslim Ban<br><br>This article details the history of anti-Muslim sentiment and xenophobia preceding the Muslim ban and comparisons of the Muslim ban with other immigration laws. |

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| | Source #7<br>• Title: States are mandating Asian American history lessons to stop bigotry<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: The Washington Post<br>• Author: Marian Chia-Ming Liu<br>• Link: States are mandating Asian American history lessons to stop bigotry<br><br>This article details the work of advocates to pass legislation to mandate the teaching of Asian American history in schools. |
| | Source #8<br>• Title: How Connecticut became the first state to require — and fund — teaching Asian American history<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: NBC News<br>• Author: Angela Yang<br>• Link: How Connecticut became the first state to require — and fund — teaching Asian American history<br><br>This article details the work of Make Us Visible to advocate for the inclusion of AAPI history in public schools and their work to pass legislation to fund AAPI studies. |

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| | Source #9<br>• Title: COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act<br>• Source type: Law<br>• Institution: U.S. Congress<br>• Author: 117th U.S. Congress<br>• Link: Public Law 117–13 117th Congress An Act<br><br>This is the text of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act which aims to expedite the review of hate crimes, establish reporting processes, and create hate crimes reporting hotlines. |
| | Source #10<br>• Title: How the Atlanta Spa Shootings—the Victims, the Survivors—Tell a Story of America<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: Vanity Fair<br>• Author: May Jeong<br>• Link: How the Atlanta Spa Shootings—the Victims, the Survivors—Tell a Story of America \| Vanity Fair<br><br>This article describes the lives and stories of the victims and survivors of the Atlanta spa shootings in which six Asian American women were killed. |

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| | Source #11<br>● Title: ‘She could have been your mother’: anti-Asian racism a year after Atlanta spa shootings<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: The Guardian<br>● Author: Michelle Chen<br>● Link: ‘She could have been your mother’: anti-Asian racism a year after Atlanta spa shootings<br><br>This article describes the state of anti-Asian violence one year after the Atlanta spa shootings. |
| | Source #12<br>● Title: Two Years and Thousands of Voices: What Community-Generated Data Tells Us About Anti-AAPI Hate<br>● Source type: Report<br>● Institution: Stop AAPI Hate<br>● Author: Stop AAPI Hate<br>● Link: Two Years and Thousands of Voices<br><br>This report contains data about the number of hate crime incidents reported by members of the Asian American community from 2020 to 2022. |

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| | Source #13<br>• Title: Amid Anti-Asian Hate, AAPI Candidates Aim To Smash Stereotypes And Lead Their Cities<br>• Source type: Article<br>• Institution: NPR<br>• Author: Daniel Lam<br>• Link: Amid Anti-Asian Hate, AAPI Candidates Aim To Smash Stereotypes And Lead Their Cities<br><br>This article describes the efforts of three prominent Asian American candidates to seek elected office in major cities. |
| | Source #14<br>• Title: First Woman of Color in Congress: A Resource Guide for the Patsy T. Mink Papers<br>• Source type: Congressional Documents<br>• Institution: Library of Congress<br>• Author: Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink<br>• Link: Introduction - First Woman of Color in Congress: A Resource Guide for the Patsy T. Mink Papers<br><br>This collection of documents is from Patsy T. Mink's career as the first woman of color in Congress, including "correspondence, memoranda, legislation, speeches and writings, testimony … family papers, [and] news clippings." |

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| | Source #15<br>● Title: Thirty years after it burned, Koreatown has transformed. But scars remain.<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: Los Angeles Times<br>● Authors: Jeong Park, Andrew J. Campa<br>● Link: Thirty years after it burned, Koreatown has transformed. But scars remain.<br><br>This article describes the impact of the 1992 L.A. Uprising on the Korean American community. |
| | Source #16<br>● Title: What we got wrong about Black and Korean communities after the L.A. riots<br>● Source type: Article<br>● Institution: Los Angeles Times<br>● Author: Frank Shyong<br>● Link: Column: What we got wrong about Black and Korean communities after the L.A. riots<br><br>This column describes the inaccurate media reporting on the 1992 L.A. Uprising as a Black-Korean conflict. |

| Learning Activities | Reflections to Affirm Identity |
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| **Week 6 Theme of Survival**<br><br>**Initiation:** Students will discuss what they experienced or witnessed regarding the anti-Asian violence from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 to now. They will share how this anti-Asian sentiment and violence affected them, their families, and their communities.<br><br>**Activity:**<br><br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read about the beating of Rodney King by LAPD officers and the 1992 L.A. Uprising that transpired (Source #15). They will read primary source documents, including first-person accounts of the uprising, the damages to businesses in Koreatown, and the police response to quell the uprising. They will also read newspaper articles and watch news reports to glean the media's portrayal of the uprising as a Black-Korean conflict (Source #16). Students will discuss the role of the American media in sensationalizing conflicts, especially those involving minority groups.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read about the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the South Asian community (Sources #1 and 2), particularly Sikh and Muslim men, and the effects of government surveillance, | Students will ask family members about their experiences, recollections, and observations of 9/11 and the War on Terror that followed. They will ask about their perceptions of government actions in the aftermath of 9/11 and whether these perceptions have changed.<br><br>Students will ask family members about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and their involvement in social justice movements in the digital age, including photos, videos, and documents that depict these experiences. |

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| detainment, and deportation. They will read about how South Asians fought against unjust policies to protect their rights.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read about the Muslim travel bans put into effect by the Trump administration and the work of activists and lawyers to challenge these bans in court (Sources #4, 5, and 6). They will learn about the role of the judiciary in upholding these bans or granting injunctions to stop these bans. Students will read about the protests against the Muslim travel ban held at airports and the remarks of President Joe Biden on repealing the ban.<br>● In pairs or small groups, students will read about the hate crimes and attacks on the Asian American community during the COVID-19 pandemic and the reactions of community leaders, elected officials, families of victims, and survivors to this violence (Sources #9-14). They will discuss the actions of legislators in city, state, and federal governments to prevent and prosecute these hate crimes.<br>● As a class, students will discuss the impact of COVID-19 on their state and activist movements for social change that have expanded during the pandemic, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Stop Asian Hate movement, and the movement for reproductive rights. They will discuss how activism has changed during the pandemic and Generation Z's activism.<br>● As a class, students will discuss the Asian American elected officials in the readings, including Congressman | |

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| Dalip Singh Saund, Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink (Source #14), and Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. They will discuss the Asian American elected officials that have gained prominence during the twenty-first century, including Vice President Kamala Harris, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, and Connecticut leaders such as Attorney General William Tong.<br><br>**Evidence of Learning:** Students will research and share about the life of one Asian American activist or elected official who has significantly impacted the AAPI community and communities outside of it.<br><br>**Closing:** Students will complete the post-survey on what they learned from the program. Students will also share how they plan to remain engaged with news about the Asian American community in the future. | |
| **Options for Content Continuity Across History Courses and Interdisciplinary Integration**<br><br>● English<br>● Humanities<br>● Political Science<br>● Economics<br>● Geography | **Extensions/Experiential Opportunities**<br><br>● Watch "The Fight," a documentary about the American Civil Liberties Union's crusade against the Muslim travel bans in 2017. |

# Appendix

## Oral History Transcripts & Recordings



## References

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Kimberly Brutsche
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 3, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Kimberly Brutsche is a Filipino American Major in the U.S. Army who recently accepted a position in the U.S. Space Force. In this interview, she describes her career as one of the first female officers serving in combat arms prior to the lift of the combat ban exclusion policy, her tours in Afghanistan, and her experiences educating students at West Point.*

Karen Lau
00:00:01.500 --> 00:00:10.319
Hi everyone. Today, I'm here with Major Kimberly Brutsche of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Space Force. The first question I have for you is when and where were you born?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:00:10.319 --> 00:00:19.079
I was born in a place called Norristown, Pennsylvania. It's a suburb of Philadelphia. I was born in 1987, so many, many moons ago.

Karen Lau
00:00:23.730 --> 00:00:28.110
Could you describe your childhood, upbringing, and your family?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:00:28.110 --> 00:01:49.470
Sure, I have a very close-knit family that really emphasized to me that my decisions in life would be a reflection of the family, so very family centric and that's stayed with me over the course of my 35 years of life. I am the oldest of three siblings from my father's side, and then I have three half-sisters who resided with their father, so one of six, really. But the oldest of three in my house, which meant that I was basically a second mother. I am a second-generation immigrant. My mother came to America from the Philippines back in the seventies … If we had to stereotype … like, the typical like "tiger mom" … my mom would fit that stereotype … She was very hard on us growing up. She always wanted us to make sure we did well in school.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:01:49.470 --> 00:02:45.900
And when you're a child, you think, "okay, well, my mom's just being super unreasonable because she made me do flash cards and write when my friends are playing. But, you know, as you peel back the onion and you look at the immigrant experience, that really informs how people navigate life in their new country. My mom was hard on us because … she didn't have those opportunities to go to school and because of that, she wanted to make sure that all of her children maximize the opportunities that she didn't have. That's just one of many examples that I just recall from growing up where maybe I didn't understand my mom through my American lens, but as I've matured, I've really come to appreciate [her].

Kimberly Brutsche
00:02:45.900 --> 00:03:34.405
With that being said, I am a biracial woman. My mother's Filipino, but my father was Caucasian. He was Polish. With that, there were a lot of benefits and there were definitely a lot of challenges. The benefit of being a biracial kid was I got the best of many worlds. I would say all my Catholic prayers in Polish and I had dumplings and lumpia … [There were also] challenges with that, [including]a lack of identity, not knowing exactly how to define myself.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:03:34.405 --> 00:04:08.550
My mother's parents passed away before I was even born, and most of my family were in the Philippines, so really my only connection to Filipino culture was my mom. I was surrounded by my schoolmates [who] were predominantly White or Black or Hispanic and I didn't look like any of them. Even the Asians in school were mostly East Asian, Japanese and Chinese, and I didn't look like them. So, I'm rejected by the … Asian side of my town, I'm rejected by the White side of my town because I definitely don't look Caucasian and that was always really challenging for me.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:04:08.550 --> 00:04:58.049
Speaking back on my mother and the immigrant experience, she really struggled with the idea of assimilation and what did that means in terms of being an American. She didn't really push Filipino culture as much on us as maybe we would have liked [her] to. Or maybe she would have liked to and it's because she thought that being an American means that you fit a certain box, meaning you speak English, you eat macaroni and cheese and hot dogs. You know, you do these American things … I think society has matured a lot since then, but that caused me to be even more confused about what it means to be a Filipino American.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:05:01.914 --> 00:05:19.104
Regardless of race or ethnicity, my parents just pushed me to pursue every opportunity I had. And if I was going to pursue the opportunity, I was going to perform well because I was a reflection of my family. There was no such thing as a closed door, so I'm very grateful for the way I grew up.

Karen Lau
00:05:22.409 --> 00:05:42.779
Thank you for sharing. I definitely relate to your stories about your mom and being the daughter of a tiger parent. Now that I look back on it, I also feel the same way. I'm grateful that she pushed me to get an education. My next question for you is what motivated you to join the University of Pittsburgh Army ROTC Program.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:05:44.669 --> 00:05:47.879
My family is a military family. My dad served. My grandfather served. My great uncle served. My brother and sister served. So, it just felt kind of natural that I was always going to be in the military. It was just a matter of what I was going to do, and my dad was a cannoneer, so he shot canons for the Marine Corps. I always wanted to be like my dad. He was my hero, and I told him [that] I want to shoot cannons and I want to be a marine. He told me "That's great, but women don't do that in the Marine Corps. It is very difficult to serve in the Marines." He recommended to me that if I wanted to maximize my potential in the military, I should join the Army, I need to go to college, and I need to be an officer.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:06:36.149 --> 00:07:45.899
So, I joined the University of Pittsburgh Army ROTC program … My entire ROTC career was this idea of shooting cannons. I got that in the Marines, women couldn't do it. [In the Army], it was open to women with a lot of stipulations saying, "Hey, you can serve, but you can't be a platoon leader, meaning you can't lead a group of soldiers, you can't serve with certain types of canons. You're mostly serving on administrative positions, not combat positions." [I thought], "I'm still going to do it because it's my chance to be like my dad, and maybe chip away a little bit at that proverbial glass ceiling and make it better for maybe the next woman." And, you know, and hopefully things would change so ultimately, I joined to make a positive and longstanding impact in the future Army.

Karen Lau
00:07:45.899 --> 00:08:06.869
Great, thank you for sharing about your family being a military family. As one of the first female officers to be in combat arms prior to the lift of the combat ban exclusion policy, what did this experience teach you about being a woman in the military? How were you and your fellow female officers treated as compared to your male counterparts?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:08:13.529 --> 00:08:54.204
Serving as a woman in military, especially when it comes to the lift of the combat ban exclusion policy, it taught me the importance of embracing differences and finding a way to leverage those differences to bring something unique to the table to make a team better. I learned quickly that if everything's the same [and] if everyone's the same, it's super boring and everyone is sitting in an echo chamber … You get stagnant and nothing changes. That's why diversity matters.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:09:25.259 --> 00:10:03.479
The other thing I learned is that I will never be a man, no matter how gender-neutral the Army makes their standards or how much I try to stray away from stereotypically feminine things. I've really learned to embrace my femininity and stave off some of the internalized misogyny I was guilty of early in my career as many women in military find themselves victim to.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:10:13.559 --> 00:10:50.844
When we lifted this combat ban exclusion policy, a lot of people were shaking hands in Congress and the military like, "Yeah! Now, women can go fight in war." But by that point, the lift of the combat exclusion policy was in 2013 … In 2013, Secretary of Defense Panetta lifted the combat ban. In 2016, the Army, which was who I was a part of at the time, they lifted it for [women] but we had already been at war since 2001.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:10:50.844 --> 00:11:25.769
By early 2003, women had been fighting in that war for over a decade before the ban was even lifted. They were doing incredible things and they were just finding creative ways to engage in direct combat without the support of policy … It's a great example of how women are going to find ways to make it work when society won't let them, and I think that was really inspiring.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:11:25.769 --> 00:12:21.569
In terms of your question on how my fellow female officers and I were treated as compared to the male officers … how I was treated was really dependent on the individual unit or person. So, there's really three categories I would put them in. The first one is neutral. If you did the job and if you did it well, you get respect, and it didn't matter if you're a woman. Those were the good guys that I loved working with because that's all I wanted. Then there were the males who looked at women with fear and confusion. They just didn't know what to do with you.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:12:21.569 --> 00:13:13.409
If you'll allow me this, I think this is a story you might appreciate. So, I was in Afghanistan with a SEAL team which we would probably say, like, looking at the movies, they are the very example of hypermasculine types of people. We were out in the middle of nowhere in Afghanistan, living at this camp. The SEAL medic was in charge of ordering medical supplies, and he was like, "Hey Lieutenant, do you need any women products because I don't know what you need, and it freaks me out because we are out there for a couple of months." I was like, "Yeah, can you get me and my partners some boxes of tampons?" He was like, "Sure, of course, I can get tampons."

Kimberly Brutsche
00:13:13.409 --> 00:13:27.269
So fast forward a week later, we get an air drop and it's a pallet, like this giant white box. Take an Amazon package and multiply it by 100, you have this pallet box. I open it up because I'm thinking this is something I'm going to give out to Afghans like soccer balls. I open it up and it totaled like 300 boxes of tampons. I'm like, "Excuse me, who are all these tampons for?" He's like, "I don't know how women work. I was freaked out. I didn't know how many you would need, and I didn't want you to bleed out, so I ordered 300 boxes of tampons.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:13:54.839 --> 00:14:43.944
So, I'm like, "Dude, this is like, 6,000 tampons. I'm only out here for like two months. You're an insane person." We also learned that the tampons plug up gunshot wounds so there are uses for tampons in war outside of women … That's just an example of just that confusion … He tried his best. The negative side of that is sometimes it can lead to avoidance … or offensive pandering where they try too hard to be an ally … and it just makes you feel more excluded because you're like the shiny thing they're putting [on a pedestal].

Kimberly Brutsche
00:14:43.944 --> 00:15:42.689
The last category is hostility which came in the form of rude and really nasty comments. I had a bad break up with a boyfriend. My commander told me, “Well, the man is the head of the household, right?” I wanted to pursue my career over marriage at that point. He said that to me, and I was like, “Well, that seems rude.” [People have said], “Hey, I can’t mentor you because my wife wouldn’t like it” … I think a lot of women fit their experiences into one of those three categories.

Karen Lau
00:15:42.689 --> 00:15:51.689
What did the repeal of the combat ban exclusion policy mean to you as a female veteran and how has it affected women in combat positions or not affected them?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:15:55.109 --> 00:16:47.399
[When] the repeal of the combat exclusion policy happened, I had just come back from Afghanistan, so I was already fighting in direct combat before the policy was even lifted. For me, it meant that it’s time to go to work. We kept saying this is what we wanted and we’re equal, and we’re capable. Now we got what we wanted. [Now the questions were], are you going to show up and join an infantry unit? Are you willing to get drafted? I know that’s still an ongoing debate. Are you willing to do all these hard things because you said we can prove it? That was kind of my rallying cry to the women I was working with.

121Kimberly Brutsche
00:16:47.399 --> 00:17:29.759
It was to show the world two things: one, this policy was long overdue; two, we’ve already been doing this. Now we just have a piece of paper that supports us doing it. We don’t have to find loopholes and do it in in the shadows anymore … In terms of this of how this lift of the combat ban exclusion policy affected women, it just meant that we took a big boulder out of the path for a quality but there was still a mountain to climb.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:17:29.759 --> 00:18:29.969
Gender integration is not synonymous with acceptance. I think that this is a thinking trap that a lot of leaders in the Army, in Congress, or in society [fall into]. Just because mom tells you that you have to bring your sister along to the playground doesn’t mean that you’re happy about it. In 2016, when that band was lifted for the army, that’s what we were dealing with. Now, everyone’s got a sister coming with them to the playground. Now, you’ve got to figure out how

to make people psyched about that and not just go grudgingly. That's still a climb that women are making six years after the repeal. It's gotten so much better … [but] there's still work to do.

Karen Lau
00:18:29.969 --> 00:18:39.089
You were in the pilot program for women in Special Forces and Rangers. What was this experience like for you?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:18:40.619 --> 00:19:42.204
So, this program was called the Cultural Support Team (CST) program … So, the program was created in 2010 or 2011 to fill an operational gap in the Army, meaning that there's something going on out there in war that the current force can't handle. In this case, it was culture. So, in Islamic cultures, like in Afghanistan, men are not permitted to talk to women unless [they are] married to them, and they definitely do not put hands on them. And what that led to was the Taliban and our adversaries leveraging our respect for other cultures against us and weaponizing women.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:19:42.204 --> 00:20:30.449
So, women were being used as suicide bombers and to plant IEDs and to do all these things because they knew the men couldn't search them. So, the Cultural Support Team program was created to fill that gap to access women and children because there were security concerns and there was an opportunity to gain valuable intelligence and because women are perceptive. They pay attention and they're highly intelligent. There's no difference in Afghanistan. Let's take advantage of that and bring a woman out there to talk to them. The CST program was created specifically to support special operations, so special forces and rangers.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:20:35.879 --> 00:21:38.519
It was equal parts challenging and rewarding. It's a pilot program so it's the first of its kind with no precedent before it. There was no policy in place saying that women can go to direct combat. That was very difficult to try to navigate when you're in a very hypermasculine environment like special operations. The Special Forces and the Rangers [are] already a hyper exclusive club. If you don't have a certain certification, if you didn't go to Ranger School, if you didn't get this type of jump wings, jumping out of a dragon, flying 20,000 feet in the air, [they treated you differently.]

Kimberly Brutsche
00:21:38.519 --> 00:22:26.789
But we are women, so now we've got to punch our way into this weird, hypermasculine environment and with that came a lot of a lot of challenges in terms of sexism and finding your own value and what you bring to the table especially as a woman. You still have to fight the Taliban and complete your mission. The CST had really hard ground to break. For the rewarding side of it, this was the first time in my Army career that I got to interact with a large number of women. Before that, I was really the only woman in my unit and I did not realize how lonely that was until I surrounded myself with a sisterhood.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:22:26.789 --> 00:23:04.769
It taught me or reaffirmed for me that women are capable of doing absolutely anything a man can do in the Army. I came out on the other side of that of that experience fully matured into the woman and leader I am today. I learned the value of diverse teams and I found a passion in sociocultural studies, and how it impacts war. When we think about war as a society, we always think of shooting things and planes, boats, and tanks. [However], if you look at a lot of really influential war strategists, they'll tell you that war is inherently human.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:23:04.769 --> 00:23:38.999
It's fought by humans right now, at least, but I'm going to the space for it, so I'll let you know, if it changes. War is not necessarily always black and white, good versus evil. There's so much gray between and the gray in between are people that are trying to survive. It was my job in the CST to try to understand that and find a way to leverage that to enhance military missions.

Karen Lau
00:23:38.999 --> 00:23:50.789
As a CST leader, you conducted over 60 combat patrols. Could you guide me through one of these combat patrols, what you were responsible for, who you were leading, and whether your goal was achieved?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:23:56.489 --> 00:25:10.679
CST combat patrols were always really interesting. I always adjusted to the type of missions that the operators were on, so our job was to be enablers. We're going to enable whatever team we're on and I was a part of several SF teams called ODAs, Operational Detachment Alphas, and a SEAL team. They had a myriad of different requirements and focuses. The types of missions I would go on could be a clearing operation. So, we are clearing areas of bad guys and gals, so Taliban. Those were a little bit more kinetic, which meant that there was a lot more

shooting happening. Or I could go on stabilization type missions which were more humanitarian based. They were there to help restore the infrastructure, restore the villages, and the people after they were decimated by war.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:25:10.679 --> 00:26:06.719
If I was on a clearing operation, that's usually the type of stuff you'll see in the movies. You get up in the middle of the night, you go on a helicopter. It was me, my partner, my medic, all women, and my interpreter, and then the actual Special Operations guys, so the SEAL team, and then you'd have a small faction of Afghan soldiers, part of the Afghan National Army. Their job was to be the face of the mission. We're trying to turn the mission over to them, so they were with us, and we'd all go in the middle of the night. We plant ourselves in the middle of some giant field, like a like a giant poppy field, and then we dispersed in the village, and we'd all have our individual responsibilities to look for Taliban.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:26:06.719 --> 00:27:06.354
My job was to go into houses to look for the women and the children and search them because where I was working, women were being weaponized. Men were hiding bomb making stuff under their clothes, so my job was to search them and then question them … Those were the clearing ops and the challenging thing about that is … how would you feel if at 3:00 am, someone came into your house and said, "Hey, I'm going to pat you down really quick and then I'm going to ask you a couple of questions." I'm pretty sure you wouldn't be a big fan of that. I don't blame them for.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:27:06.354 --> 00:27:37.524
Usually after a couple of days of doing that, and [after] we say this area is safe, then we'd switch to the stabilization mission which meant that the Taliban have cleared out of here. Let's help rebuild you and show you that the Afghan government cares about you. So, we're going to build you a well, we're going to help. [We asked], "What do you want you want? [Do you want] a school [or] a hospital? … How can the American government help you?"

Kimberly Brutsche
00:27:37.524 --> 00:28:12.149
But remember a couple of days ago, I walked into your apartment in the middle of the night, patted you down, and asked you questions. And flipped open your desks and your tables. And then I walked out and said, "Have a nice day." I come back 3 days later and go, "Hey, what can I do for you?" … I'm pretty sure you'd tell me to buzz right off, right? … That was the challenge of, those types of patrols. On one hand, I had to be the hammer for security purposes,

and on the other hand, I had to be the spoon to feed and take care of people and try to do the humanitarian side.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:28:22.859 --> 00:28:12.149
In terms of responsibility, I had a teammate who was a specialist. Her name's Specialist Kaiser. She was in the California National Guard. Fabulous human. I had a female medic to help treat women who were going through a myriad of medical issues. And then I had an interpreter who was a woman and spoke fluent Pashtun, the language that was being spoken around my area of Afghanistan.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:29:04.169 --> 00:29:17.549
In terms of long-term goals, in August 2021, there was the withdrawal in Afghanistan that caused a lot of heartache for a lot of veterans who fought in Operation Enduring Freedom[1] because unlike our predecessors in World War I or World War II, there was no definitive conclusion. We found so much more connection with the Vietnam veterans because of the Vietnam War ended in a very similar way. So, what was all our effort for?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:29:36.179 --> 00:29:49.799
I do think my goal was achieved within the limited scope of influence I had … My job was to access women and children, talk to them, build relationships, and set conditions for the success of the males on my team.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:30:07.854 --> 00:31:10.289
I worked in the very, very conservative area in southern Afghanistan outside Kandahar. When I say conservative it was, if women left their houses other than to fill up their water jugs to cook, they would get their heads chopped off. Because of that, me being a woman going into this village, the men were not happy about it. They called me a w****. They told me I would "walk in fire," which was their way of saying I was going to hell because I was doing things that in their culture, they deemed inappropriate. They said, "you will never talk to our women because you will do unto them Western influence and turn them into w*****, too." Now, "I'm just like, "Well, thank you have a nice day."

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[1] Operation Enduring Freedom was the War in Afghanistan in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The U.S.'s longest war, it began with a U.S. military bombing campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. In August 2021, the U.S. ended the war, withdrawing forces and evacuating 120,000 people. Thirteen U.S. service members and 170 Afghan civilians were killed during the evacuation at the Kabul airport.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:31:10.289 --> 00:31:42.149
It took time, a lot of patience, and a lot of creative negotiation skills to change that mindset. They did change their mind, and they got to the point where the men would bring me to their houses and introduce me to their wives … I take those victories with me despite what the long-term outcome of the War in Afghanistan was.

Karen Lau
00:31:42.149 --> 00:31:52.169
Thank you for sharing about those experiences. In 2014, you were deployed to the United Arab Emirates as a Patriot Missile Battery Commander. What was this experience like?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:31:52.169 --> 00:33:04.139
Oh, man, it was difficult. A lot of people think that my time as a Cultural Support specialist in Afghanistan was the hardest part of my career, because it was direct combat. I was out in the middle of nowhere with a bunch of guys that maybe I didn't trust all the time … But this was far more difficult for me because it was a complete shift in my Army career, from the time, I was a lieutenant at this point, I was a captain in about six or seven years. I spent my year working with canons and then I was working in special operations in this very culturally specific [mission]. Now, I'm in air defense artillery with multi-million-dollar missiles. My property book, which was all the equipment I was responsible for, totaled over almost 1 billion dollars … It was something I could never really wrap my head around at the time.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:33:04.139 --> 00:33:52.499
I was told when I switched to air defense artillery … I was told that I would never be competitive because I didn't have enough experience. I was doing cannon stuff, but it wasn't shooting missiles and there were far more qualified officers. I don't like being told "no." I already told you how my parents raised me to pursue opportunities. My old commander told me that I could never be a CST, that it wasn't good for my career, and I did it anyways. So, I was like, "Okay, you told me "No." Now, I'm going to figure it out." It was hard to figure it out, but I did, and I got that that deployment.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:33:52.499 --> 00:34:48.779
But ultimately what made it difficult was that missiles are a strategic asset, which means that countries use missiles to talk to each other. Putting missiles in certain places in the world sends a very clear message to another country. A great example is 2016 or 2017 when North Korea was shooting test missiles towards the Sea of Japan. It was our ally. Our ally didn't like that.

Former President Trump deployed a unit of terminal, high altitude missiles to South Korea, and [was like], “Okay, you want to pop off with missiles? We’re going to pop off with missiles, too, and our missiles are bigger.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:34:48.779 --> 00:35:34.739
And then a couple months later … they’re like planning a tree or something across the [demilitarized zone]. So, that’s how countries talk to each other and now Captain Brutsche was in charge of some of these missiles. That's scary. That’s a lot of pressure. But at the end of the day, it was super rewarding because I finally got to command soldiers. That’s all I wanted to do … So, if Air Defense was going to give me a chance to lead soldiers, then by golly, I’m going to do it. I had 73 of the most incredible soldiers I could have asked for.

Karen Lau
00:35:52.854 --> 00:36:04.254
My next question is, during your career, you were very involved in the education of new officers. Why is educating the next generation of military leaders important to you and what have you learned as an educator?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:36:06.689 --> 00:37:04.134
My first job in the Army was working at a schoolhouse … The Army put me in the same schoolhouse I had just graduated from as a basic officer. I felt like the oldest kid at summer camp because all my friends were going off to Afghanistan and Iraq, and I had to stay at the school because I was a woman, even though I was very good at field artillery. When I got that assignment, I was very sad. I cried. I was very resentful of it … I kept going back to the idea of those who can’t do, teach. I couldn’t do, therefore, I taught.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:37:04.134 --> 00:37:36.509
What [teaching] did for me was inspire me to see God put me in that position to teach, because that’s where my talent was, that’s where my unseen passion was, and that has permeated throughout my career. If you ever looked at my resume, you’d see, I’ve taught way too many times in the Army and after this, I’m going to [teach at] the Air Force Academy.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:37:36.509 --> 00:38:29.940
So that’s ultimately why I stayed in education, but then ultimately what’s inspiring me to speak about these opportunities now and what I’ve learned as an educator is that education is a chance to mentor, to influence, and inspire a new generation to not make the same mistakes that you

did. I did not have a mentor until my second battery command, which was nine years after I commissioned. That's a long time for someone to float through a military career. I only stayed because I wanted to make a difference for someone who may be in a similar position as me.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:38:36.750 --> 00:38:46.050
Now, I continue to serve as an educator. If a student came up to me and [said], "I feel kind of lost, Ma'am. I don't know what I want to do with my Army career. I'm being told that I can't do this." [I would say], "Well, let me, let me be a mentor to you because I didn't have that and I know exactly how it feels and it's very, very lonely."

Karen Lau
00:38:59.695 --> 00:39:14.365
I think it's wonderful that you were able to turn around what was, at first, a disappointing thing into something where you could provide opportunities for cadets and also be a mentor to them which you didn't have.

Karen Lau
00:39:17.010 --> 00:39:30.360
In 2021, you were among the first officers selected for the U.S. Space for as a space operations officer. What was your reaction to the creation of the Space Force and what were your initial thoughts when you learned that you earned this role?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:39:32.070 --> 00:40:19.915
My first reaction was, "It's about time." I know the Internet poked a lot of fun at the creation of Space Force and at [the fact] that former President Trump was creating it. But the Air Force and the Army already had their own space commands. Just like what I said about women, we're just doing things under this blanket of restrictive policy. Well, guess what? We were doing the same thing with space. There have been things happening in space since the '50s. I was very excited that the Department of Defense and the U.S. government actually recognized where the future of the War was going to be.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:40:19.915 --> 00:41:23.190
It feels very Sci-Fi right now, but there's stuff happening up there. I have very unique perspectives on it because I worked in missile defense, so I already knew my particular missile. They called an atmospheric missile, which means that it leaves the atmosphere. Guess what other things leave the atmosphere? Rocket ships, right? So, we're already playing in the space. I was excited that we were adding to the repertoire of incredible military capabilities that this

country has. Space is neutral territory right now and that's awesome. Every country is free to explore research and spend time in space. There are countries out there in this world that want to weaponize it and our job is to try to keep it neutral so we can use it for exploratory purposes.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:41:23.190 --> 00:41:56.485
I was teaching at West Point when this opportunity came up and I was told, "Kim, you're a stellar officer. You have great credentials and you've done really cool things in your Army career, but you're not an intelligence officer. You don't do cyber, and you don't have the space badge from Army Space Command. I don't know if you're going to be the most qualified. I don't think the Space Force is going to want you."

Kimberly Brutsche
00:41:56.485 --> 00:42:37.885
When we learned about me, we learned that I don't like being told that I can't do something. So, I was like, "Okay, well, now, I'm just going to put my packet in and I'm going to see what happens." A couple months later, I got picked up and they were like, "Congratulations, you're going to be among the first to switch over to the Space Force. And when I learned that, I was very excited because that meant that I had an opportunity once again to make a lasting impact on the military. I did it once with gender integration. I was doing it intermittently throughout my career by mentoring cadets and officers that I was teaching at school.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:42:37.885 --> 00:42:40.345
Now, I get to stand up a whole new military force. I get to be part of history. That's super cool. I was hoping by joining the Space Force that my experience as an Army leader, and as a commander, would help me build a really positive culture in the Space Force. When you take when you take an environment for a really smart people and you put them all together, it doesn't mean that they're going to be the most effective team. They need to be led, and that's how I sold myself.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:43:13.285 --> 00:43:35.520
Hey, I may not be really good at the [technical] stuff. I'm terrible at math. I taught ethics, philosophy, and leadership. What I can do is lead effective teams. [I told them], "Let me be a part of building that type of culture for you so that all the smart people are free to do all the [technical] things like Star Wars.

Karen Lau
00:43:35.520 --> 00:43:47.850
Congratulations. What has been your experience in the Space Force been so far and what is your vision for your future in the Space Force?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:43:51.390 --> 00:44:40.530
It's been great. It's still pretty new. I'm still on my space courses. I'm still technically in the Army right now. I transfer officially on September 16th. It's been challenging though because it's so new. The last time that the military stood up a new force was in 1947 with the U.S. Air Force. That's a long time ago. We are really building the satellite while in orbit … With that comes the difficulty of getting myself out of the Army and putting myself in the Space Force. Everyone is doing the best they can. It takes a lot of politicians and military officers to make that happen.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:44:40.530 --> 00:45:35.220
It's a whole new culture. The Army focuses on the ground fight, land warfare, and that comes their own specific culture that's existed for almost 200 years. The Space Force is different because they're an offshoot of the Air Force. It's a far more relaxed environment. They're not as focused on … putting 50 pounds on our back and running up a mountain because that's not what they need their space guardians to do. They need them to be able to look at the trajectory of this object and [whether] it is going to collide with the International Space Station.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:45:35.220 --> 00:47:16.110
So, that's the most challenging part so far about being a part of the Space Force. Today, I sat in a class where I learned about galactic, cosmic rays. And I sat there, like a deer in headlights … For my future in the Space Force, my future will continue to be in education. I'm in Kansas right now. After I leave here, I go to Colorado Springs. I will go to the Air Force Academy. I'll be writing space doctrine, so all the manuals that the Space Force will use in the future to educate [officers]. At the Air Force Academy, I'm hopeful I can pursue my PhD and become a professor there … I have 7 years left before I retire. I'm on the backside of my career. So, the best thing I can do with the last 7 years I have is to invest in young people like yourself, young people who are inspired to make a difference and hopefully build a space for us for whatever Star Wars stuff is going to happen 100 years from now because I have no doubt that's the future of the Space Force.

Karen Lau
00:47:16.110 --> 00:47:24.990
That’s amazing. You've received many accolades for your service, including the Bronze Star Medal. Which one of your achievements has meant the most to you and why?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:47:29.755 --> 00:48:17.940
When I read the read-ahead, that question really, really stuck with me. I had spent a lot of time thinking about it. For me, the accolade or achievement that means the most to me is not necessarily any of the medals. It’s when I have a former soldier or cadet write to me and say, “Ma’am, you taught me this, or you said this to me, and it’s come to fruition. Thank you for teaching me how to deal with it” or “Ma’am, I really respect you. Can you give me a letter of recommendation for grad school?” Or even better when their wives or husbands would write to me and go, “Ma’am, you are the best commander my husband or wife has ever had, and we miss you.”

Kimberly Brutsche
00:48:17.940 --> 00:48:50.190
That’s what’s meant the most to me because … my passion has been creating positive influences in the Army and creating a lasting legacy. My legacy are the people that I’ve led and trained. So, when I get that affirmation that what I did made a difference to them, that’s way better than any fancy, shiny metal and far less expensive because those things are pricey.

Karen Lau
00:48:50.190 --> 00:49:05.185
I'm sure you’ll continue to make an impact on all of the future students and mentees that you’ll have, especially once you become a full professor. My next question is, what do you recall about your relationships and camaraderie with your fellow service members throughout your career?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:49:05.490 --> 00:50:12.450
The camaraderie between service members is absolutely fascinating and I’ve never really been a civilian since college, but there’s something to be said about relationships built through shared hardship. When I say hardship, I’m not just talking about combat. A lot of people just default to “thank you for your service” because they assume you’ve gone to war. That’s not really what hardship or sacrifice in the military is because you only go to war for a couple of years maybe out of your career for most soldiers. What does that hardship look like? It’s being away from your families. It’s not having control over your career.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:50:27.870 --> 00:51:02.755
But the good thing is, you're not alone, you have other people that are going through that and that's how you really bond, and those relationships are really precious to me. It's why on the parade, you'll see, like the American Legion or the VFW. They're all out there and just a bunch of [veterans] who may have never known each other in the military, but they're going to come together and they're going to talk about serving because they have that in common. And I think that's really, really special.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:51:02.755 --> 00:52:04.110
That being said, there have been some pretty terrible interactions. With a lot of good comes a lot of the bad. In an environment like the military where you have an established hierarchy and a path to success, you can see a very competitive spirit … But that never outweighs the amazing people that you interact with in the military. I would say if I had to pick the one thing that I love the most about serving in the Armed Services, it's the camaraderie and the relationships I build with other people.

Karen Lau
00:52:04.110 --> 00:52:17.790
Throughout your career, even stationed in many places, including Oklahoma, North Carolina, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, and Germany. What have been your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and the cultures at these places?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:52:19.620 --> 00:53:32.455
What I really appreciate about this question is it's not just focused on foreign countries. You threw in Oklahoma. Some people may think Oklahoma as a foreign country. I definitely did that first … For me, the most memorable experiences that I've encountered with the cultures in these places is how people choose to connect with you. I really started focusing on the sociocultural aspects of war. I became really interested in how people connect with others, how they welcome you, and what they chose to show you about their cultures.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:53:32.455 --> 00:54:20.910
Oklahoma is a sweet tea and a steak kind of place. It's very slow moving. It's super friendly … You could … just leave your door unlocked and it's absolutely okay because everyone was just so trusting and forgiving out there. Whether you're religious or not, someone saying "Bless you. Have a good day" just makes you feel good because it feels genuine.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:54:20.910 --> 00:54:44.755
North Carolina is another sweetie kind of place. What I liked about North Carolina was that you could one day be in a really dense pine forest and then, in an hour, you're at the beach. In places like Connecticut, I think you can probably identify with this as well.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:54:56.790 --> 00:55:06.120
The most memorable experience about being in Germany was … how influential World War II really was … A lot of the people, a lot of the Germans resented U.S. presence in Germany and in Europe because it's been X number of years since World War II. Why are we still there? Now? There are reasons why we're there. As Americans, we understand that, but I'm sure we would feel the same some sort of way if we had Japan just start building military bases in our country and saying, "We're here to help you because you can't help yourselves."

Kimberly Brutsche
00:55:48.085 --> 00:55:58.135
I saw this when I was traveling through Japan as well. My husband was stationed in Okinawa, and they have a lot of opinions about military being out there. So, I thought that was always really fascinating.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:55:58.440 --> 00:57:08.160
The most fascinating cultural experience was in the UAE and seeing how it's a predominantly Islamic culture. You can't show tattoos. Women have to cover their shoulders. But then, at the same time, Nicki Minaj is performing in Dubai. You see women making Instagram videos and TikToks at a beach club. All of the nations around them are far more conservative in terms of Islamic culture. I think that was a really memorable experience … The most memorable experience for me is how they connect with me. It's usually with some type of smile and in some type of delicious food.

Karen Lau
00:57:10.680 --> 00:57:16.320
How have your service experiences affected your life and what have you learned about yourself during your service?

Kimberly Brutsche
00:57:23.520 --> 00:58:53.370
My service, for the longest time, came before my own personal relationships with friends and family and that was definitely a negative effect on my life. I didn't realize it at the time. I was

very laser focused. I'm very passionate about the things I do with my career, but it was often to the detriment of my personal wellbeing … I didn't attend friends' weddings. I missed funerals. I lived a couple hours away from a family member, and I never drove to see them … I was spending my weekends working on PowerPoint slides or something like that. So that was because it took me about 10 years into my career before I really realized that none of that matters.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:58:53.370 --> 00:59:50.880
You know, the Army and most jobs will see us as the very definition of replaceable. Your family and your friends don't see you as replaceable. That's what I learned about myself during my service and that's largely why I switched to the Space Force. I'm very psyched about being part of a new service, but this was an opportunity to maybe join a service that wasn't considered as intense and wasn't going to deploy me as often as I would have [been deployed] as a missile officer … I just didn't want that for my family, especially now that I'm married.

Kimberly Brutsche
00:59:50.880 --> 01:00:04.080
I learned that my family comes first, and all this career stuff is extra icing on the cake, but it's not going to be standing or sitting with me at my table when I'm 75 years old with cataracts and a bad back.

Karen Lau
01:00:05.880 --> 01:00:16.260
Thank you for sharing your perspective about that. I think a lot of women experience similar internal conflicts about whether it's okay to prioritize their career over their family or vice versa.

Karen Lau
01:00:16.260 --> 01:00:23.520
Currently, you're a student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. What has this experience been like?

Kimberly Brutsche
01:00:23.520 --> 01:00:47.970
It's been awesome. You know, I've been an educator for so long. The last time I went to school was 2013 for my second masters. Now, I get to be a student again. I always tell students, especially cadets, that being a student is one of the only times in your military career that you are responsible only for yourself.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:01:01.140 --> 01:02:30.690
The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College is a difficult school. It's a school for arguably, the top 30 percent of majors in the U.S. Army. There are open invitations for international students, and then other service as well but it's arguably the top field-grade officers in the military year-long. It's a deliberate shift in how we, as officers, think about war because now we're moving to higher ranks and we're moving on some more positions of influence. What was unique about my experience as a CGC student was that I pursued a unique opportunity called the Art of War Scholars program. It's only offered to 12 students out of 1200. You have to compete for it. You have to write a thesis and interview for it. It takes you out of the regular schoolhouse, and you get to sit and think very deeply about military history, policy, and strategy with the people that write the books. So, we traveled the country and we sat with all the experts. It's positioning us for really important jobs in the Army.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:02:30.690 --> 01:03:36.390
What that meant was while some of my friends were on the golf course by noon and going into the bars on weekend, I was reading 250 pages a night and working on a 150-page thesis … It's an excellent opportunity to become a better officer, and I'm very grateful for that. It's a very intense school. I'm very grateful that, um, that I just graduated. So, I came out of the school as an official Army Historian, Army strategist, and an Art of War Scholar. And those are awesome things that I can bring now to the Air Force Academy as a Space Force officer.

Karen Lau
01:03:36.390 --> 01:03:45.150
Congratulations, that's incredible. I think it's so interesting that you decided to write about the combat ban exclusion policy for your thesis.

Karen Lau
01:03:45.150 --> 01:03:53.070
How is your identity as an Asian American shaped your ideals of patriotism and service?

Kimberly Brutsche
01:04:08.040 --> 01:04:51.750
I see America as a place that my family in Poland and the Philippines dreamed of, and they still dream of. I have a lot of family still in the Philippines. My mom always used to joke that for a woman in the Philippines in her village, if you were rich, you could become a nurse. If you weren't rich, you really had two options: you find a marine or sailor, and you marry them and you come to America, which is what my mom did. She married the marine. Or you become a prostitute.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:04:51.750 --> 01:05:40.230
I asked my mom this question, “What do you think of America?” And she was like, “I just thought of America as full of rich, beautiful people … For me, being an Asian American has made me feel that I have an obligation to my family and to other people that are in similar situations like my family to make this country the best that it can be within the scope of influence that I have.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:05:40.230 --> 01:06:16.890
I'm sure you’ve heard the adage that America’s a melting pot. I hate that phrase because I think my mom was a victim of that phrase, and she tried to melt into American society … instead of really standing in front of society and saying, “No, I’m a Filipina and I came over here at 18 years old. I learned English. I raised some bad a** children who love their country and they all serve.”

Kimberly Brutsche
01:06:16.890 --> 01:06:50.280
I really see America as a jambalaya where it’s all starkly different things, but [they] all contribute to making the jambalaya taste good. It’s all different, but there’s enough in there that complements other things that they can unite to make something beautiful.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:06:50.280 --> 01:06:59.850
I’m very proud to be an American, and I’m very proud to be a Filipino and a Polish American. I’m going to use my platform of military service to show that to other Asian Americans.

Karen Lau
01:07:06.355 --> 01:07:20.335
In my past interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he described a “bamboo ceiling” in the Armed Forces where it was more difficult for minorities to gain promotions. Do you believe this still exists today?

Kimberly Brutsche
01:07:23.730 --> 01:09:02.790
I do, [but] I don’t think it’s deliberate. I’ve worked a lot in diversity in my Army career and soon-to-be Space Force career. It’s not outward, point-blank discrimination. I call it “benign neglect.” In May for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, I interviewed a series of Army officers about their service … Almost all of the aforementioned officers mentioned something along the lines of a perception that because I’m Asian, I’m quiet.

I don't physically look like the prototype of a good military officer. My husband is 6'4", Caucasian, has an athletic build, and looks fit. If you stand us next to each other, people assume he's the really accomplished Army officer … But he got out of the Army. He's not the accomplished Army officer anymore. I am, but they see this tiny Filipino girl.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:09:02.790 --> 01:09:38.460
Between the two of us, we both went to Afghanistan, but I did all the bad a** stuff with all the operations outside the wire. I'm the one who [worked with] missiles … We make assumptions about the qualifications of people based on what they look like … Our perceptions are rooted in our experiences and how we've seen the world.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:09:38.460 --> 01:10:52.315
The world has seen a U.S. Army that's been predominantly white males fighting in wars … Now, when these officers talk about those stereotypes where they did not help themselves, they are just happy to blend into the collective group … [People] suffer in silence because if you speak up, you're selfish. If you don't speak up and stand up for yourself, you're just going to affirm people's opinions about you because you're not challenging it. [That's] not because it's malicious or you're weak.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:10:52.315 --> 01:11:45.960
And that happened to me. There was a person who would say, "Kim, if you keep your head down and you work really hard and you maintain a good attitude, people are going to notice. You'll get the top-rated evaluations." Consistently, over my career, despite my pedigree, I have gotten average evaluations. Out of my 13 years in the Army, I've only gotten one top evaluation from the first person who ever mentored me. When they counseled me, and they sat me down and they said, "Hey, you did amazing. You did this and this and this, and you wrote this, you published this … but you're not getting the top rank."

Kimberly Brutsche
01:11:45.960 --> 01:12:27.600
Did I say anything? No … we would sign the evaluation and I went back to my office, and I cried. So, I'm part of the problem too, right? … Yes, I do think there's a bamboo ceiling. Um, and it's only going to change if Asian Americans choose to continue service and rise to influential ranks in the Army. We need another General Shinseki[2] … There's a myriad of other ones, but he's the most prominent [general] that most average Americans know about.

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[2] General Eric K. Shinseki, a third-generation Japanese American born in Hawaii, was the first Asian American four-star general in the U.S. Army. During his career, he served two combat

Kimberly Brutsche
01:12:38.305 --> 01:13:21.510
It's related to my thesis work of minority populations in the Army, whether it be women or minorities who are leaving the service after their initial obligations. I studied women and they were leaving combat arms for myriad of reasons and women get out of the Army at a higher rate than men. This is a problem, right? If we want to make the next [AAPI] general and the first female four-star general, women and Asians have to stay the course and continue to serve to break through the bamboo ceiling.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:13:21.510 --> 01:14:07.650
But that's really hard. It takes a lot to continue to say, "Okay, I'm just going to keep getting average evaluations. I'm going to continue to get stupid jokes made about me." That starts to tear at your soul a little bit. I saw that in my thesis work with why women were leaving combat arms. I left combat arms. I'm going to the Space Force. It's like living in a glass bowl where everyone's staring at you. It's exhausting. But then what happens? They get out and then a fresh new batch of Asian Americans have to come in and try to do the same thing, but when they get tired, they get out … Nothing ever changes.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:14:07.650 --> 01:14:57.570
Yes, the bamboo ceiling exists. We are just as guilty of perpetuating it, in my opinion, as maybe the ones who are enforcing it. I don't always think it's malicious. If it's going to change, then we need Asians to stay the course and continue to serve through all those obstacles. They need to find ways to inspire themselves to break through the bamboo ceiling. The only way that we're going to change it is we need advocates at the top. You can have as many interns as you want in Washington. But who makes the decisions? Congress does.

Karen Lau
01:14:57.570 --> 01:15:10.140
Speaking of General Shinseki and his role in history, why do you think Asian American history and the stories of Asian American veterans should be taught in schools?

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tours in Vietnam for which he was awarded three Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart and led NATO peacekeeping forces. Shinseki served as the 34th Chief of Staff of the Army under the Clinton and Bush administrations and served as the 7th Secretary of Veterans Affairs under the Obama administration. Three of his uncles served in the all-Japanese units, the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated military unit in history, during World War II.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:15:12.390 --> 01:15:40.740
We're just another thread in the fabric of our nation. Every story deserves to be heard. My experiences as a Cultural Support Specialist and traveling the world has taught me that people are fascinating and to look at things one dimensionally is inaccurate and really, really boring.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:15:40.740 --> 01:16:36.355
As an Art of War Scholar, my job was to study military history and strategy … The focus of all these war studies was from a Western European point-of-view. We [studied war] from the German perspective, the British perspective, and the French perspective. [However], if we're going to study the Russo-Japanese war, thank you for all the great literature on Russia, [but we also need to study] what Japan had to say about fighting against the Russians and how they thought it was rooted in yellow peril. That's important because those are things that drive war that we don't always think about.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:16:36.355 --> 01:17:37.620
That was the perspective I wanted to give to my classmates to the point that I think they got annoyed because some of the feedback I got was "she talks about minorities too much." I've spent my entire life learning about British history. Maybe you should learn about Filipino history. People don't know that the U.S. tried to colonize the Philippines. We talk about colonizing Native Americans and that was atrocious. [The U.S.] stamped down my ancestors and called them insurgents in their own country and then they said, "Hey, we're going to smack you down for trying to gain your own independence in your country. And then we're never going to talk about it in the history books because that's not a part of history that we like to talk about just like we don't like to talk about Native American history."

Kimberly Brutsche
01:17:37.620 --> 01:19:09.360
Those perspectives are important because … if we continue to look at things through rose colored glasses, we're going to repeat mistakes and that's what we keep seeing. We need to add these Asian American stores. I love this study you're doing because [these stories are] going to help increase that perspective for people who may not otherwise be exposed to it. Connecticut is full of a lot of affluent Caucasian people, and they may never see a ratchet little Filipino girl from the weird parts of Philadelphia. But they can learn about my people and think about things the way that they do. You may never be able to put yourself in the shoes of an Asian American who had ancestors that worked on the railroad under terrible working conditions. But you can appreciate that because of that experience, that person is going to see the Industrial Revolution a little bit differently than somebody whose ancestor was a railroad tycoon.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:19:09.360 --> 01:19:16.860
We need to study Asian American history because it is another way to increase perspective and perspective makes us better thinkers, better decisionmakers, and … better Americans. We could stave off some of these stereotypes that [Americans] are ignorant and unwilling to learn about other cultures. We need to start with the cultures within our own country and then maybe we can do a better job of being an ambassador around the world.

Karen Lau
01:19:38.670 --> 01:19:48.930
That's a great answer. I completely relate about learning about American history my whole life, but not really learning about the true American history and the stories of minorities.

Karen Lau
01:19:48.930 --> 01:19:58.050
My next question is what legacy do you hope to impart to future Asian Americans and women who will enlist in the Army and the Space Force?

Kimberly Brutsche
01:19:58.050 --> 01:21:22.350
I want to impart a legacy of resilience and ambition. The permeating theme of my entire career has been pursuing opportunities that make me happy, not opportunities that make other people happy because that happens a lot in in the military. Do things that make you happy and if it's something that you truly want, don't take no for an answer. If you come into your career with that mentality, you're going to find the strength to continue to push through and be a trailblazer to be some of the officers in your organization because Asian Americans in the military are still vastly underrepresented, especially in key leadership positions. Women have much more of a presence [now], but we still need women to rise to those ranks of influence. I want to see a future female Chief of Staff of the Army, or Chief of Space Force, but it's got to start with the first person the moment they raise their hand coming out of college.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:21:22.350 --> 01:22:18.930
They have to find the strength to say, "I don't really care what you think. I don't care what your what your experience has been, or your opinions of Asians or women. I'm my own person. I come in with my own perspectives, values, and skills. I'm going to use them to make this military better and you're welcome for my service." That's what I've done my whole career. Despite my average evaluations, I've clearly gained enough attention to keep getting some incredible opportunities, like going into the Space Force. You don't get that from just sitting on

your hands and hoping opportunities come to you. You do it with really hard work and a lot of willingness to put yourself out there. That's the legacy that I want to leave.

Kimberly Brutsche
01:22:22.225 --> 01:22:33.835
People, like my fellow educators and leaders who I think really have matured, really do see the value of diversity in the force. It's so much better than when I commissioned in 2009. I can only imagine it's going to continue to get better to get better.

Karen Lau
01:22:39.900 --> 01:22:46.530
Thank you so much. It's been a real pleasure to get to know you and good luck in your future in the Space Force.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Seth Varayon
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 5, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Seth Varayon is a first-generation Thai American Major in the U.S. Army. In this interview, he discusses his deployments to Afghanistan, his creation of the Asian Pacific Islanders Army Officers group and this group's response to anti-Asian violence, and his current work on the Army Talent Management Task Force.*

Karen Lau
00:00:00.000 --> 00:00:05.370
Hi everyone. Today, I'm here with Major Seth Varayon. My first question for you is when and where were you born?

Seth Varayon
00:00:05.370--> 00:00:18.329
I was born in October 1985 in Northern Virginia, specifically Alexandria Hospital.

Karen Lau
00:00:18.329 --> 00:00:21.990
Could you describe your childhood, upbringing, and your family?

Seth Varayon
00:00:23.125 --> 00:00:38.065
My parents are first generation Thai Americans. So, they were born in Thailand, and they immigrated to the United States. They actually met in the States. They were not together before. They both came separately. My father worked kind in the newspaper industry, kind of a photo print type paper. My mother actually got her degree in political science in Thailand but when she came to the States, she found her calling in hairdressing or hairstyling, so they opened a hair salon in Washington, D.C. They owned and operated that hair salon and another one throughout my childhood.

Seth Varayon
00:01:13.920 --> 00:01:17.730
Growing up as an only child, it's kind of a standard American story. I grew up in Northern Virginia, specifically Falls Church, Virginia from my birth to about sixth grade, and then in

sixth grade, we moved to McLean, Virginia where I went for the last year of elementary school, middle school at Cooper Middle School, and then high school at Langley High School.

Karen Lau
00:01:49.470 --> 00:01:59.670
Does your family have a history of military service? If not, what was it like for you to be the first to serve in your family?

Seth Varayon
00:01:59.670 --> 00:02:45.000
There's no history of military service in my family. I think maybe there might be some distant relatives in Thailand that may have served in the Thai military. I don't think there was anything really different about me joining service. As an only child, my mother was probably concerned, but she was also very supportive in letting me do what I wanted to do. And that was serving our nation in the Army, specifically infantry. I know that was probably harder for her to know that I was going to be in procurement and potentially like a combat arms type of branch.

Karen Lau
00:02:45.000 --> 00:02:50.250
What was the hardest part of the military lifestyle for you to adapt to?

Seth Varayon
00:02:59.310 --> 00:03:03.720
One of the challenges that I noticed as continued my service in the military was the locations in which I was stationed were drastically different from Northern Virginia where I grew up. Going to Fort Benning, Georgia, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, places like Fort Polk, Louisiana … it was just different [since] places in the South do not have as much diversity.

Karen Lau
00:03:46.470 --> 00:03:51.510
If you could go back to the start of your military career, what advice would you give yourself?

Seth Varayon
00:03:55.830 --> 00:04:01.230
That's a tough one. My advice would be to be confident and to trust in knowing that if you've prepared well enough and you know what it is that you're doing and what you're talking about, people will respect and recognize that. It took me a while to be confident in being in charge. I knew I was in charge because of my positions and my training, and I think I led well, but the confidence I have now as a leader would have been easier if I had known that earlier.

Karen Lau
00:04:45.989 --> 00:04:50.219
Could you describe your first service assignment at Fort Campbell, Kentucky?

38Seth Varayon
00:04:50.219 --> 00:06:34.679
Yes, so after I went through my initial training, which was infantry training and Ranger School, I reported to Fort Campbell, Kentucky for the 101st Airborne Division. I was assigned to force brigade, which is cool because at the time, you know, the 506th Infantry Regiment. So, if you've heard of "Band of Brothers," that's the same unit from that TV show and from history. My first assignment, it was a platoon leader in easy company. They were already deployed to Afghanistan in East Province, so I was the platoon leader at a small outpost, where for most of the time I was actually in charge of all the soldiers in that outpost in all the operations in that area. My company commander split time between that outpost and another outpost, where another one of the platoons and the company was. A third platoon rotated to the larger base as a kind of a support operation, so I was definitely interested and forwarded a lot of really lateral movement to do what we need to do, or at least what we thought we needed to do to help advance … operations in the area.

Seth Varayon
00:06:34.679 --> 00:07:47.394
That was kind of my first deployment. We returned and immediately went back into another training cycle because we knew we were going to go deploy again to Afghanistan. In about a year and a half, after I got back in the summer of 2009, for the next year and a half, we trained to go deploy to Afghanistan again. In mid-2010, we deployed again to the same general area, but I was in a different area and this time I was a company executive officer, so my duty and scopes had grown a little bit this time. Instead of just being in charge of a platoon, I was second in charge of 3 platoons and all of our attachments. In that assignment, our company was responsible for two areas of responsibility split between two outposts. Often, I would either be with the company's first sergeant or the company commander, and the three of us would rotate to where there was at least one of us at the other location.

Seth Varayon
00:07:47.394 --> 00:07:54.174
So, we'd be in charge again of the area of operations and all the things happening there. So, I learned a lot of lessons at that deployment. Also, I was injured by an enemy mortar attack. So when you ask about how my military service has been for my family, I know my mom was probably pretty scared at the time, but I was very fortunate and only really sustained kind of minor injuries.

Karen Lau
00:08:19.499 --> 00:08:32.459
As a veteran who served two deployments to Afghanistan, could you share some of your thoughts on the exit of troops from Afghanistan?

Seth Varayon
00:08:32.459 --> 00:09:32.219
I think it could have been done better, or we could have exercised a little bit more patience or prepared [more]. Obviously, I'm not at the highest levels of government and I am not aware beyond what I've read in the news, all the information and facts that were presented, but I think that we could have prepared more, set ourselves up, and set the conditions so that it was not as last-minute seeming and kind of like an emergency to get everybody out. Whether it we could have started earlier for preparation, or we just said, "Hey, we don't need to go on an arbitrary date," things probably could have been gone better.

Karen Lau
00:09:35.549 --> 00:09:38.759
Thank you for sharing your thoughts. I spoke with another U.S. Army major yesterday, who was part of the Cultural Support Team in Afghanistan and she also expressed some of the same sentiments about that exit of troops from Afghanistan. A lot of her fellow service members were disappointed that there wasn't really an end to the war, just an exit.

Seth Varayon
00:09:58.619 --> 00:10:03.989
I think that's really fair.

81Karen Lau
00:10:03.989 --> 00:10:14.909
My next question is, could you describe some of your experiences and achievements as the battalion executive officer of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army?

82Seth Varayon
00:10:16.224 --> 00:11:51.839
That mission is a rotational mission, and it falls under the rack of originally aligned forces. So, units are consistently rotating through to do this mission. It was very interesting for me, because I had never done a rotation nor had been stationed in South Korea or the Republic of Korea. That was a great cultural experience, just being able to be in that country and to experience some of those things. I definitely learned a lot about getting units overseas … and interacting with the units that are already there … Before we went to Korea and throughout that rotation, our soldiers were able to train for some things that they normally didn't get to train [for] both in

missions and equipment. That was an experience that I'll have under my belt for the rest of my life.

Karen Lau
00:11:51.839 --> 00:12:02.549
Throughout your career, what have been your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and the cultures at the places where you've been stationed?

Seth Varayon
00:12:07.229 --> 00:13:25.529
[During my] first two deployments to Afghanistan, I had the opportunity to interact with the elders of the villages that were in my area of responsibility. In their culture, they have the Shira, which is the gathering of all the elders to discuss topics and I guess it's a form of government … As the local military leader, I was invited to those meetings and was able to provide input. Just as I reflect back, I was 21 or 22 years old, and here I was in a room full of people that had seen so many more things and been a part of the war with Russia trying to trying to advance the Afghan government as well as what we were trying to do in terms of combating the enemy.

Seth Varayon
00:14:13.949 --> 00:14:43.229
During my deployment, I reached out to my high school alma mater, and some of the kids in one of the classes, as extra credit program, did a coat drive and they collected coats across the high school and the local area. We were able to send boxes and boxes of coats, and my platoon went and handed out these coats to a lot of kids and adults because it's really cold there. And so I think that helped.

Karen Lau
00:15:02.489 --> 00:15:06.179
That was a really great story about the coat drive and the high school.

Seth Varayon
00:15:06.179 --> 00:15:18.389
Oh, thanks. I really was just happy to be able to participate and facilitate it.

Karen Lau
00:15:19.829 --> 00:15:26.129
In your different service assignments, what were the biggest challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?

Seth Varayon
00:15:26.129 --> 00:16:46.619
In the military, we switch jobs every year to two years, three, if you're lucky. You're switching jobs which means you're constantly learning. By the time you feel comfortable at your job, it's probably about time to move on to the next one. I would tell myself to be confident enough to prepare and spend the time as early as possible to learn about what that job is. Get used to knowing that you're always going to be learning and you should always have that learning mindset. By the time you feel comfortable, you're moving on already. Make sure your organization and your systems are in place so that you are not the single point of failure … If you're the single point of failure, then you haven't set your unit up for success.

Karen Lau
00:16:46.619 --> 00:16:51.599
What do you recall about your relationships and your camaraderie with your fellow service numbers?

Seth Varayon
00:17:00.959 --> 00:17:59.369
Throughout my career, I've met so many great people. Every unit I go to, there are so many great people and I think the biggest thing is being able to see all walks of life, people from all over the country and all over the world that have come together to be in this big machine we call the Army. If I had chosen [another] career where I didn't move around as much, I would not have been able to interact with, be friends with, mentor, coach, and learn from people from all walks of life and all over the world who bring different perspectives. Those other perspectives have shaped me into who I am now.

Karen Lau
00:17:59.369 --> 00:18:13.289
Currently you serve on the Army Talent Management Task Force and the strategic initiatives group where you've increased the Army's engagement with minority groups. What has this experience been like and why is this initiative important to you?

Seth Varayon
00:18:14.574 --> 00:18:24.744
The Army Talent Management Task Force does have a diversity, equity, and inclusion section. Most of my personal work with diversity, equity, and inclusion is actually kind of outside of my scope of work for my job here at the Task Force. I do two things with regards to that which I'm particularly proud of. I co-founded and administrate a Facebook group called the Asian Pacific Islander Army Officers Facebook group. This group grew out of a conversation I had with somebody where I realized that there was a gap when it came to bringing together the Asian

Pacific Islander population of army officers. [I'm proud of] creating that group and having it grow from me just inviting all the people that I knew and telling them and invite others to about 1,700 people and growing. Being able to kind of connect this group that had had not been connected before [is important to me].

Seth Varayon
00:19:34.289 --> 00:20:08.574
More locally, I have volunteered to be a part of the headquarters of the Army's Special Emphasis Program committee, which takes a special emphasis on officers' communities like Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, African Americans, women, [et cetera] and work together to help plan the outreach and the events that have to do with these communities.

Karen Lau
00:20:08.574 --> 00:20:22.014
I was really inspired when I read about your founding of the Asian Pacific Islander Army Officers group, and I was wondering if you could tell me more about what this group has accomplished so far, especially in response to anti-Asian violence.

Seth Varayon
00:20:26.729 --> 00:22:00.564
Some group members who are part of other organizations like an organization in New York City for Korean Americans did a run that to raise awareness and money to combat anti-Asian violence. Through the group, [they were] able to share the event and reach a wider audience … across the Army to get additional participation. With regards to the group, we've been able to focus on professional development discussions. When we talk about mentorship or when we talk about being able to identify with others in the Army, Asians are only about six percent of the force. If you take the officer population, it's even smaller. So, to be able to bring everybody together and have a comfortable space [for] professional discussions on things like strategic topics, [advice, or mentorship], I think that's really when the value of the group comes in.

Seth Varayon
00:22:00.564 --> 00:22:25.019
We've also held professional development sessions on Zoom where some people who are experts or at least very well experienced in their field have offered to hold sessions for people who are interested. We've done those for various different specialties, and we've done one on fitness for the new army fitness test.

Seth Varayon
00:22:39.684 --> 00:23:35.579
There's a high population of Asian American service members that serve in Korea. Through the Facebook group, they were able to create an in-person group that met regularly and had events [for] professional development, networking, and mentorship. They were able to cultivate a really good group that got together, did community service, and celebrated Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Karen Lau
00:23:35.579 --> 00:23:46.229
I think what this group has done so far is really incredible, especially in regard to mentorship and professional development, which will really help Asian Americans get into leadership roles in the Army.

Seth Varayon
00:23:46.229 --> 00:24:34.799
I agree. When I was wrestling with the idea of even creating the group, I was talking to a friend of mine who's a member of a similar group for African American Army Officers. I took a lot of what that group does and applied it to this group. Most people probably don't have a problem, kind of getting along and assimilating and just being a part of an organization. But for some people, it's harder. As an Asian American, if they grew up and hung out mostly with other Asian Americans, it might be harder for them to connect with others.

Seth Varayon
00:25:03.839 --> 00:25:12.389
To have that type of connection with someone who has the same shared experiences or upbringing and allow them to connect on a better level, and to be comfortable enough to talk about subjects that they might not be comfortable enough to talk with others, I think it was the power of [the group].

Karen Lau
00:25:22.169 --> 00:25:33.389
You've definitely created a stronger and more tightknit community of Asian Pacific Islander Army officers who now have a place to go to whenever they need support. So, thank you for doing that.

Karen Lau
00:25:33.389 --> 00:25:41.339
You've received many athletes for your surface, including the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart. Which one means the most to you and why?

Seth Varayon
00:25:44.969 --> 00:25:50.609
It probably hasn't been any of the military awards. The thing that I'm actually most proud of is the [Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC)] Uniformed Services Award I earned earlier this year because of my work with the Facebook group. While recognition certainly wasn't the goal of starting this group, it was nice to have been nominated for and recognized for starting the group. My organization had to nominate me for that, so to know that my [group] and my current organization, the Talent Management Task Force, supported me, that was nice to know as well.

Karen Lau
00:26:44.549 --> 00:27:04.734
Congratulations on the FAPAC Award. I read an article about how you gave a flag flown in Afghanistan to the owner of a car shop. Allen Akin who you met in 2009. I was wondering if you could tell me more about this story, and whether you've kept in touch with him over the years.

Seth Varayon
00:27:04.949 --> 00:28:28.079
This is a really great story. In between my deployments, I had my car that I loved. It's a BMW and Mr. Akin owned a BMW shop. They did regular maintenance, but they also did some performance stuff. I had brought in the car to them for some performance things as well as just regular maintenance. I brought my car to drop off to him, and I was going to travel and fly. My plan was to drop the car off and then take a cab to the airport, but my flight was actually the next day. When we got to talking, he found out that I was going to sleep in the airport for my flight the next morning. He was like, "No, you're not going to do that." He offered to let me stay at his house and then drop me off in the morning at the airport … That kindness that he showed really touched me and reinforced my belief that there are so many good people out here in the world … He also picked me up from the airport and brought me to my car afterwards. So, I'd always felt so indebted to him for his kindness.

Seth Varayon
00:28:28.079 --> 00:30:44.099
I didn't know how to thank him … And then at my next deployment, a lot of people will do these things where they buy a flag and then they fly it on our base in Afghanistan … When I found out about that, I thought that's the perfect thing …I got a flag, and I flew it. Then I folded it up and I had a certificate signed by the commander of the base that said "Awarded to Mr. Akin for your support of the unit. This flag was flown at this base on this date." I came back and I gave it to him, and I think he really appreciated it.

Karen Lau
00:31:39.564 --> 00:31:43.379
That's a great story. Were you able to connect with him again in the years past?

Seth Varayon
00:31:43.379 --> 00:31:58.494
So, I did a little bit probably a few years after that, but to be honest with you, I have not maintained very good contact. This is a good reminder for me to reach out and say, "Hello."

Karen Lau
00:32:00.659 --> 00:32:09.809
You've spoken a little bit about how your service experiences have affected your life and your family. What have you learned about yourself during your service?

Seth Varayon
00:32:13.979 --> 00:32:59.399
We go through different phases as we mature not only as Army leaders, but as people … We all join because we want to help out and …take care of others, but I think at least for me, I knew that, but I was also doing it for me to prove that I could do some things and to be a leader. As you go on in your service, you start to realize it becomes less about you over time and becomes more about others. Now, I have a family, and I have kids. If I were to ask myself, now it's all about the organization, it's all about the people, their families, and my family, less about me.

Seth Varayon
00:32:59.399 --> 00:33:22.649
When I talk to others, particularly younger officers, I say, "You joined to prove to yourself that you can do some things but remember that it's for the soldiers … and their families." I think that driving factor gives you the [motivation] you need to continue.

Seth Varayon
00:33:22.649 --> 00:34:18.839
Even with this Facebook group, part of it was born out of an identification of a gap in the community, but also because I began to realize that my career had had a timeline … This group would be my ability to give back and get back as much as I could before that time is over. The group is for people who have previously served, too, not just people that are still serving. I'd still love to be part of the community as the years pass. Once I'm done with service, my relevance will slowly fade. As I am a leader now in the military, I'm fresh on current events and I can provide that to the younger soldiers in the future generations and leaders.

Karen Lau
00:34:18.839 --> 00:34:24.899
Absolutely. Currently, where you working and what are your responsibilities in this role?

Seth Varayon
00:34:24.899 --> 00:36:01.049
In the Strategic Initiatives Group, we're pretty much the plans and the "up and out" arm of the Task Force … [I'm involved with] the International Talent Management Forum … It's a forum of international armies and talent management, and it's a quarterly forum where we get together with partner nation armies. We just talk about everyone's latest and greatest talent management topics, initiatives, and issues. Then we go around and share, discuss, and learn from each other to make our armies better. It's been a really great dealing with international partners because that's something that I haven't necessarily done much in my career. Along that same vein, there's a similar forum that we call AMX which is Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and Space Force so that is the equivalent interservice one. That's where all the services, and the DoD get together to discuss talent management initiatives and issues.

Karen Lau
00:36:05.549 --> 00:36:12.839
How has your identity as a first-generation Thai American shaped your ideals of patriotism and service?

Seth Varayon
00:36:15.774 --> 00:37:19.704
I see my parents and their successes as small businesspeople in America as the epitome of the American dream. They came from humble upbringings in Thailand and both of them have made a life for themselves and lived upper middle class, and that's kind of the upbringing that I had. I credited a lot of everything I've been able to accomplish to the things that they've done for me. Having the Thai culture is a large part of my life. It has helped me be self-aware, but also tolerant and accepting of all cultures, just because I know what it's like to straddle both lines.

Seth Varayon
00:37:20.549 --> 00:37:29.814
In some respects, if I go to Thailand, I may speak a little bit of Thai, but I don't look walk and talk the way a Thai person does. In America, I'm American, but I look Asian, I look Thai. That's probably something a lot of people like you and I can relate to, but I think it's powerful and it's only made me better.

Karen Lau
00:37:47.489 --> 00:38:18.510
I can definitely relate to that sense of pride in being an American, but also having the cultural identity as an Asian American. I think it definitely adds more perspective to where we live. People have said that they don't like the term "melting pot" because it doesn't really reflect all of the incredible cultures that are here, but I think as Asian Americans, there is a special sense of belonging that we share.

Seth Varayon
00:38:18.510 --> 00:39:03.810
This topic has been very near and dear to me now that I have children. I've got three children now and my wife is Caucasian, so all the Thai culture that they get comes from my parents, me, and the Thai language that I'm trying to teach them. And I think it's so important because it can go away in an instant. Some of my cousins who are full Thai, but live in America don't even speak Thai. It's something very important that I want to pass on to my children.

Karen Lau
00:39:03.810 --> 00:39:03.810
In my past interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he described a "bamboo ceiling" that existed in the Armed Forces where it was more difficult for minorities to get promotions. Do you believe this still exist today?

Seth Varayon
00:39:22.980 --> 00:40:16.680
Bottom line, no. There are successful minorities at least in the Army. Asian American officers that have made it to the highest levels. Look at General Shinseki and several other Asian American generals that have made it. When you start looking at the percentage of Asian immigrants that make it to those levels compared to the percentage that serve and then compared to other groups, that is where you see the difference. So, that proportion is not the same. That's part of why the Facebook group is important because it seeks to give everyone the best leg up they can to succeed.

Seth Varayon
00:40:16.680 --> 00:41:03.060
No, the bamboo ceiling does not exist per se, but there are things when you talk about awareness or inclusion like stereotypes [that still exist] … Asians are often associated with [being] meek or subservient, and sometimes that doesn't cut it in the military in leadership positions. Some Asians have to overcome that to be assertive, dominant leaders, which is often what you see a lot of in the Army, especially in combat arms.

Karen Lau
00:41:06.390 --> 00:41:20.850
I really like getting all the different perspectives that veterans have about the “bamboo ceiling.” Some have agreed [with you] and said that there has been a lot of progress [while] some have said that it still exists in the other branches.

Seth Varayon
00:41:20.850 --> 00:41:25.470
There’s definitely work to be done for sure.

302Karen Lau
00:41:27.180 --> 00:41:32.280
What legacy do you hope to impart to future Asian Americans who will enlist than the Army?

Seth Varayon
00:41:41.790 --> 00:42:44.790
Because we’re such a small portion of the overall force and because we are combating things like a perceived “bamboo ceiling” or stereotypes and perceptions, when you go to whatever unit or whatever job you’re in, you not only represent yourself, but you represent all the other Asians in the service. Because there are so [few] of us, if you go and you are awesome, you’re the person [that] kicks butt, people remember you and associate others that come after you with you and what you did. But if you were just average or even worse, then people that will add negatively to the ongoing stereotype and people be like, “I’ve served with Asians before, and they were just whatever.” I asked people to consider that when they go, wherever they do … they’re representing more than just themselves.

Karen Lau
00:42:50.100 --> 00:42:57.750
My last question for you is, why should Asian American history and the stories of Asian American veterans be taught in schools?

Seth Varayon
00:42:58.830 --> 00:43:40.530
[Asian Americans are] part of history and so we want to make sure we are sharing everyone’s history to the best extent possible. [Teaching history] helps with cultural awareness and to know the hardships [or successes] that people have been through … it helps those young kids of Asian American descent understand how they have shaped history, or how their forebears have shaped American history.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Lieutenant Colonel Leonardo Tongko
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 3, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Leonardo Tongko is a Filipino American immigrant and an active-duty service member in the U.S. Air Force who recently made the rank of Colonel. In this interview, he describes his time at the Air Force Academy, service assignments in Africa and Europe, and his experiences working as a speechwriter to the Secretary of Defense under two administrations.*

Karen Lau
00:00:01.620 --> 00:00:11.699
Hi everyone. Today, I'm here with Lieutenant Colonel Leonardo Tongko of the U.S. Air Force. It's so great to have you here, Leo. My first question for you is when and where were you born?

Leonardo Tongko
00:00:11.699 --> 00:00:20.610
I was born in a city in the Philippines on November 30, 1978.

Karen Lau
00:00:22.230 --> 00:00:25.740
Could you describe your childhood upbringing in your family?

Leonardo Tongko
00:00:25.740 --> 00:01:43.950
Really great childhood and upbringing. I actually moved with my mom and my dad. My dad was from Manila. My mom was from a small, rural town at the time called Legazpi in the region of the Philippines … I spent the first seven years of my life in the Philippines, along with the two brothers and two sisters as a middle child. We moved here to the United States back in 1986. And then after 1986, we're in Southern California in a small town called Placentia. We moved a couple of different cities here and there around Orange County and settled back in Placentia. I actually stayed there until I was 18 or 19 years old and then I went to the Air Force Academy.

Leonardo Tongko
00:01:43.950 --> 00:02:34.290
In terms of childhood and upbringing in the Philippines, I really enjoyed my time there until I moved when I was 8. I was at a very small school called Saint Agnes Academy, considered

myself fairly fortunate to have gone to that school because it was a rural area … And then when we moved here, public education all the way.

Karen Lau
00:02:34.290 --> 00:02:49.170
Thank you so much for sharing about your family and your childhood in the Philippines. Could you share what motivated you to apply to the Air Force Academy and what your experience as a cadet was like?

Leonardo Tongko
00:02:49.170 --> 00:03:45.540
Yeah, absolutely. For me, it was three factors that really went into it. One, I'll say was moving here in the '80's and then early '90s, I saw Desert Storm[1] growing up. It was the first time for me that I'd really seen a really strong sense of patriotism from the folks here in the in the U.S. So, a lot of my classmates were really supportive of what we were trying to do. Of course, I was very young … but I did understand how incredibly proud folks were of the military and the, the people that were … trying to liberate another country.

Leonardo Tongko
00:03:45.540 --> 00:04:16.440
And I just recall how incredibly difficult it was for my parents when we were growing up, and then leaving the Philippines, which was under martial law. From what I understood in the early seventies, for them, it was tougher. So, you know, I had this strong sense of freedom and just wanted to be a part of that. So, that was that was 1 thing that motivated me.

Leonardo Tongko
00:04:16.440 --> 00:06:29.999
The other thing I motivated me really was through high school, one of the things that I recognize and realized was how incredibly fortunate I was to come to the United States and how incredibly lucky I was to have the opportunities that it gave me. The third part that really inspired and motivated me was that it gave me an opportunity to contribute back to the U.S. and so that sense of patriotism that I felt from my fellow classmates was really formative. The Air Force Academy was where I decided to go because I thought of all the service academies, it was going to be the closest to my family on the West Coast.

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[1] Operation Desert Storm, the first major foreign crisis faced by the U.S. following the Cold War, centered on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, a supplier of oil to the U.S., led by Saddam Hussein. Over 500,000 Americans deployed to Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield. The largest air campaign since the Vietnam War, it was the first major military operation to use space technology such as GPS and satellite communications.

Karen Lau
00:06:29.999 --> 00:06:59.994
It's wonderful that you were able to develop such a strong sense of patriotism from a young age. I think it's wonderful that people who were born here and decided to join the military academies had a sense of patriotism, but it's even more impressive that people who were not born here are able to join the military and serve their country. My next question is, does your family have a history of military service? If not, what was it like for you to be the first to serve?

Leonardo Tongko
00:07:02.694 --> 00:07:56.429
My family did not have [a history of service] and, in fact, it actually was one of the contributing factors to why I wanted to join. Ironically, my family has lots of doctors, lots of nurses, especially coming from a Filipino background, and I wanted to do something different when I was younger … I wasn't quite sure what I really wanted to do. In fact, when I went into the Academy, I didn't know if I wanted to be a pilot, which is what I became when I first started … I knew it was going to be a different opportunity and a change of pace from what my family was doing … It was kind of a rebellious streak.

Karen Lau
00:07:59.759 --> 00:08:05.279
What was the hardest part of the military lifestyle for you to adapt to?

Leonardo Tongko
00:08:05.279 --> 00:09:26.189
Initially just being away from home. It was hard because in the Filipino culture, we, we really think about family. So, everything revolves around family or food … Being able to adjust to that was certainly the toughest part … being 18 and leaving home for the first time ever … The great thing that I learned in the military is the military does become your family and so I have made some lifelong friends and teammates that I still talk [with] to this day.

Karen Lau
00:09:26.189 --> 00:09:31.529
Could you describe some of your assignments post-graduation from the Academy?

Leonardo Tongko
00:09:35.039 --> 00:09:43.109
I actually entered the academy post 9/11. I was actually at the Air Force Academy when 9/11 happened, and I just recall being at breakfast at the Academy, I just completed an internship there several weeks back at the Pentagon. And then here I am, entering into what we call a nation at a time of war, and we have been for the past 2 decades.

Leonardo Tongko
00:10:17.759 --> 00:10:57.629
For me, however, it probably something that put my mom's mind at ease because she was definitely crying the first time the first time that I let her know I was going into the military … I went to Laughlin Air Force Base which was my first choice for pilot training. I did well enough that they actually asked me to come back to teach, so I actually became a first assignment instructor pilot, so I was a Second Lieutenant flying what we call T-1s which is a small white jet for tanker transport aircraft.

Leonardo Tongko
00:10:57.629 --> 00:11:01.709
After a year, I did some instructor school. I enjoyed teaching others for the first three and a half years my career. Then I went into Little Rock in what we call a C-130, the J model, which is a newer version of C130, which is a transport aircraft. I became combat rated in that and then I flew a combat deployment in the Middle East, flew quite a bit into Iraq, little bit in Afghanistan, and to Africa and then I went into an assignment called the Air Force Weapon School. It's a fairly important assignment as an Air Force aviator, an officer, because it's where we teach instructors of instructors.

Leonardo Tongko
00:11:59.969 --> 00:12:42.629
Just like in undergraduate pilot training, they liked what I was doing, so they actually asked me back and I became an instructor for that assignment, so I became an instructor in Little Rock for a couple of years. Then before that timeframe, I was deployed to Afghanistan for about 6 months in a location called Kandahar at the time in the late 2000s and then did my instructor tour. Then, I was fortunate enough to actually go to Europe after my instructor tour for one year at the operations group at Little Rock.

Leonardo Tongko
00:12:42.629 --> 00:13:18.869
And I went to Europe. Ironically enough, we honestly thought it was going to be our last assignment. I wasn't planning on becoming a commander. I wasn't planning on staying in after about 13 to 14 years. But, you know, as they say, you bloom where you're planted … We went to what's called a headquarters staff there so U.S. forces in Europe and Africa worked for a great leader. His name was General Frank Gorenc, who was a 4 star there.

Leonardo Tongko
00:13:18.869 --> 00:13:51.479
I flourished in that job, I was in this what we call a commander's action group, had an opportunity to really learn from senior leaders, think, and do business, especially out in Europe

and Africa. I had great opportunities to travel. While I was there, I then was nominated and selected to be a commander of … a contingency response squadron. In a nutshell, we go out to different locations, open up airfields, and then make sure that the next mission can start rolling into these small contingency airfields that we go out to. We did that for a couple of years.

Leonardo Tongko
00:14:10.494 --> 00:15:26.009
We did some really great work in Africa where we led a relief mission. Then we spent a lot of time in Europe helping to train and work with all of our partners in Europe and many of them, NATO allies. So, it was a really great experience. And then I came back [to] the United States. Here at the Pentagon, I did a tour with the air staff. [My] most recent assignment was … I wrote for Secretary Mark Esper, the Secretary of Defense, as his speech writer and then when the administration transitioned, I wrote for Secretary Lloyd Austin. I just left the position about a month ago, actually, and ironically, at the same time, our first daughter was born so I've been fortunate that I was on leave when that happened.

Leonardo Tongko
00:15:26.009 --> 00:15:30.239
My current assignment is I'm now going back to school as a student at the Marine Corps War College, so, Air Force guy, getting to work with the Marines and study with the Marines, which is pretty darn cool.

Karen Lau
00:15:45.959 --> 00:15:53.159
Thank you for sharing so much about your career and all that you've accomplished. Congratulations to you and your family! My next question is throughout your career, you've been stationed in so many places from the Republic of Mozambique to Europe. What have been your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and the cultures at these places?

Leonardo Tongko
00:16:07.829 --> 00:16:59.189
Mozambique [was] of the most memorable experiences I have had for several reasons. One, I just absolutely enjoyed the challenge with being there helping others. It was a time when it was Cyclone Idai. I just remember as a small child in the Philippines, [cyclones were] terrible in the Philippines, especially where we were, because it was in a flood region, infrastructure wasn't very strong and there were always the threats of flooding and people dying.

Leonardo Tongko
00:16:59.189 --> 00:17:40.949
I just remember thinking about that when I was young. And then going into Cyclone Idai and seeing massive devastation on a scale that I did not realize, until I flew in for the first time into this city called Beira where we did a lot of our work, how incredibly devastating the effects of the cyclone were, not only for the area, but for the people. I remember we were there, and we were in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, and it's where we staged our hub.

Leonardo Tongko
00:17:40.949 --> 00:17:49.829
It happened to have been perhaps a week to two weeks into the operation. Everyone was tired, but we enjoyed the mission, just being out there to contribute and to help bring food to the people. In fact, there's a picture of a small child [who's] being held by her mom. I still have it on a plaque. They have this thing called an RUSF and it's basically ready to use food supplements. So, it's kind of like a power bar for babies. Our USAID representative said these calories represent what this child will eat to make sure that she or he has a fighting chance and [is] able to develop.

Leonardo Tongko
00:18:28.079 --> 00:18:35.729
I just remember how meaningful that was to me that we were out there being able to do that at the request of the government, and with the coordination with the agency because it brought me back to my time in the Philippines, how incredibly important it is to get that kind of support.

Leonardo Tongko
00:18:56.819 --> 00:19:33.509
But what really made it incredibly special is the base commander brought his team over and we shared some … beverages with us at the end of our shift that evening … It was just the base commander saying, thank you for what you're doing to help support our people in our country.

Leonardo Tongko
00:19:53.189 --> 00:19:57.239
I've also had some memorable missions in Europe. One of them was, as a paratrooper, being able to jump with the brigade into Poland and work with our Polish teammates out there.
If you can imagine a big formation of just multiple aircraft, thousands of troops. And I was fortunate that I was one of the first troops to jump out into one of the largest exercises we've done at the time. It was also special because it juxtaposes with what I was doing in Africa, and then going back to Europe to a completely separate mission set, but the same thing working with our Polish partners. They were incredibly gracious hosts and I just recall the base commander being grateful to be able to partner with us. I remember just telling them how

grateful we were that they were so gracious and allowing us to do these exercises with them because it really meant something for both of our countries. But it really meant a lot to our team to go out there and do what we do best, which is to open up airbases all across Europe and Africa, so those are probably my most exciting operational things that I got to do for my assignments.

Karen Lau
00:21:30.174 --> 00:21:37.284
Thank you for sharing these inspiring stories about Mozambique and Europe. I think it's great that the military values humanitarian aid just as much as they are involved in defense and combat, especially as we see now with the war in Ukraine, how aid is so important to the citizens. My next question is, during your different service assignments, what were the biggest challenges you faced? And how did you overcome them?

Leonardo Tongko
00:22:01.049 --> 00:24:14.009
That's a great question … I'll just say that I've had many failures in in my career … Over the past 20 years, I've realized that well, more often than not, the failures that I have … these challenges, they've helped me grow and become a better leader, but ultimately a better person. Some of the biggest challenges I had growing up in the military … was being away from home. The first time I felt like I was a failure was my second year at the Air Force Academy when I wanted to quit … It was the first time I had this challenge of trying to figure out what I wanted to be and what I wanted to do … One of the best things that I did to overcome that was actually talking to my family. And in talking to my family.

Leonardo Tongko
00:24:14.009 --> 00:24:21.659
[By] talking to my family, there was no pressure. They're incredibly proud of what I was doing, and they wanted to support whatever I wanted to do and so, ironically, I didn't want to let them down. Ultimately, I stayed, so that was one of the ways that I coped and overcame.

Leonardo Tongko
00:24:40.589 --> 00:24:50.249
Challenge number 2 was … I almost I left the service in year 13 and 14. I was supposed to transition out at about a 10-to-12-year mark. I'd become a pilot; I didn't really know what I wanted to do afterwards because I didn't think there were any prospects for me to be a commander and so on. I was very down on myself, in terms of what it is that I wanted to do. This time around, I had my wife who is an incredibly great teammate, confidant, and my best friend. We had a conversation about what it is that I wanted to do next, and she was able to help me kind of overcome my own personal barriers … and solidify my decision to stay.

Leonardo Tongko
00:25:55.889 --> 00:27:09.749
Challenge number 3, a recurring theme throughout my entire time, was trying to figure out how to become a better leader … We're all in positions where we want to lead, and we want to serve. As a commander, I have made some decisions that were challenging. They were tough to make ... Something that was formative for me as a commander is being able to overcome decision-making paralysis and then when I made a poor decision, learning from those.

Karen Lau
00:27:09.749 --> 00:27:28.199
I'm glad that you stayed in the military and that you were able to receive so much support from your family. What do you recall about your relationships and your camaraderie with your fellow surface members? Do you have any stories about working together with a team?

Leonardo Tongko
00:27:28.199 --> 00:28:33.119
So that that's one of the things that helps continue to motivate me to stay in is no matter where I go and no matter the assignment … I've had some incredibly great and supportive teammates under some incredibly tough circumstances. I recall my second mission combat mission into Iraq. We had a co-pilot and two load masters. If you can imagine some of our most terrible missions were flying into are those locations at night using night vision goggles, figuring out exactly where we were trying to go, and making sure we could land on a postage stamp.

Leonardo Tongko
00:28:33.119 --> 00:28:46.559
Those were incredibly nerve-wracking, but what made it all better was knowing that I had teammates on my side, and we always had great support back at home station to make sure that we could accomplish the mission. So, I enjoyed my time flying with a crew. Having been an instructor pilot, I've always enjoyed the teammates and camaraderie I had with my squadron.

Leonardo Tongko
00:29:03.059 --> 00:29:19.109
And so those are those are wonderful memories I have, particularly when we're on the road, a little bit away from the squadron or mother goose as we like to call it and just being able to execute the mission.

Leonardo Tongko
00:29:30.029 --> 00:30:22.889
What I really enjoyed about being a squadron commander of a contingency response unit was I had 30-plus different specialties and different types of airmen from different backgrounds. They

have communications, medical, and security forces we worked a lot with. As a commander, I really learned at a tactical level what all of these airmen brought to the fight. One of the things that was important to me and informative for me as a commander was how incredibly special all of these teammates were working together to accomplish the mission. It's incredibly hard to bring all of that together. What made it easy? What was the fact that I had really phenomenal?

Leonardo Tongko
00:30:36.479 --> 00:31:03.719
In terms of having been at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, it was really the first time I've gotten to work with civilians and some of our most senior leaders. Being a speech writer is kind of a unique role because you have … opportunities to interact with the Secretary and a lot of our senior most teammates in the department.

Leonardo Tongko
00:31:07.649 --> 00:32:16.824
What struck me about that it was it didn't matter that I was just this Lieutenant Colonel working with them. What mattered was what I brought to the team, and in turn, with the teammates that I had with two different administrations, it didn't matter which team it was … Everybody wants to contribute to make sure that our nation is safe and that we're defending the nation. For me, that was an incredibly eye-opening experience … A very special part of my development was being able to work with those teammates and having the camaraderie to think about these wicked problems and these issues and then being able to tell our story. So, that was that was an incredibly important time for me.

Karen Lau
00:32:16.824 --> 00:32:23.184
Thank you for sharing about these stories of your team, leadership, and the shared values that you have with your team. My next question is, you stated that you are passionate about causes that provide mental health services for service members, and their families, especially those who are suffering from PTSD. Why is mental health one of the causes important to you?

Leonardo Tongko
00:32:37.319 --> 00:34:05.759
It it's important because … mental health is health … The military is like a family, and … the folks that I've worked with, the camaraderie that we have, they're all my teammates. For me, that is one of my priorities … to have teammates that are fit for duty and can be at their best. And when they're not at their best because they have life challenges, like having a kid right and being asleep for only a couple hours at a time. Those things take a toll on you, and they accumulate over time, and we don't realize how incredibly stressful our service members' lives are on the inside. All we see is who they are when they come into the door, unless we start to

talk to them and have conversations about how they're doing and then peel the onion back a little bit and realizing they're not doing great.

Leonardo Tongko
00:34:16.109 --> 00:36:18.659
[One top of] those challenges and feelings of homesickness, there are the stressors associated with combat, separating us for long periods where we're away from home, you're under this … crucible of combat at times … So, those stressors are very difficult to overcome when you don't have help … I had a great support system in my family. I've had a great support system with my wife. But there are often times when we have service members that just don't have that … same family structure that I did, or they have a similar structure, but they feel a lot of pressure from their family … Our most precious resource in the military is our people … When you're not at 100 percent, it's incredibly difficult to defend our country. So, for me, that's why mental health is such a critical and important issue.

Karen Lau
00:36:34.619 --> 00:36:44.849
My next question for you is, how have your service experiences affected your life and what have you learned about yourself during your service?

Leonardo Tongko
00:37:03.479 --> 00:38:02.309
It's been 20 years now. A lot of my teammates are now, at the point where we're eligible for retirement. I just found out a week ago that I made Colonel, so that's certainly what motivates me to continue to serve at the next level … [Serving has] certainly helped with my confidence and my personal belief in my ability to do the mission and help others. It's also given me a dose of reality and humility about the limitations of what I can accomplish by myself.

Leonardo Tongko
00:38:56.280 --> 00:39:27.030
One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that everything that we do, whether it's defense, supporting the country, humanitarian assistance, or disaster relief requires you to be able to work [well] with others … So, even as a leader, you realize that you can't go it alone without a good, strong team.

Karen Lau
00:39:33.600 --> 00:39:38.820
Congratulations on making Colonel! That's an incredible accomplishment. How has your identity as a Filipino American immigrant shaped your ideals of patriotism, service, and justice?

Leonardo Tongko
00:40:01.830 --> 00:42:29.160
[My identity has] helped me become a better teammate and a leader because of my sense of family and a camaraderie that we have as Filipinos, that sense of pride in what we do … One of the values that I took away from growing up in the Philippines is working hard … That's an important aspect of the Filipino culture that I've brought with me. Another aspect that has helped me is the fact that I have a different lived experience than most. There were struggles in the Philippines, but there were certainly things that I really enjoyed about the Philippines. I came back in 2000 and [some] important values that I've seen in Filipinos [are] hospitality, graciousness, outward kindness towards others, and going out of your way to make sure that they're taken care of. I think that has served me well when it comes to trying to be a good host, trying to make sure that everybody's comfortable … I have used that as part of my leadership model, to have as much opportunity to show kindness, gratitude, and a generosity towards others, those are very important traits that I continue to see in my relatives and my mom.

Leonardo Tongko
00:42:29.160 --> 00:43:18.870
Sadly, my dad passed away this past year. One of the most important lessons my dad taught me wasn't so much what he said, but his action, which was kindness and generosity. Everybody loved my dad … not because he was the most outspoken guy, but just because he was a genuinely kind person. That's a huge part of his upbringing, the Filipino culture, and that's one of the things that I continue to try to strive for … It's made me a better leader because of it.

Karen Lau
00:43:18.870 --> 00:43:29.460
That's wonderful. I think it definitely goes to show that it's important to be kind to others in service. You are definitely carrying on your father's legacy of kindness, so thank you for doing that.

Karen Lau
00:43:29.460 --> 00:43:41.100
I have a question about the pandemic, [in particular,] how there has been an increase in hate crimes against the Asian community. How has this affected you and how has military responded to this issue?

Leonardo Tongko
00:43:44.550 --> 00:44:42.870
Yes, it definitely affected me with not so much a fear for myself, but a fear for my mom, my sister, my aunt, and my family, especially [those] living out in Los Angeles … Sadly, folks are misinformed about the pandemic. They don't understand just because of its origin … the

pandemic knows no race. There are no boundaries associated with it. Folks that are attacking [Asians], sadly, are just very misguided. And it's incredibly sad, but that those things happen and that's made me certainly fearful for my family.

Leonardo Tongko
00:44:51.570 --> 00:45:04.410
Despite all of the vitriol and the rhetoric that happens out there, I can't think of a better place, a better country where we try to help manage and have a healthy public debate about these issues even though they seem very divisive.

Leonardo Tongko
00:45:49.650 --> 00:45:54.420
One of the things that I'll say that's been incredibly helpful for me and something special that we had was a day where we stood down. Even in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary cared enough to make sure we spoke about these issues seriously … We stood down for a couple of hours and we talked about it. It was amazing to see civilian leaders and senior military members listen to us talk about this issue as Asian Americans and how it was affecting us and ultimately how it affects the readiness of the force.

Leonardo Tongko
00:47:10.290 --> 00:47:57.270
So, it affects mental health, but it also affects your ability to focus on the mission when you're worried about somebody trying to hurt your family. Being able to express that to let people know in a safe environment that these are the things that I worry about was incredibly powerful for me as a service member. Those are some of the things that we've done is to have these conversations about divisiveness and hateful rhetoric.

Leonardo Tongko
00:47:57.270 --> 00:48:08.040
I've seen how incredible the Department of Defense is mobilized since the start and transitioning from one administration to another. Everybody is rowing hard on all oars to try to help support the whole of a government approach to taking care of people and trying to mitigate the risk from the pandemic … I'm incredibly proud to see how we have helped mobilize the logistics part of trying to move vaccines around the country and around the globe … especially our national guard teammates across the country, trying to help out with that.

Karen Lau
00:50:09.120 --> 00:50:19.350
It's great that the military has responded to the pandemic and also did a day where they all stood down. I had no idea about that, thank you for sharing. In my past interview with a Korean

American Coast Guard veteran, he described a “bamboo ceiling” in the armed forces where it was more difficult for Asian Americans and Pacific islanders to gain promotions. Do you believe this still exists?

Leonardo Tongko
00:52:06.300 --> 00:53:13.920
Yes, I do get a sense of what we call this “bamboo ceiling” … I’ve been fortunate that I’ve been able to move upwardly in my career … I think the gist is, it seems it’s very difficult for Asian Americans to breakthrough that ceiling and move on to the upper echelons even though we have probably some pretty good examples of Asian Americans getting to the highest levels like General Shinseki.

Leonardo Tongko
00:53:17.010 --> 00:55:46.350
I get that sense from my experience and my perspective when I was a young Air Force officer, part of our culture was [for new officers to be] very quiet. I was on the side, I just wanted to accomplish the mission and I just wanted to do well … I think that’s probably a contributing factor to why we have this perception of the “bamboo ceiling” … One of my teammates from the Air Force personnel actually showed the statistics of who was making what rank and in what proportion … For the most part, the promotion system … in the Air Force is actually pretty good and very fair … The bigger challenge isn’t so much when you get to this selection process, because the selection process goes through a rigorous way of looking for biases.

Leonardo Tongko
00:55:46.350 --> 00:57:27.540
The challenge is getting to a point where you have your records go into that promotion system. The notion of the “bamboo ceiling” occurs before your report is written. When you, as an Asian American, have a tougher time establishing rapport with your counterparts and with your leaders because you have a different perspective, I think that tends to create these unknown biases that they can’t see, but manifests themselves in other ways in how they decide who does what … It’s not to say we have to change who we are as a person in our culture.

Leonardo Tongko
00:57:27.540 --> 00:57:57.960
But it means having an understanding of what is that we do without compromising our values. I tell folks, “I need you to go out there and volunteer. I know it’s not the thing that you want to do because you just want to work hard at what you do, but you have to understand that these are the things that help get you recognized and show your value in other ways.”

Leonardo Tongko
00:57:57.960 --> 00:58:28.290
Sometimes, what we find in our best airmen is how well they do outside their comfort zone and also how well they do in a task that's different from what they have normally done. We just want to see if they are able to accomplish it, do well, and work with others. We, as a military culture, we value folks that are able to work well together and be good teammates.

Karen Lau
00:58:59.160 --> 00:59:12.330
Thank you for sharing your perspective. My next question is, what legacy do you hope to impart to future AAPIs and immigrants who will enlist in the Air Force? Do you have any advice for anyone who is just starting out in the military?

Leonardo Tongko
00:59:12.330 --> 01:00:31.410
I'll say service is the legacy I want to leave behind. I came into this, knowing that I wanted to serve and contribute back … [If] you signed up to serve, contribute first and foremost. Does it mean that things will get handed to you? We still have to work hard … You have to continue to be persistent. You have to have grit and perseverance and you have to work hard. You also have to know and understand the environment that you're working in and be mindful of not losing yourself … [or] changing who you are because your values and you as a person are enough. Nobody can take that away from you, but as long as you work hard, you remain a valued teammate.

Leonardo Tongko
01:00:31.410 --> 01:01:10.200
You create value for others because you're a good teammate. You step out of your comfort zone … Work hard, be part of the team, be humble, and ask a lot of questions when you're trying to learn and understand others if you're curious about what it is that you're doing.

Karen Lau
01:01:35.850 --> 01:01:44.430
That's great advice. My last question for you is, why should Asian American history and the stories of Asian American veterans be taught in schools?

Leonardo Tongko
01:01:44.430 --> 01:02:52.080
I think it needs to be taught in schools because we have to understand that there are contributions by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. That is part of our history and that's part of we are. So, I think it's important to be able to share that. More importantly, it isn't so

much just sharing history for history's sake. It's a sense of pride in knowing that, when we talk about this country as a nation of immigrants, a melting pot, there is diversity in our successes because of the diversity of lived experiences. The Asian American and Pacific Islander experience is part of that, and we need to acknowledge that and be able to learn from it.

Leonardo Tongko
01:02:52.080 --> 01:03:12.810
So, there have been painful things that have happened to immigrants in the past in our country, and [education] is not so much to throw it in people's faces that these things happened, but it's to make sure that we recognize and acknowledge contributions and then move forward together. I think that's important for us to be able to learn from that and continue to grow as a country

Karen Lau
01:03:12.810 --> 01:03:19.920
Thank you so much, Leo. Is there anything else that you wanted to share?

Leonardo Tongko
01:03:19.920 --> 01:03:27.060
No, I just wanted to say, thank you so much for putting this together. Being able to tell our story is important to do so. I think if we don't tell our story, we do ourselves a disservice by not being able to share what we know what it takes to succeed and what it takes to just be better members of the community, so I really appreciate the opportunity to do this, Karen.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Admiral Andrew M. Sugimoto
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 11, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Andrew M. Sugimoto is a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Coast Guard. He is the third Asian American and the first Japanese American to make flag rank. In this interview, he describes how his Japanese and German heritage has influenced his military service, the Coast Guard's missions of intelligence, security, and environmental stewardship, and the importance of remembering the history of Japanese Americans' service and sacrifice during World War II.*

Karen Lau
0:0:0.0 --> 0:0:7.330
Hi everyone today I'm here with Admiral Andrew Sugimoto. My first question for you is when and where were you born?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:0:8.550 --> 0:0:13.830
I was born in Redondo Beach, California in 1967.

Karen Lau
0:0:15.590 --> 0:0:19.230
Could you describe your childhood, upbringing, and your family, please?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:0:20.400 --> 0:1:5.950
My dad is Japanese, and my mom is German. I grew up in Southern California and in Germany. I'm a product of multiple different cultures. It was always very interesting having friends come over for dinner because we would have something very Japanese on the plate and then a little bit of German, so it could be like chicken teriyaki and sauerkraut on the same plate. My friends would just stare down at this thing going, "Well, I've never seen that combination before."

Karen Lau
0:1:5.950 --> 0:1:11.400
What motivated you to apply to the Coast Guard Academy and what was your experience as a cadet like?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:1:13.20 --> 0:2:1.500
I was a lifeguard and my guidance counselor who happened to be from a Coast Guard family, recommended that I apply for the Coast Guard Academy. I did, and I got in. It was tough, even though I had traveled extensively before, I got really sick my first year and I ended up doing two freshman years, which at the Academy, is the equivalent of doing two different boot camps. So, I had a tough time of it, but I got my way through it and graduated in 1990.

Karen Lau
0:2:1.500 --> 0:2:8.670
Does your family have a history of military service? If not, what was it like for you to be the first in your family to serve?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:2:10.360 --> 0:2:43.700
I am the first in the family to voluntarily serve. My father was one of the Japanese Americans in World War II that served in the Army along with my uncle. And then I had two other uncles who were part of military intelligence. One was stationed in Hawaii and the other one was stationed in Alaska along the Aleutian Island chain.

Karen Lau
0:2:45.580 --> 0:3:19.890
I think it's really fascinating that you have a history in your family of Japanese Americans serving the military. When I was writing questions and looking at your career, I was also thinking about the history of military intelligence, especially the Japanese Americans who volunteered or were drafted into the Army and helped with intelligence. So, my next question for you is, what does the history of Japanese American codebreakers and counterintelligence officers mean to you? Does this history motivate or inspire your approach in your role as the previous Coast Guard's Chief of intelligence?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:3:21.400 --> 0:3:32.360
Wow, that's a fantastic question and it is something very personal to me and something that I take a great deal of pride in that. My uncles directly participated in military intelligence and counterintelligence operations in that they were also there in rebuilding Japan afterwards. One of my uncles was there and helped with the MacArthur staff, basically helping Japan come back together again under the Marshall Plan. So that rich history makes it very personal. It almost comes sort of full circle when I was back in intelligence on my last tour of duty and got to see what they accomplished. [This history] allowed me to be where I am because of it.

Karen Lau
0:4:20.50 --> 0:4:31.330
Thank you for sharing. I now have more questions about the start of your military career. If you could go back to the start, what advice would you give yourself?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:4:35.110 --> 0:5:24.220
There is no substitute for the journey and there is no substitute for the hard work that will come along the way. Not that I took shortcuts or anything, but you often wonder when you're starting out, "What will this all mean? Why do I have to do entry-level work? Why can't I just jump ahead to something that perhaps interests [me] more than other things?" Each of those jobs that I had along the way provided the foundation for me to be a much better officer the more senior I became. So that journey and that hard work that you put into it is absolutely worth it in the end.

Karen Lau
0:5:24.220 --> 0:5:40.350
That's some great advice. Speaking of your journey, I think it's really interesting that you decided to go to law school, so I wanted to ask you what motivated you to attend the University of San Diego School of Law, and what was your experience going from being an active service member to a law student like?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:5:42.200 --> 0:7:2.980
First of all, I was still on active duty at law school. The Coast Guard paid for my way through law school and of course, when you're in San Diego, staying in San Diego, it's great motivation because it's a great place to be. The University of San Diego is a fantastic school, and I had a great experience there. I come from other lawyers in the family. My cousins were … pioneers. They helped develop the self-help law books and other things like that under a company called Nolo Press and always inspired me a little bit with how they thought the law should be equally accessible to everybody. And so, as they went through that journey, I wanted to become a lawyer. My emphasis was probably more on operational law and being able to enable Coast Guard operations as well as on the legal assistance side in helping fellow service members with any of the issues that they had. So those were some great outcomes of those three years of law.

Karen Lau
0:7:2.980 --> 0:7:13.220
I've asked service members who have attended both the military academies and graduate school this question. What was more challenging, your 1L year at law school or swab summer?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:7:13.830 --> 0:8:40.90
I don't want to do either one again. I think probably, swab summer. It's a great question. I think I was mature enough to understand the how hard it was and why it was necessary to really dig into the 1L year at law school. I don't know if I truly understood the mechanics and certainly isn't a great place to be indoctrinated and yelled at and all those other things that we did as young adults. You are trying to establish who you are as a person and everything else [while] having other people try to impose what they think is the picture that you should be is challenging … When I went to law school, I knew who I was. I had just come off command of a ship and was going to law school. It's a little bit different for me. It was not academics versus physical. To me, it was more in who I was as a person and developing.

Karen Lau
0:8:40.90 --> 0:8:58.660
That's an interesting perspective. My next question is, Admiral, you recently celebrated a change of command where you became the commander of the Eleventh U.S. Coast Guard District. What does this achievement mean to you and how was the transition from overseeing intelligence programs to missions across several states and waters?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:9:2.70 --> 0:9:58.260
This is where I started. So, when I was a high school student, I went down to see the very First Coast Guard unit. It was here in California. To sort of come full circle and then be the commander here and come every single day to work to support the frontline women and men that actually do the operations out on the water, saving lives, enforcing laws, protecting the environment, and ensuring our ports and waterways remain open and safe is a huge privilege. [There is] a certain amount of satisfaction in watching them do fantastic work every single day and making sure that they get what they need in order to carry out their missions. So, it's gratifying and a little bit full circle for me.

Karen Lau
0:9:58.260 --> 0:10:14.550
That's a great story of how you started at the Eleventh Coast Guard District, and now you're leading it. I have a question about the environmental stewardship operations. How are these operations in the Eleventh District different from Alaska and the Arctic Shield, and how are they similar?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:10:16.400 --> 0:11:46.420
Wow, another great question … In many ways, they're very similar. We take protection and environmental stewardship as one of our priority missions. You have some of the most pristine waters here off the California coast. There are a number of national marine sanctuaries in places where endangered species are protected. The same thing goes for Alaska, which [has] among the most pristine waters in the world. We make sure that the food basket, that strategic protein stock, all of those things continue to remain viable as well as protect the environment in other ways and make sure that it's there for generations to come. It helps the planet continue to heal itself and operate in the manner that it's supposed to. Operating in the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean is very much similar to operating off the California coast and in both places you can get beat up pretty good by the waves.

Karen Lau
0:11:46.420 --> 0:12:21.600
I think the environmental mission of the Coast Guard is what sets it apart from a lot of the different branches. In my sophomore year of high school, my first exposure to seeing veterans was this volunteering event at the Mystic Seaport where we had a lot of Coasties and members of the NOAA Corps pick up trash on their day off. It was really inspiring to see how dedicated they were. Being able to speak with them one-on-one, they told me about their mission of saving marine wildlife and battling climate change, which is also becoming one of the big issues in defense and foreign policy. So, thank you for sharing about that.

Karen Lau
0:12:21.600 --> 0:12:31.190
I have some questions about intelligence for the next part of the interview. How have military intelligence operations and technologies changed since World War II?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:12:33.410 --> 0:14:26.730
The fundamentals are always going to be the same, I think. That is, how do you apply what you have been able to gather now that how you gather may technologically have changed considerably? But taking it and then analyzing it and superimposing culture and the thought patterns and other things … which are so key to a deeper understanding of our competitors, that part remains the same. How we've collected those various different pieces of information has changed, and that could be because we've gotten better at overhead imagery, or we've gotten better at collecting signals or we've gotten better at human intelligence and techniques in that particular regard. The ability to measure different items across the board, all those things have been enabled. What is also very, very different is the amount of data that we get as an intelligence agency and the ability to then sift through that data in a very smart way. Through the

use of algorithms, artificial intelligence, or simple scripts and to be able to prioritize what is necessary to be analyzed by human rudimentary analysis done by AI and the ability to safeguard that data as a whole in the cloud environment, and to give access to the to our other partners so that they can also work on it, that part is absolutely revolutionary in the way we continue to move forward and we have to be very good at that because our strategic competitors are very good at it also.

Karen Lau
0:14:26.730 --> 0:14:30.300
Absolutely. I think the use of human intelligence is really interesting.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:14:32.560 --> 0:14:34.730
Nothing beats a human, that's for sure.

Karen Lau
0:14:36.720 --> 0:14:47.840
My next question is how have threats to national, economic, and cybersecurity changed since 9/11 and how has the Coast Guard's identification of and response to these threats changed?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:14:49.940 --> 0:16:27.920
One of the things that 9/11 taught us is that we no longer are protected by the two ocean moats that we learned about in high school … The idea that [if] a war was going to occur, [it] would occur someplace overseas, and yet somehow the homeland was primarily protected with the exception of perhaps Pearl Harbor, [is obsolete] by the fact that there was a terrorist attack on U.S. soil, the idea that cyber-attacks and others can reach in at any time to any part of our society and affect our daily lives. More importantly, those same applications could also then affect us economically and or the ability to ship goods, services and perhaps even more importantly, humanitarian aid around the globe. Those things suddenly come into stark focus when we realize we're no longer protected as we have thought by those oceans. Now that we have to look much closer at what's happening, [we have to think about] how we are protecting those systems and making sure that there is resilience baked into them so that if something does happen, then it could be because of climate change, … natural disasters, or a human attack, then we are able to still function and still be able to respond in the shape and way that we need to.

Karen Lau
0:16:27.920 --> 0:16:37.170
I think it's great that humanitarian aid has come into such a large focus, especially recently with the war in Ukraine, but it also has been part of the mission all along.

Karen Lau
0:16:37.990 --> 0:16:59.10
I've asked this question to a U.S. Army Major and a member of the Marine Corps, but as a veteran, do you have any thoughts on the Biden administration's withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan and the end to Operation Enduring Freedom? I'm not sure how much of an extent the Coast Guard played in the War in Afghanistan, but I just wanted to know if you had any thoughts.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:17:1.10 --> 0:18:0.730
As a sitting, active-duty officer, I'm going to stay away from the politics of the situation, but I will tell you that the Coast Guard was absolutely involved in Afghanistan, both in intelligence purposes as well as other support functions that we did, ensuring logistics for safe [transportation]. The Coast Guard has been in Iraq and many other different places. We have a patrol boat squadron that currently operates out of Bahrain, protecting the vital sea routes for oil and other things like that, and we continue to do whatever we can to meet our commander's intent to protect the national security and ensure safe commerce as it flows all over the place. So.

Karen Lau
0:18:0.730 --> 0:18:14.560
With oil, gas, and other fossil fuels becoming more and more of a danger to the environment, could you describe some of the Coast Guard missions you've prosecuted and led, including responses to oil spills and other natural disasters?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:18:15.790 --> 0:19:58.640
Absolutely. So, first of all, one of the things that we continue to work with in our industry around the globe is how do we reduce that dependence upon fossil fuel? How do we reduce the carbon footprint that is out there? We are looking at different fuel types for vessels so that we can still operate and have commerce ships but have less of a carbon footprint. We are looking at allowing wind energy to be a supplement and a generator of electrical power along the coastlines and separating the shipping channels out to give the at a safe space. There are a lot of these things that we are very supportive of in order to help continue to do what we can in terms of the environment. In my personal experience, I have responded to … multiple different hurricanes and national disasters, and obviously the primary concern and every one of those is the safety of human life first and then doing everything that we can do to clean up and get the environment back to where it is. That includes deep water horizon oil spills off the coast in any of the different places. Even if a vessel inadvertently [or deliberately] spills fuel oil or other things like that into the water, the Coast Guard tracks those things and continues to hold individuals accountable for it so that we can continue to meet the best environmental standards.

Karen Lau
0:19:58.640 --> 0:20:4.850
Could you just describe some of the search and rescue missions that you've participated in when you were serving aboard cutters?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:20:12.240 --> 0:21:40.470
If you read the book, *The Perfect Storm*, there is a storm mentioned at the very last chapter called the "Motherwell storm." I was a part of a very dedicated crew that went out and rescued the fishing vessel *Courtney Elizabeth* in that particular storm, and that was something that I will never forget, watching my fellow Coasties on deck doing everything they could to save those particular individuals and bring them back to safety into Newport, RI. I've stood watch and conducted a search and rescue missions in the Bering Sea. If conducted search and rescue missions off the California coast when a vessel caught fire. I've also conducted search and rescue missions down South in the eastern Pacific when fishermen have been caught adrift … If they happen to celebrate Thanksgiving or something like that, then there isn't going to be that empty chair at the table when the family gets together, and they actually get to sit down with their families. For me, that gives me a measure of comfort that we are able to return those individuals back to their family and that they can continue to go on and hopefully do good for mankind.

Karen Lau
0:21:40.470 --> 0:22:6.810
Right, those are definitely a lot of sacrifices and heroic actions that you and your fellow cuttermen have done to save these people and return them to their families. You've served more than 12 years at sea, and you describe yourself as a "proud cutterman." When you think about the history of Asian American cutterman serving since 1853 and your own experience aboard cutters, what comes to mind?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:22:6.810 --> 0:22:10.420
It is a life of sacrifice, but I want to emphasize the sacrifice of the families. They are the ones that are [left] behind, and we get caught up in our missions and we do those things, but they're the ones that have to deal with anything that comes in and the families don't choose to serve like we do. They become a part of this life. [During] hat separation and all the other things that that occur, the difficulties trying to juggle multiple different activities in school, work, and everything, they don't get a break during those time periods. I am always very mindful of the support of our families when we serve. I'm here because of a number of individuals that have gone before me and paved the path. I get to stand where I am and … had the experiences I got to have because someone else blazed the path for me, so I'm eternally grateful for their sacrifices

and their family's sacrifices in going to sea, and I hope to continue that long tradition of individuals that go to sea in order to help mankind out there.

Karen Lau
0:23:32.470 --> 0:23:56.480
Absolutely. I think it's very interesting to think about cuttermen who really look forward to going out to sea and the experiences that they faced. In my very first interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he describes finally going at the sea and going to Alaska after two years working in a vault and just keeping track of important documents and thinking that this is the adventure that he signed up for.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:23:58.380 --> 0:24:45.990
Being able to see a rainbow at night by the light of the moon, watching baby dolphins being born, taking the ship and shutting off all the engines because you're surrounded by a pod of 150 different whales when they're reaching all around you, seeing the sunrise or the green flash when it sets, or those other things that you don't get to see anywhere else on the planet and just understanding the vastness and the power of the ocean is an experience that not everybody gets to have. Those are some of the experiences that make it a very special life.

Karen Lau
0:24:45.990 --> 0:24:51.330
Do you ever feel nostalgia or miss these experiences even now that you're in such a high position?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:24:56.450 --> 0:25:57.0
What I miss is the cruise aboard the ships and the work, going out there and whether they're doing a search and rescue mission, law enforcement, protecting our nation, or protecting the environment, doing it with those unbelievably talented women and men who stand all around you and do that great work and you watch them just truly bloom and get into it. You count yourself lucky to be a part of that crew. That is something that I miss every single day. The only thing better is that I get to go home to my family every single night. But if you are going to serve, you are going to go out to sea. I hope you're lucky enough to get to serve with the Coast Guard women and men that are out there at sea. They are truly an exceptional bunch of individuals, and I missed that part every day.

Karen Lau
0:25:57.0 --> 0:26:8.520
I've heard from every service member I've interviewed that the military is a family. Do you have

any stories about your relationships and camaraderie with your shipmates and mentors aboard the cutters?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:26:10.880 --> 0:27:44.570
I'm very, very lucky. I think I am in touch with somebody from every unit that I've ever served with over the over the last 32 years. Quite unexpectedly, I was blessed to have my very first commanding officer when I was an ensign and just started out show up to my change of command at the Eleventh Coast Guard District. That was Rear Admiral John Tozzi. It was just awesome to see him again after so many different years, so many years to have them there and to go a little bit full circle in starting out brand new and then being here at the other end. It doesn't matter if they're enlisted or [retired] officers, being able to exchange books and reading lists, catching up on birthdays, and watching them retire or move on from the Coast Guard and do fantastic things [is universal]. I have another shipmate who just left a little while ago and got a note from him that he got into nursing school and is going to San Diego to pursue those dreams. It's just absolutely fantastic to see. It would be the same as you watching your cousins, brothers, and sisters go off and do something great. How happy you are from it is a pretty cool thing.

Karen Lau
0:27:44.570 --> 0:28:4.770
Thank you for sharing those stories. Among the different locations where you have served, including California, Alaska, Massachusetts, the Gulf of Mexico, and now the Eleventh District, which spans the California-Oregon border to Peru, what have been your most memorable experiences interacting with people and cultures?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:28:11.220 --> 0:30:6.450
Being there for the 200 anniversary of the birthday of Australia and watching them celebrate was amazing. Helping the natives of Alaska prepare for their caribou hunt and making sure they have life jackets on [was another memorable experience]. I have a picture of them all wearing their life jackets before they head out onto a Caribou hunt. Being able to help them with key equipment for their sustenance and hunting and going to Peru and Ecuador and talking to the fisherman there [were other significant interactions I've had]. I've been throughout the Caribbean in a number of different places and seeing how humanity has adapted and universally pursued fishing and other [survival methods]. What is apparent to me and what is something I think that is a key enabler for the U.S. military, for everybody here is our acceptance of the diversity of thought. It doesn't matter where you are from, what you believe in, or what you identify as. You come in with a different experience than the next person and you [have] the ability to harness all of that diversity of thought together. That's how we overcome these really difficult problems and how we are able to continually succeed over the last 232 years of Coast

Guard operations. But [as a] nation, [that goes] even further. To be able to do all that is one of our strengths and one of the things I think is incredibly important to remember.

Karen Lau
0:30:6.450 --> 0:30:39.240
I completely agree that we're at our best when we embrace all the cultures and diverse perspectives among our people. Previously, you've served as a staff judge advocate and practiced operational law, military justice, and legal assistance. Could you tell me about your experience practicing military law and what lessons from your time at the Academy and aboard cutters have helped you in this arena?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:30:39.240 --> 0:32:23.60
Academically, you can boil anything down to a black and white rule. What the operational side has taught me is that you also need to inject common sense, though with the law and real-world experiences, and you need to put it together to be able to deliver an answer to the operational person who has the legal question so that it's legal, ethically, and morally right. This supports the way I'm doing operations. Simply coming in and saying "yes" or "no" in the black and white fashion does harm to the legal program. It does harm to the operational program, so you need to truly understand what the customer needs and wants to do, then focus on how to get there legally, ethically, and morally in the right direction. We have an obligation as law enforcement agency as was mandated by Alexander Hamilton from the very beginning to treat our fellow Americans as fellow Americans and not anything else. To approach it in a very pragmatic manner, not be overbearing, or try to use positional power or law enforcement powers to change [the law] is a key part of doing that and making sure we get it right. We are all human beings. How we treat each other as such a key component of that. When you apply the legal rules to it, it shouldn't be a surprise. It should be the right way for the right reasons moving forward.

Karen Lau
0:32:23.60 --> 0:32:42.470
It's often said that justice is blind, but I've always felt that the experiences and heritages of people really help them navigate challenges, especially in the law. So, I was wondering, as an Asian American lawyer, how has your identity shaped your ideals of justice and equality?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:32:46.950 --> 0:34:7.60
My father was one of the Japanese Americans who was uprooted from his home and was taken away. My grandfather's business was taken away. They were put into [an incarceration] camp. Their rights as U.S. citizens were taken away and then he was shipped to Arkansas. The idea that those rights are fungible or that somebody thought that those rights were fungible was one of the

main reasons that I became a lawyer. Those rights are for everybody no matter what, and it doesn't matter what the situation is and who your opponents are. Those inalienable rights are just that inalienable. We must protect that for each and every one of ourselves. Now, it doesn't mean we don't protect ourselves because our opponents will take advantage of the society that we've created here, but that is our core identity. That is who we are and to make sure that that doesn't happen again, that is absolutely one of those pillars on which I stand as a lawyer.

Karen Lau
0:34:7.60 --> 0:34:35.800
Thank you for sharing about the experiences of your father being incarcerated during World War II. I was wondering if you had any thoughts on the military's role in the Japanese American incarceration camps during World War II, especially how there were military leaders who were directly responsible for putting Japanese Americans in camps, and they were never really punished for this.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:34:35.800 --> 0:36:39.630
That's a tough question because when you look to all of the different avenues of the government that came together to enact the law [and] the appeals … they all worked in concert at the time to make it a lawful general order. It doesn't mean it was right, and obviously it's the only one of the few times that the government has ever apologized to a populace. So, we have evidence that it is not right even from the government's point of view, but at the time, those individuals that were simply carrying it out to do their job because all those other steps have been taken. It's kind of hard to fault them to a certain extent. I'm assuming that they treated [the Japanese Americans] humanely, that they didn't beat them up, that they weren't malicious, that they didn't take away to the extent maximum extent possible, the dignity, the respect, and everything else afforded to a fellow human being. Those that did take that away, of course, I have a problem with that. In the totality of it, it makes it a very difficult thing to fight with, which is why when you talk to that generation, my father's generation, the idea that the motto for the [442nd Regimental Combat Team] then became "Go for broke," meaning, "We were going to be more American than the Americans. We are going to show everybody, no matter how difficult it was, that we had every right to be a U.S. citizen and prove it as such." That's what drove the greatness for the unit.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:36:48.510 --> 0:37:45.600
Blind following of orders is not the right thing, but in the totality of it, when you have to look at it in that manner, how do you push back on it? It takes something that I'm not sure the nation had at that particular time to deal with. So, what I do know is that for many people and many other Americans, neighbors took over the land and farms. They took care of it while the Japanese were

in camps and then turned it back over to them when they came back … It was many, many years later that they received some minor compensation for [their incarceration].

Karen Lau
0:38:17.550 --> 0:38:54.580
I think one of the most inspiring periods of World War II was the resistance by Japanese Americans like Fred Korematsu, who fought against Executive Order 9066 and refused to have their civil rights and liberties get taken away. Throughout my years, I've often heard the phrase, "dissent is patriotic," that you can love your country, but also believe that what it's doing is morally unjust. So, I was wondering what you think of patriotism and that phrase, "dissent is patriotic."

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:38:57.210 --> 0:39:51.590
I believe it's foundational to the United States. We started out in dissent to the king. We started out in dissent to the Church of England. We started out as individuals that wanted to manifest our own destiny and move out … When you have that executive order and then Korematsu's [resistance], absolutely they are brave. That is what I was talking about in terms of bravery and pushing back. But when the Supreme Court and others all line up … dissent is kind of hard when every avenue of the government is pushed in in the U.S.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:39:53.820 --> 0:40:0.850
I think dissent is absolutely at the very core part of it. When we talk about taking in different opinions, you have to take in the opinions that you don't like either, the dissenting opinions. Otherwise, we're all going to think alike, and it defeats the whole purpose of what we were talking about all the way through. You have to acknowledge it and hopefully learn. Figure out why they are dissenting. Peaceful demonstration is absolutely a very important and critical part of the United States experience. To be able to do that, to change civil rights, to change human rights, to change workers' rights, all those things have been accomplished because people stood up and dissented. I applaud it absolutely every day.

Karen Lau
0:40:52.460 --> 0:41:19.140
With what you brought up of people dissenting and protesting [issues] that were unjust, I'm thinking about how during your childhood, the Vietnam War was [happening] and there must have been so many protests [happening] in the West Coast … Do you remember any of that and did that help you think about going into the military at all?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:41:19.140 --> 0:42:3.160
Yes, it was actually a balance. Wow. You're the first person who's ever asked me that question. My mom grew up in Germany during World War II and was bombed and strafed by the British. My dad had his experiences that we've already talked about. For both of them, war was the absolute most important thing ever. Don't get me wrong, they had tremendous respect for the military … but they never wanted the world to see another World War II. That was born out of their experiences.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:42:3.160 --> 0:43:13.430
As my cousins were growing up and the Vietnam War came along, they were a part of both the protests and support. The political spectrum in my family stretches the whole gamut of it. I have a cousin that absolutely protested and decided to go to Canada, and I respect him and his decisions and all the other things he stood for. He stood on his principle. He chose to dissent. He chose to do it in a peaceful manner, and he chose to sacrifice for it. He couldn't come back to the United States for many, many years because of it. That is all born out of out of my opinion that the sacrifices [made by] my dad's generation in order to make sure that the United States was [free] and those things we call freedom, liberties, patriotism, or rights, that they have the inalienable right to those things.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:43:14.840 --> 0:43:44.600
As a as a serving member and an officer in the military, I abstained from the politics of it all, but those things are imbedded in our oath. When we raise our right hand and we swear the oath to serve, it's against all enemies, foreign and domestic. It doesn't just say outside. So, we have a duty and a responsibility to uphold the Constitution. And they take that very, very seriously.

Karen Lau
0:43:47.570 --> 0:44:3.0
Speaking of upholding rights both at home and abroad, during the pandemic, there has been an increase of violence against the Asian American community. How has this affected you and have you used your voice to speak out against the anti-Asian hate in any way?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:44:4.670 --> 0:44:8.700
I actually created a couple of different ways that we did this. We did listening sessions. We provided support groups to individuals that were affected in the military as well as at the Coast Guard Academy. As a whole service, we provided some listening sessions and support that we created to help those individuals deal with what's going on. In many cases, [the hate] didn't stop

just because it was the pandemic. Just last week, there were two different attacks that were carried out against Asian Americans and so I don't want to say that this is in the past. This is an ongoing [issue] and we must continue to push back against hate in every form so that everyone can enjoy their existence here.

Karen Lau
0:45:14.420 --> 0:45:38.170
It's great that you were able to organize listening sessions and support the mental health of Asian American service members, especially with all the existing stressors that are already in their life and now having to worry about the safety of their family members, who they are separated from at home. I think one of the best ways to counter this violence is to increase the visibility of Asian Americans.

Karen Lau
0:45:39.480 --> 0:45:45.760
I know that the Coast Guard and other branches in recent years have taken a lot of strides to diversify their ranks. In some of my interviews, the idea of the "bamboo ceiling" has been brought up, [the notion] that historically, it's been more difficult for minorities seeking promotions in the Armed Forces. Do you believe that the "bamboo ceiling" still exists?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:46:4.770 --> 0:47:53.930
I don't think so. My boss is Vice Admiral Andrew Tiongson, and he is the proud son of a Filipino senior chief. And now he's a three-star Admiral, one of the six most senior individuals in the United States Coast Guard. There are other flag officers [who] are Asian American. We are a product of those individuals that came into the service though 30 years ago. The number of individuals during the time period of dealing with the Vietnam War and the aftermath, how many of those individuals saw the military as a viable path as a [career] or saw an individual that they could identify with? We're still dealing with some first, but the good news is we are dealing with firsts, right? So that Admiral Tiongson is the first Asian American three-star in the Coast Guard. I'm the first Japanese American Admiral. People can see themselves in the future in those [positions]. When we look to the academies like the Coast Guard Academy … close to 40% of the incoming class last year was Asian American. That means if you look out into the future, when those individuals achieve flag rank in the time period that we had, [it will become] normal.

Karen Lau
0:48:10.50 --> 0:48:17.500
As the first Japanese American to make flag rank [in the Coast Guard], do you have any advice for students who aspire to be the first at something?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:48:21.380 --> 0:50:0.600
I will tell you that there are probably three things that if you do these three things, I'm pretty sure you can achieve anything that you want to. One, you have to have a positive attitude. It has to be positive in that it's infectious. It drives everybody else around you. If you see the positive possibilities, everybody else will around you will, too. And so, showing up, being happy, greeting people, treating them with respect, all those other things change the very dynamic of the workforce around you. Two, there is no substitute for hard work or the journey. You've got to work. There is just nothing that will change that, and you have to be willing to do long, hard hours. There is a sense of satisfaction that comes from it as well and you get confidence. And finally, you can't let a problem block your way. You have to be innovative and that's where things like continuous learning, acceptance of divergences of thought, all those other [ways] you look at the problem [come into play]. As we have talked about for the for the lawyer piece, you find a way that's legally, ethically, and morally the right way forward, no matter what is standing in your path. And then you go through it. If you do those three things, you can achieve anything you want to in this life. It doesn't have to be in the military.

Karen Lau
0:50:0.600 --> 0:50:22.800
I think in about just under a minute you made the best graduation commencement address that could ever possibly be made, so thank you. My next question for you is what legacy do you hope to impart to future Asian Americans who will enlist in the Coast Guard, and have you served as a mentor to ever any service members?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:50:22.800 --> 0:51:47.190
Yes, I don't know if I'm a good mentor. You have to ask them, right? But I try to dedicate a good portion of my week to many, many different individuals and helping them. I just had a mentoring session. I met somebody for coffee, we talked for an hour and a half this morning. I have another one tomorrow scheduled to talk about emotional intelligence and the aspects that it brings to a leader. I think as a leader that is absolutely your obligation to help pave the path for everybody else around you. I guess that's my legacy. I think the most important thing is that my boys are proud of me, and my wife is proud of me. I see [myself] more as a good person than whatever rank I have on my shoulder. As long as I'm a good person and I can go through life that way, that's okay with me. And that could be as a janitor or it could be as an Admiral, it doesn't matter. Being a good person is by far one of the most important things.

Karen Lau
0:51:47.190 --> 0:52:6.190
I feel very grateful that my students in the future will be able to hear these pieces of advice from

you, but I know that across the country there are so many students who won't be able to. So why do you think that Asian American history should be taught in schools, especially the stories of Asian American veterans?

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:52:9.300 --> 0:53:49.370
The reason [AAPI history] should be taught is that we are stronger when we're all together, and if you only learn about half, then you've only learned half the situation. When you look at Asian Americans and what they've done in the medical field, in the military, as astronauts, or in business, we have an amazing legacy that has been blazed by our individuals. At the very, very beginning, some of the most profound seafarers were members of the Asian naval services, whether it was Korea, China, or Japan. And as they set sail around the globe, that's our legacy as well. To simply not recognize that or not incorporate that as part of who we are as Americans is a … disservice. Every one of those individuals that helped blaze the path so that we can be where we are right now, recognizing them is part of the manners of our profession, what we like to say in the Coast Guard. We should and need to acknowledge their sacrifices because we are better today because of the many things that they have done for us. So, we need to teach it. We need to acknowledge it. The nation should be proud of it.

Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto
0:53:49.370 --> 0:54:21.0
If you look at the simple story of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, one of America's most decorated units, how can you not be proud of the stories and their accomplishments? [Being proud of them is] not just because I'm a Japanese American or a descendant of individuals that served with that particular unit. That's simply by being an American looking at the great things that they had done. That is a legacy that they and many others have laid for us. I look at other individuals in the military like General Nakasone, who heads up the NSA, there is a towering intellect that has led us in so many different ways. We are safer as a nation because of him, and we can learn a lot from his path of dignity and character that he has led. I hope that inspires other people to continue to look into Asian American history and to understand the legacy that is left by the richness of those many veterans that have served.

Karen Lau
0:54:45.530 --> 0:54:52.810
Thank you so much, Admiral Sugimoto. It's been such a pleasure to get to learn about your story and to have this conversation with you today.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Eva Van Camp
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 10, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Eva Van Camp is a Korean American Captain in the U.S. Coast Guard. In this interview, she describes her family's military history, the importance of mentorship and diversity, and her leadership of search and rescue missions and responses to natural disasters.*

Karen Lau
0:0:0.0 --> 0:0:5.430
Hi everyone. Today, I'm here with Captain Eva Van Camp. Thank you so much for being here, Captain.

Eva Van Camp
0:0:6.610 --> 0:0:7.520
Thank you for having me.

Karen Lau
0:0:9.200 --> 0:0:11.650
My first question is when and where were you born?

Eva Van Camp
0:0:12.560 --> 0:0:25.240
I was born in South Korea in 1974. I was adopted and came over to the States when I was about 18 months old.

Karen Lau
0:0:28.280 --> 0:0:31.700
Could you describe your childhood, upbringing, and your family?

Eva Van Camp
0:0:32.870 --> 0:1:56.920
So when I was adopted, I was adopted by Caucasian parents. I was the first of four children adopted from South Korea. My dad had a house up in Maine with his parents, and so he brought my mom. They both grew up in Connecticut, and then they ended up settling up in Maine. That's where I spent my entire childhood up in the woods … It was [near] the Canadian border as you head up towards Montreal and Quebec, I grew up there with my three other siblings that came

along shortly after. We grew up in an all-Caucasian town. We were the only minorities except for one African American and we were the only minorities I think within the northern state of Maine. We didn't think anything of it originally, but as I got older and started playing sports and traveling around the state, [I realized] I was different, and people weren't necessarily nice about that. Kids can be really cruel at times and so I [experienced] a fair amount of discrimination early on. However, I wanted to leave that area and go on and do bigger and better things. That's where I ended up joining the Coast Guard and I've been open to a whole new world of life and diversity out here in the Coast Guard.

Karen Lau
0:1:56.920 --> 0:2:2.910
Does your family have a history of military service? If not, what was it like for you to be the first to serve?

Eva Van Camp
0:2:3.750 --> 0:2:45.510
My family has a military history, and my dad was retired Navy. He was active duty and then reserved for most of my childhood, my grandfather's Army, and my uncle is Navy … My parents really encouraged me to look at some of the service academies as an option because the finances and also because of the great opportunities following the Academy. So, I do have some military history and I'm very happy. Once my dad realized what the Coast Guard was about, he was very proud of me being in the service and being in the Coast Guard.

Karen Lau
0:2:45.510 --> 0:2:53.120
It sounds like they might have been an Army-Navy rivalry in your family, especially when there's football games at the Academies.

Eva Van Camp
0:2:53.580 --> 0:3:9.950
There's a lot of different rivalries. We had the Navy and the Coast Guard. You know, we're the "Puddle Pirates", "shallow water folks," and all kinds of fun rivalry [jokes]. When it was all said and done, we were all proud to serve our country. That's why we joined our respective services.

Karen Lau
0:3:12.430 --> 0:3:15.570
Could you tell me about your experience as a cadet at the Academy?

Eva Van Camp
0:3:18.730 --> 0:3:48.740
I had to go to NAPS first, so I graduated from high school and went to the Naval Academy Prep School in Newport, RI. I was there for a year and then went into the Academy. I had an adventurous time at the Academy. I had a lot of great summer programs where we went out and experienced the field. I went through the academic rigors and the military rigors at the Academy, and it was okay. I will say it was a lot different back then as a female [cadet] at the Coast Guard Academy. It's gotten a lot better. If somebody would ask me a few years ago if I would have my daughter go to the Academy, I'd probably say "no." But now things have gotten a lot better since I went through 20-plus years ago, so I would definitely not encourage her because I wanted to choose where she wants to go on her own, but I'll show her different opportunities. I made some really good friends at the Academy when I graduated. I came out and I've had a great career. I still keep in touch with a couple of my best friends. We're coming up on our 25th reunion back at the Academy this year, so it's pretty exciting.

Karen Lau
0:4:34.30 --> 0:4:37.600
What was the hardest part of the military lifestyle for you to adapt to?

Eva Van Camp
0:4:40.130 --> 0:5:9.640
So I'm a pretty organized person and I grew up in a military family, so I don't think initially it was too hard to adapt, but I think the biggest thing was realizing and trying to fit into an organization that is predominantly white male. We're only still about just under 15 percent females in the Coast Guard and even less than that for Asians. So, I think that has been an area where I have worked to integrate better, to share my background, and share who I am. Even though I look Korean, I don't speak Korean and I hate kimchi. But there's a lot of other things that I bring to the table, and I've learned about my culture over the years, trying to adapt to a service where again, there are not a lot of females like there are now. It's great that we have the incoming class with 43 percent women, and we've been graduating high classes. When I went through, we were just middle of 25 percent or so females. So, we've come a long way and I'm hopeful. I look forward to the next generations and what we see coming into the Coast Guard looks very positive.

Karen Lau
0:5:55.490 --> 0:6:0.140
If you could go back to the start of your military career, what advice would you give yourself?

Eva Van Camp
0:6:1.990 --> 0:6:32.400
Get more mentors early. Back when I was at the Academy, I didn't have very many people to talk to. It was a somewhat lonely experience, I would say. Now at the Academy, there's a ton of people that come through there that do mentorship and do sponsoring. I mentor a lot of cadets. I have over several years and you see a lot of senior officers, junior officers, coming through the Academy. Now you see enlisted members coming through that work there and things have changed … Looking at where I would want to change my career, [I would] get more mentors because I was kind of all over the place with what I wanted to do initially. I think if I had a little bit more guidance, I would have done a little bit better in structuring my career. I wouldn't change anything for the world now. My career has been fabulous, but I have picked up a lot more mentors and actually advocates. In life, you also need to have some advocates for you. I've been able to pick up some [advocates]. Even as a senior officer, I talk to my mentors all the time.

Karen Lau
0:7:16.180 --> 0:7:19.510
Could you describe your first tour of duty aboard the Cutter Laurel?

Eva Van Camp
0:7:20.430 --> 0:8:4.500
It was basically me and one other female that reported aboard. It was our first tour with all males on board and … I learned a lot. I made a lot of friendships and mentors. I got some mentors on there and some colleagues that helped me through the first tour. But it was challenging. Coming out of the Academy, it's a whole another world of responsibility I had to adapt to as well as maintain my work lifestyle, which took some time, but I was able to [do it] fairly quickly.

Karen Lau
0:8:4.500 --> 0:8:13.260
Could you describe some of the search and rescue missions you participated in across your career, including the response for the Deepwater Horizon[1] spill in 2010?

Eva Van Camp
0:8:14.80 --> 0:8:45.470
So I've been doing search and rescue since a long time ago, back when I was in the District 7 Command Center in 2001. Search and Rescue is what I love. That's like my bread and butter, just coming in and saving lives when I can. Unfortunately, that's not always the case, and in my current job my I have to talk to family members if we can't find their loved ones or we find them

[1] The BP Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, killing 10 people and causing 134 million gallons of oil to spill into the Gulf, becoming the largest offshore oil spill and one of the worst environmental disasters in U.S. history.

deceased. The hardest job is talk to the family members, but it's the most important job. I started [search and rescue] back in 2001. I've worked through that in different jobs throughout my career. If there's one most exciting, star case, obviously it would be Deepwater Horizon. That was way beyond just search and rescue. That big incident covered a lot of different areas that the Coast Guard and other agencies have grown from. There was loss of life and there was the pollution side. We had to focus on the media, the local Congressional inputs and issues that we had to overcome there. I think that it definitely put me on the road map in the Coast Guard. It gave me a huge experience, not only on the search and rescue side, but the law enforcement, the instant management, the pollution side of it, and everything in between. So, I think in some of the hardest cases, I tell people this all the time. I really focus on boating safety and cold-water safety. That's my message especially here up in New England because people don't realize how fast the currents move and how cold the water is at all times a year.

Eva Van Camp
0:10:8.380 --> 0:10:39.710
I mean right now, it's pretty warm here in the summer but in the winter, people can only live sometimes for 15 to 30 minutes if they end up in the water depending on what happens in their circumstances … [There's] an art to search and rescue. It's not just one cookie cutter and one program that shows you how to find somebody. It's a lot of different pieces that come together. We find missing swimmers. We unfortunately don't find swimmers. Throughout COVID, there were a lot more people going to the water and not just by boats. A lot of them are going out on paddleboats, kayaks, or paddle boards. So those are all very interesting cases. We encourage folks to call the Coast Guard as soon as you have a situation where you're unsure if someone's coming back because the longer that you wait, the harder it is. At night it's even worse. So those are some of the thoughts on the search and rescue side.

Karen Lau
0:11:10.420 --> 0:11:23.690
Thank you for sharing. Throughout your career, you've been stationed in many places, including Florida, Virginia and New Orleans. What have been your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and the cultures at these places?

Eva Van Camp
0:11:25.490 --> 0:11:49.0
In Miami, it was very challenging because I didn't speak Spanish … I think it was okay to fit in down there. It was not that hard because there was pretty decent diversity. When I was in in New Orleans, it was a little different because not only was I Yankee, but I was also Asian. There was a huge population of Filipino and Vietnamese down in New Orleans, but those were fishermen. They weren't like the mid-grade or senior executive folks. I got some grief from folks, a little teasing about how I was Asian down there and also being from New England because they are

very southern, Cajun, New Orleans type people. That took a little bit of overcoming. But what I will say is, throughout all these places that I've been, I've learned a lot about the different cultures and for the most part, the Coast Guard is pretty respected. Throughout wherever we go, we have a humanitarian mission, so people will respect our job and our position and overlook what we look like on the outside.

Eva Van Camp
0:13:11.710 --> 0:14:25.450
Some of the challenges is the inclusivity. We are a snapshot of society, so when you come into an organization, adjusting and bringing stuff to the table is how I've overcome some challenges. It's taken a long time for me to build confidence, coming from a small town in Maine and just being thrown into a military service and then learning how to work with … the predominantly white, male service that we're in and showing what value I have to bring to the table. It's taken a lot for me to be able to stand up and talk to people about my experiences. I haven't had necessarily the best experiences at all times in my career, but they've made me stronger and a better leader. I'm able to share [those challenges] with other folks, other women particularly, and other Asians about how to overcome them and how it's helped me to become a better leader.

Eva Van Camp
0:14:25.450 --> 0:14:56.110
Look at the Academy. I had a couple of really close friends … and that's one thing we talk a lot about it. The classmates and those friendships that you build are going to last a lifetime. Back then, you don't really believe that you're just going through some rough times. When you go through those rough times, that tends to bring people together and [we] become a team and a family. I've met amazing people throughout my career. I spent a couple years on a Navy ship and that was my Coast Guard station tour. It's a lot different than being in the Coast Guard when you're on a Navy ship, but I was very well respected. I had great commanding officers. I traveled the world on the Navy ship. I'm unlike a lot of people. I've actually traveled the world in several jobs of my Coast Guard career. I've been to the Western Pacific, Europe, Australia, pretty much almost all the continents except for Antarctica. But I really love … meeting new people, seeing the different cultures, being able to bring a service to their nation, helping other countries when they are building out their own coast guards [with] their own folks and their training … The people that I've met even later in my career, the people that work for me, everyone brings different perspectives, different backgrounds, but it's how we figure out the strengths of each other [that] make this a better organization.

Eva Van Camp
0:16:13.230 --> 0:18:3.440
I spent a couple years in governmental and public affairs when I was at headquarters, working for the Director of the Coast Guard, and it was very eye-opening. I always thought it would be

interesting to serve on the Hill and in Congress there, but I didn't think I had the personality. So that job gave me the opportunity to be close but not be in the throes of it. But I got to learn a lot. [As a result of] my operational experience that I could bring to the table when I went into Congressional and public affairs, I understood what the operator was looking for. I understood some of our concerns out here in the field now that I've been in Congressional affairs. Now, as a sector commander back in the field, I'm able to use a lot of the important relationships and knowledge that I gained from being in a Congressional affairs role to bring awareness to the Congressional members here in Connecticut, to be able to show them how important the Coast Guard is, what our value to the nation is. When I went in there and when I came back out, I was extremely helpful. I also learned a lot about social media and public affairs and how to navigate that because in the age that we live in … everything's public information. And so, how do you get in front of social media and media issues when you have a search and rescue case or when you have a national security incident? I learned a lot on that job and have been able to apply that coming out here as a secondary commander.

Eva Van Camp
0:18:3.440 --> 0:19:3.740
So my first master's degree was an MBA back when I was in Miami. To be completely honest, that was for promotion purposes. I knew I needed to accomplish that and get a check on the block, so to speak. I didn't really think much of it when I was going through. I knew I needed to get it and so I got it before I had a family and got busy with life. I didn't realize until about a few years later that when my husband and I got married and we were trying to be located together in the same area that it would come into play. So, I was selected to be a base controller and that was a finance job. The only reason why I got that job was because I had an MBA. What I tell a lot of young folks is you never know when you might need that education or when it comes into play. And so that was my first masters and then I went to the National War College a few years ago at National Defense University in D.C.

Eva Van Camp
0:19:3.740 --> 0:20:18.520
And I didn't really want to go back to get another master's degree. I wanted to go to a think tank like Brookings or Rand, but I was selected to go to the National War College … I embraced that opportunity, went in there, and learned so much … about strategy. I really believe now I can punch above my weight class when it comes to strategy in the Coast Guard … By having a National War College degree and being able to talk about domestic and international … affairs, I'm able to … be part of the discussion, whereas before that master's, I was not always part of the part of the discussion or at the table, so it's been very helpful to have those master's degrees.

Eva Van Camp
0:20:18.520 --> 0:20:59.30
I've had a lot of challenges. As a senior officer now, I'm working hard to share those lessons and speaking openly about my experiences. If I could just help one person at a time, it prevents something from happening or helps someone recover from a situation, that's where I want to take my experiences and that's why I continue to serve. I could retire anytime, but I continue to serve because I want to be that role model and that mentor for others that are coming behind me.

Karen Lau
0:20:59.30 --> 0:21:4.340
How has your identity as an Asian American shaped your ideals of patriotism and service?

Eva Van Camp
0:21:6.0 --> 0:21:18.380
I grew up in a Caucasian family with a lot of military [service]. And so, I have always been very patriotic. I know that unlike others, I was adopted and … was always already ingrained with the patriotism. I didn't have to adjust too much there. So, I would say it hasn't been too much of a difference for me in my life. I've always grown up in that environment.

Karen Lau
0:21:41.800 --> 0:21:50.300
In my past interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he described a "bamboo ceiling" in the Armed Forces. Do you believe this still exists today?

Eva Van Camp
0:21:52.210 --> 0:23:22.700
So I think there is a ceiling I would say both as a female and as an Asian. There have been no female Asians selected for flag rank or Admiral. There is still a ceiling … I look up and I don't see anyone that looks like me, I never have. I also know that it's very challenging to get certain jobs because other folks like me have not been in those jobs before. There are studies that show that ducks pick like ducks when they go select folks that they're comfortable with working around. So, I'm trying to overcome some of those challenges. I really work hard, take care of my people, and worry about my people over anything else and the service that I've provided to the nation. Hopefully, the rest will fall in place. But I definitely think there's still a ceiling out there. I would say with our new Commandant, things are getting better, and she has a very optimistic outlook. I know we've come a long way on the diversity and inclusion part of the Coast Guard. But I think we still have room to grow and continue working in different programs, whether it be the Women's Leadership Initiative or the Federal Asian Pacific American Council to promote [diversity] and help our folks learn, be mentors, and get [promoted] to senior ranks.

Karen Lau
0:23:24.790 --> 0:23:28.670
Is there a certain rank or goal that you would like to achieve by the end of your career?

Eva Van Camp
0:23:30.490 --> 0:24:34.500
Well, I've already gotten way beyond what I've ever dreamed of. I really thought I was going to do my five years and get out of the Coast Guard and move on. But tour after tour of the fantastic life I was leading and having within the Coast Guard, here I am 25 years later. Do I have a goal in life? I think it's just mostly to be happy and take care of my people. I'll take care of my family, enjoy my family as much as I can, because at the end of the day, my family is going to hopefully still be there, but the Coast Guard will move on. I just want to be able to provide what I can to the nation through my strengths. Would I like to have make Admiral someday and be the first female Asian Admiral? Maybe. But that's not why I put on my uniform every day and come to work. I have goals and aspirations. But again, it's more to take care of my people and give them what they need.

Karen Lau
0:24:34.500 --> 0:24:40.50
What legacy do you hope to impart to future Asian Americans and women who will enlist in the Coast Guard?

Eva Van Camp
0:24:41.260 --> 0:25:43.860
You can do anything. Coming in, I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know where I was going or how I was going to make it in the Coast Guard. I think anybody coming in the Coast Guard is great because you can do anything in the Coast Guard unlike other agencies. The Coast Guard has a very inclusive environment … We have a small population of Asians in the Coast Guard, but it's growing … with the 43 percent incoming class at the Academy. We graduated, I believe 33 or so Asian Americans last year from the Academy … So, I would say come in, do what's going to make you happy, stay as long or stay as little as you want but try to enjoy every day.

Karen Lau
0:25:46.360 --> 0:25:53.470
My last question for you is why should Asian American history and the stories of Asian American veterans be taught in schools?

Eva Van Camp
0:25:55.560 --> 0:26:25.20
It's important for people to see others that have gone before them. When you look up, you want

to be able to say, “Hey, I can do that. I can be that person. I can be successful. I can be that Admiral. I can be that CEO, whatever it may be.” So, I think it’s important for people in school to learn about Asian American history and how impactful it has been to our nation. I mean, looking back at the wars, looking back at our history, Asian Americans have played a significant role throughout every war throughout time and in our military services, so we should understand that, embrace that, and learn from it. I really appreciate all that you’re doing and your passion behind this project because it’s going to help the future better understand where we’ve been and where we need to go.

Karen Lau
0:26:50.800 --> 0:26:54.510
Thank you so much for doing this interview, Captain Van Camp. It’s been great to learn about you.

Eva Van Camp
0:26:54.940 --> 0:26:56.420
Thank you. Thanks for having me here today.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Mara Langevin
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 8, 2022

*Summary: Mara Langevin was the first minority, female pilot and Asian American, female pilot in U.S. Coast Guard history. In this interview, she describes her Japanese American and Cherokee heritage, her experiences throughout her Coast Guard career in flight school and aviation as a female pilot, and her current work in humanitarian assistance at USAID.*

Karen Lau
[00:00:00]
Could you state your name and your position, please?

Mara Langevin
[00:00:03]
My name is Mara Michelle Langevin and currently, I am a humanitarian assistance advisor to the military with the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

Karen Lau
[00:00:15]
When and where were you born?

Mara Langevin
[00:00:17]
I was born in Southern California, Hollywood, on August 20th, 1969.

Karen Lau
[00:00:25]
Could you describe your childhood, upbringing, and family?

Mara Langevin
[00:00:29]
I am the youngest of five children, so I have two older brothers and two older sisters. My mother was from Hawaii and my father was from Arizona. They met when my father was in the Navy, stationed out in Honolulu, Hawaii. My oldest brother and my sister and my other sister were born in Hawaii. And then when my parents moved to Southern California, my other brother and I were born, and it was a great year. We weren't very well off. My mother was a teacher. My father had some various different jobs. At one time, he was working for Litton Corporation, working on the spacesuit, and other times he was a substitute teacher … I had a humble upbringing, but it was great to have my brothers and sisters in the house. We always had a full family in the house all the time. So, it was a good upbringing.

Karen Lau
[00:01:40]
Thank you for sharing about your childhood in your family … You mentioned that your father was a veteran, and he was stationed in Honolulu. What was it like for you to follow in your father's footsteps? Could you tell me about your father's service as a U.S. Navy Korean War veteran?

Mara Langevin
[00:02:03]
My father was born in Arizona, and he joined the Navy in 1951. So, it was a few years after World War II had ended and the Korean War had started in 1950. He and his friends from high school wanted to join the military. So, one of his really good friends joined the Marine Corps, and he wanted to join the Marine Corps as well so the buddies could stick together. But his father did not want him to join the Marine Corps because he thought that that service was a lot more dangerous, seeing much more hand-to-hand combat. But he did allow my father to join the Navy. And so, my father joined the Navy. He always wanted to be a pilot, and he got into the aviation field. He enlisted. So, he wasn't an officer, but he ended up being an aviation's postman's mate in the Navy, which is basically a plane captain who takes care of the pilot's plane, pulls them out of the hangar, gets them started, gets them ready, does the engine checks, all those types of things. So, he was on an aircraft carrier during the Korean War, and that was his position. When I was growing up, he always loved planes, loved movies about dogfights and aircraft. We used to watch this show called "Baa Black Sheep Together," which was about Marines in World War II and the War in the Pacific. It was very much a dogfight, pilot-on-pilot type of movie. I enjoyed watching it with him. I enjoyed the flying scenes and the aviation. So, part of the reason why I went into aviation was because of my dad.

Karen Lau
[00:04:04]
I was just going to ask you if your father's time as a plane captain had inspired you to join flight school. When you told your father that you were accepted to flight school, what was his reaction?

Mara Langevin
[00:04:18]
He was very happy. I told him on the phone because I was in the Oregon at the time. I think he was very happy. He was a tough, tough guy. Back in the day, they didn't really show a lot of emotions. From what I gathered on the phone, he seemed like he was really happy for me.

Karen Lau
[00:04:45]
You mentioned that your mother was a schoolteacher. I read in an article by Dr. Thiesen that she expected all of you and your siblings to get full scholarships to college. What was growing up with that expectation like?

Mara Langevin
[00:04:57]
Yeah, that was a little bit stressful. We had modest upbringings, not a lot of money growing up in our household. She was a teacher, wanted everyone to go to college, but didn't have the funds to pay for everyone. So, it was expected that if you go to college, you would pay for it out of a scholarship. So, we all had to do well on grades, we all had to do well on our SAT tests. And it was a lot of stress because my sisters did their really well on their grades and their SATs. My brothers were not as good. But my oldest brother actually went off to the Air Force right away after high school. So, he ended up not going to college right away, but did go after his service in the Air Force. My other brother got a scholarship, actually. He went to the Coast Guard Academy. He got a scholarship there and then got medically disqualified for his vision, which was really sad, but then did end up getting a scholarship to USC for ROTC, Navy ROTC. We were all fortunate enough to get a scholarship. My oldest brother went to school afterwards. I think he might have used the GI Bill to get his college degree.

Karen Lau
[00:06:32]
Out of all the military academies, you decided to attend the Coast Guard Academy. Why did you make this decision? Could you tell me about your experience as a cadet and a student-athlete?

Mara Langevin
[00:06:44]
Yes, I did apply to all the academies. I did not get into the Air Force Academy. The Naval Academy said that they would accept me if I did one year of Naval Academy Prep School, which is called NAPS. So, I would have to do five years at the Naval Academy. The Merchant Marine Academy, West Point, and the Coast Guard accepted me. I thought about the missions of each service, really wanting to fly. Since the Air Force didn't accept me, I was like, "Wow, I'm not sure if I want to fly Navy missions for what the Navy did or the Army because their main mission is to shoot down and kill people." I think with my personality, the Coast Guard's [mission of] saving lives is much more suited for me. So, I ended up going to the Coast Guard and I was glad I did because it was a wonderful mission. The aviation part of it, the search and rescue, was really exciting and really rewarding.

Karen Lau
[00:07:55]
That's wonderful. What was the hardest part of the military lifestyle for you to adapt to? I've heard so many horror stories about Swab Summer. Could you tell me about that?

Mara Langevin
[00:08:04]
For me, there were a couple of things that are really difficult. One was being in an environment that was mostly male dominated. So, in our class, we were like 10 percent female and all the female cadets were kind of stuck in the same room together. So, I think

there was like four of us in one room. First of all, it's summer and the rest of the male cadets, fourth class cadets, they were just two in a room. [A challenge other than] being in this male-dominated culture … for four years [was] time management, managing your time because you have to balance your schoolwork with your military education, like your military indoctrination. If you wanted to do sports, which I decided to do, you had very little time to juggle. I'm sure regular colleges are very similar with sports and academics, but then throw in another aspect of your military indoctrination and education, waking up at reveille, going to bed at Taps, certain times of the day, meals at set times, and managing all that together. The time management piece was really a hard thing to do initially.

Karen Lau
[00:09:38]
If you could go back to the start of your military career, what advice would you give yourself?

Mara Langevin
[00:09:43]
Yeah, I had to think about this question quite a bit. I think in retrospect, especially knowing that I was going to be the first Asian American female and first minority female pilot, I think I would have been prouder of who I was and maybe sharing more of my background, heritage, and culture with people. My way to survive in that environment was trying to fit in and assimilate to the environment. [I didn't try] to stand out [or] bring attention to [myself] so I'd be part of the ranks of the troops. That was the way I survived. I felt that was the best way to get through the hardships of the academy life. In retrospect, I think maybe I should have been more proud and more open and educated people on what's it like to be an Asian American or what my heritage is. I think if I could go back in time, I would tell myself that.

Karen Lau
[00:11:00]
I've heard similar responses from the female veterans that I've interviewed about how they wish that they, at the beginning of their career, wouldn't have just put their head down and did what they were told, that they would have expressed themselves more and hadn't been afraid to be themselves.

Mara Langevin
[00:11:15]
Yes, very similar feelings.

Karen Lau
[00:11:18]
What was your last position in the Coast Guard before you retired?

Mara Langevin
[00:11:22]
I was an instructor pilot and a standardization and structure pilot, which is over at the Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama. As a standardization instructor pilot, we take all the pilots from the fleet from various different air stations and we educate them, train them, and then exercise them on the Coast Guard aviation standards, making sure that every pilot can fly at every air station and understand what the rules are, how to do the procedures and what the aircraft limitations are. Everything is standard within the Coast Guard and all the emergency procedures are conducted in the same way, so that if you're flying with somebody from a different air station, you can still communicate and know how to fly the aircraft. It should be seamless … Everybody flies and uses the same rules.

Karen Lau
[00:12:34]
Could you describe some of your experiences during your first tour on the Cutter Resolute?

Mara Langevin
[00:12:39]
On the Cutter Resolute, that was my first tour. I was an ensign when I got to Astoria, Oregon, which is where the Resolute was. I was the only female aboard the 210-foot cutter. I believe there were maybe 100 folks on the ship, and I was the only female. That was a little challenging because [I didn't] have anybody to relate to or to talk to. It was similar to the Academy here in this male-dominated place, and I just had to fit in. We did a lot of fisheries patrol. In that area, Washington, Oregon, Northern California coast, and sometimes Alaska, we did a lot of patrols, law enforcement, making sure that people were following the fisheries laws, [ensuring that] they're not overfishing or fishing endangered species. We did some search and rescue on the cutter, and we did a couple of patrols down south where we did more law enforcement type [missions], looking for drugs. I was a deck watch officer, so my duties were to drive the ship during special detail. I was a maritime law enforcement officer. I would go out on these boardings, on these fishing boats, talk to the captain, make sure they had all the safety equipment, go down in the fish holes, and check the fish to make sure they were fishing the right species, which was, a lot of times, very awful because it was stinky, and I was seasick. Some of the times, [I was] dealing with older men who saw [me as] a little girl on the ship, because at that time I was 21 and I'm short in stature, not an overbearing personality. Sometimes, fishermen thought they could push me around because of being a woman, being younger, [and] smaller in stature.

Karen Lau
[00:14:58]
It's interesting that you brought up even in your service assignment, that you were being surrounded by men and it was male-dominated at the time. When I spoke with an U.S. Army major, she said that when she tried to find a mentor, the person that was above her said that his wife wouldn't be comfortable with him mentoring her. Did you have any of those conversations?

Mara Langevin
[00:15:22]
No, I didn't. I think that idea of mentoring was pretty new when I first got in. I didn't really look to find a mentor. It was more, just do your best and if there's somebody who's a good leader that you want to emulate, just talk to them, try and emulate them. There wasn't the term mentorship. I think there might have been, but it wasn't something that at least is now very much taught at the Academy. [Now, people can] find a mentor, find someone to help them, and find someone you can talk to and relate with. It wasn't that popular when I was in. There were a few women pilots who came aboard. Sometimes we had AVDETs, which are aviation detachments. For the ship that I was on, we had one 8865 helicopter that would stay on the back for the entire patrol … For that patrol, they would work with us … If they had a female pilot, she would stay with me. So, I met a couple of really neat female pilots while I was on the cutter, and … when I became a pilot, there were some really impressive female pilots in the Coast Guard who I thought of as my mentors at the time.

Karen Lau
[00:17:00]
In 1993, you were selected for flight school. What were your initial thoughts upon learning that you were selected and what was the flight school training like?

Mara Langevin
[00:17:09]
Oh, I was ecstatic. When I found out I got flight school, that was like my dream come true. I always wanted to be a pilot. I didn't have to be on a ship anymore and get seasick all the time. I think [I had thoughts of] "Oh my gosh, am I good enough for this?" [There was] a little bit of self-doubt initially. [Then, I thought], "I got what I wanted and now I got to really work hard, excel, and get my wings." There was a pressure for me to not only get through, but [also] to excel.

Karen Lau
[00:17:53]
What does the achievement of becoming the first minority, female aviator in the Coast Guard mean to you?

Mara Langevin
[00:18:01]
Now, when I found out, it was kind of a shock. I didn't realize that I was the only female, minority pilot … I did a diversity talk at the Coast Guard Academy for a diversity weekend. That was great. I guess it's a little bit of pressure, too … I'm glad that I ended my career in a positive light for other coaches and especially the aviators. I can imagine if I was still in, it would be a little bit more pressure to be the excellent pilot … but I'm ecstatic that I can help others, too. I've talked to a few people at the Academy, and they were so excited to have someone to relate to who is the first or in that position. When I gave that presentation to the Academy, they could relate to my stories. I'm happy that they had someone to relate to

because back in the day, I didn't have many people that I could relate to. I'm trying to mentor a pilot, she's an Asian American pilot as well, and I keep in touch with her. That's really great that she reached out to me, and I can talk her through my experiences as a flight student, try to help her get through the process, and be someone there that she can talk to, relate to. But she's killing it. She doesn't even need help from me. She's doing great, but that part of it is really fun and exciting to do so.

Karen Lau
[00:20:05]
It's incredible that you're able to give back and be the person for somebody else that you didn't have back then.

Mara Langevin
[00:20:12]
Yeah, that's really special. That's really a neat feeling.

Karen Lau
[00:20:17]
At a similar time when you were in flight school, there was an African American, female student who unfortunately wasn't able to finish. Why do you think it took so long for there to be minority women pilots? What kind of challenges do you think they faced that made them leave?

Mara Langevin
[00:20:36]
In the Coast Guard, since it is a seagoing service, and the focus is on ship driving and search and rescue. However, a lot of it is shipboard search and rescue. Aviation isn't for everyone. It's a difficult mission. It's a difficult job. It really takes a desire to be a pilot. Maybe part of it is the culture of the flight instructors. Early on, I know that in some services where it was more of a male-dominated area [like] aviation was, women were not accepted. In the Marine Corps, I had a friend who was the first female pilot in the Marine Corps, and … it was very hard for her. There were pilots who did not want her to be there, didn't think she could do it, and didn't think she was strong enough, but she proved them wrong. I think there might [have] been a culture between back in the day of men thinking that women couldn't do this because aviation was so difficult. I don't know why they thought a woman couldn't do it because I mean, physiology says that women can be better fighter pilots because of the way our bodies form. We've got the same brain men have. There are very intelligent women who can do the same thing. It's that that old way of thinking, maybe it's fear. Maybe they think if women start entering this field or minorities start entering this field, it's going to take away their jobs. I have no idea what took so long.

Karen Lau
[00:22:49]
I think that's kind of a similar mindset that people had when the combat arms exclusion ban was lifted, and women were able to go into direct combat. Now we know that there are some positions that women are specifically better at than men because they're allowed to go into villages in Afghanistan, where in those cultures, men aren't allowed to approach or speak to women at all.

Mara Langevin
[00:23:12]
Right, right, the female engagement teams in the Army.

Karen Lau
[00:23:24]
Since you made history, there have only been two Asian American, female Coast Guard officers who have earned their wings, Susan Walters in 2008 and Adriana Gaenzle in 2012. How does this make you feel?

Mara Langevin
[00:23:39]
I was kind of shocked when I heard that. I thought there might be more. I thought at least from what I've seen in the Coast Guard in general, there's a lot more Asian American Pacific Islanders in the Coast Guard. Even when I went to the Academy, we were one of the [larger] minority groups within the Coast Guard. I thought there would be more, but I'm not sure why. It just could be because the Coast Guard is so much more of a seagoing service. And people when they join the Coast Guard, they look to being a ship driver or a ship captain. There are so many other things that the Coast Guard does, too, that could maybe draw the AAPI people towards that type of job.

Karen Lau
[00:24:43]
After you earned your wings, could you describe some of your search and rescue missions in the HH-65A Dolphin helicopter?

Mara Langevin
[00:24:51]
The primary mission for aviation is search and rescue. When you're stationed at the air station, you're on call for 24 hours with the heavy-duty pilots, and you're just ready to take the call when some ship goes down or someone's in distress. That's probably most of what we do. We also do law enforcement missions sometimes. Like I mentioned before, those are on the back of the ships as an aviation detachment. We would go out with the ships and do fisheries patrols or drug ops. There are specific aviation units that are solely drug law enforcement operations. I really enjoyed the Aids to Navigation missions that I did in the Coast Guard where we helped service lighthouses and marker beacons. I had a really good

relationship with the head navigation person down in Honolulu. I'd lower them down on this small rock where there was a nav aide. We had a really good relationship, and he would serve as the nav aid, and I'd bring him back up and I would take him out to the lighthouse. Those were always fun missions for me. We also had some missions where we worked with the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] (NOAA), and we would monitor marine mammals. In Hawaii during their migration season when they're giving birth to their babies, the humpback whales are all over Maui, off of Maui, and sometimes boats get too close. We would monitor the boats, [prevent them from] harassing the whales.

Karen Lau
[00:27:02]
It's great that you worked with NOAA. They do so much to protect marine wildlife and the environment. In the story of your first rescue, you describe the moment where you had rescued a pilot who then asked you where the pilots were and didn't really believe you when you said you were the pilot. How did this moment make you feel and were there any moments similar to this in your later rescue missions?

Mara Langevin
[00:27:24]
Yeah, I was a little annoyed. I mean, here I just picked him up and saved his life, and he was he didn't believe that I was a pilot. At first, I was a little annoyed and shocked that he didn't believe me. But then, I was thinking about how he just got rescued, maybe he's tired, maybe he's a little shaken up. I kind of thought it was funny after that and kind of blew it off, but it was typical. He wasn't the only one. There are a lot of other people who when I introduced myself, I'd come up in the flight suit and I had my wings … so that only can mean [I'm] a pilot. I don't know what they thought I could be if I wasn't not the pilot. I suspect they thought I was like the flight nurse or maybe a mechanic. It happened quite a bit. People didn't believe that I was a pilot. There's a stereotype of pilots, at least when I got in, [that pilots were] tall and male … So, if you don'' fit that stereotype, then you obviously can't be [a pilot]. I think today is a little different, maybe I'm hoping.

Karen Lau
[00:28:51]
Not every pilot looks like Tom Cruise.

Mara Langevin
[00:28:52]
Exactly. There you go.

Karen Lau
[00:28:55]
You talked about your time as an instructor pilot in Mobile, Alabama. Could you tell me about your experiences at the Coast Guard's Aviation Training Center and what was it like to teach students the ropes?

Mara Langevin
[00:29:08]
It was an important mission. It was sometimes very nerve-wracking because you take a pilot who just got their wings, and they don't know anything about the aircraft. Part of what we did there in Mobile at the Aviation Training Center with the pilots that just got their wings is train them in the aircraft that they're going to be flying in the fleet. They know once they get their wings that they're going to be helicopter pilots and they're going to be 1860 pilots or 65 pilots. So, I took the 65 pilots who had not stepped foot in [the] HH-65 before, and I taught them how to fly the aircraft. I was their first look at the aircraft, the procedures, the emergency procedures, and how to fly the bird. It was important that I got everything right, everything textbook, because once you go in the fleet, you have to assimilate into that air station wherever it is. Everybody should know how to fly that aircraft in the fleet. So, it was an important job. It was scary at times, but it was really rewarding, too, because you're training your fleet pilot to do the right thing.

Karen Lau
[00:30:25]
That's amazing. In your different service assignments, what were the biggest challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?

Mara Langevin
[00:30:40]
In my first service assignment, I think one of the biggest challenges on the ship was seasickness, just being able to get under way and maintain my composure as a deck watch officer, as a combat information system officer, when I'm feeling like crap. Where I was stationed in northern Oregon … we got underway in the Columbia River, and we hit the bar probably 20 to 30 minutes out of our port and it just starts. The Columbia River bar is very dangerous and it's very choppy. It can be very choppy. And so, you get sick right away. So, I guess maintaining composure when you're just feeling awful and you're waking up in the middle of the night to stand watch and being professional all the time … I felt as being the only woman on the ship, I had to be very professional and not give anybody any idea that … I was helpless or the woman who couldn't do something. I always had to be professional even when I was doing bad. I always had to be the leader.

Karen Lau
[00:32:13]
What do you recall about your relationships and camaraderie with your fellow service members throughout your career?

Mara Langevin
[00:32:20]
They helped. On the ship, I had some junior officers who were kind of like older brothers to me who I could talk to and who understood me. At flight school, I had friends who were going through the same thing I was going through, and we commiserated together. Even at

the air station, I had two really good friends who I can always lean on and always talk to. For the most part, nobody really cared that I was an Asian American female or a minority female.

Karen Lau
[00:33:35]
Throughout your career, where have you been stationed and what were some of your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and their cultures at these places?

Mara Langevin
[00:38:13]
When I was in the Coast Guard, my first duty station was Astoria, Oregon in the Pacific Northwest. It was a very small community and a lot of people within the community had Scandinavian or Finnish heritage. At the time that I was there, if you weren't blond haired or blue eyed, then you might get people who would tell you to go back where you came from when you enter into a store. But for the most part, there were many lovely people there and they had Scandinavian festivals in the summertime which were really neat. I learned a lot about that culture that I didn't know about. Then, I was stationed in Florida for flight school. Being in the South was an also another experience that being a minority, you sometimes get people who say comments under their breath about you and you don't know exactly what they're saying, but you can kind of tell what they're saying. I got to go to Mardi Gras in New Orleans for the first time, which was very interesting. I met my husband in flight school so that was one of the perks of being there in Florida. And then I went to Hawaii, and that was a great experience because my mom's from Hawaii and I had relatives there. The people in Hawaii are very diverse. There's a lot of different Asian cultures there, so I actually fit in completely in Hawaii and people even thought I was from Hawaii and local. I love the food, I love the culture, and that was easy. Then I went back to Mobile, Alabama, which was similar to Florida, the southern culture and Southern hospitality, but sometimes not for everyone. And the food was great … I ended up leaving the Coast Guard right out of Mobile, Alabama, moving back to Honolulu, Hawaii. And I've been there ever since. In my current job, I've been to several different places, deployed to Kuwait.

Mara Langevin
[00:43:04]
Under my current position as a humanitarian assistance advisor to the military, I was sent to Kuwait on a deployment to support the Iraqi internally displaced persons response. Kuwait is a very interesting country. It's a majority Muslim country and the women wear complete black burqas. They don't cover their faces but pretty much everything else is covered and the men wear white robes … The women eat in one place together and the men eat in another place together. You don't see them out together too much. It was a very different culture from the American culture. But I was on that specific response, and I had three months there. It was a learning experience for me in the Middle East, [learning] how people in the Middle East view different cultures, the sexes within their cultures, and different diverse groups within their culture.

Karen Lau
[00:44:32]
Throughout your Coast Guard career, do you have an estimate of how many missions you went on and how many students you've had?

Mara Langevin
[00:44:41]
The missions? I have no idea. It's probably quite a few. I know that I kept a logbook and I have over 1,500 flight hours. A mission is two flight hours. You got to do the math on that. But I did have the number of lives saved in my flight book and I saved 21 lives. It's a very proud number. I can remember that one.

Mara Langevin
[00:45:16]
I'd say new students, probably about ten. And then we would also get fleet pilots who had experience, who just needed to refresh themselves on certs or emergency procedures. And those we did more frequently. So, we would bring them in the simulator and then we'd give them all these emergencies that you can't simulate while you're actually flying because they're too dangerous. And so that was probably about 20 or 30 or so, I was only there for a year and then I got pregnant and had my son, so I had to take some time off.

Karen Lau
[00:45:58]
How have your service experiences affected your life and what have you learned about yourself during your service?

Mara Langevin
[00:46:06]
I think my service experiences have shown me that I can do things that maybe I thought I couldn't do. Sometimes, my confidence in myself is low and I'm not sure where that came from because I've been able to do quite a bit and accomplish quite a lot. But I think the service experience has helped me realize that if I really work hard and put my mind to something, that I can do it … That's taught me that if you really are motivated to put your mind to it and work hard, it might not always come easily like it comes to some other people but try not to compare yourself to other people. Try to look at what you're given, the talents that you have, work with what you got, and just do the best you can.

Karen Lau
[00:47:05]
Could you describe the day you retired from the Coast Guard? What were your emotions like and how was the readjustment to civilian life?

Mara Langevin
[00:47:13]
I didn't technically retire. I was discharged. You only retire after 20 years of service, and I got out at 10. When I did make the decision to leave the Coast Guard, it wasn't easy. I just had my son, and I was wondering if I wanted to continue flying, continue with the pace of life that you have as a duty pilot or an instructor pilot, and then try and raise my kids at the same time. I think I made the right decision for me. I decided to get out, raise my children, and do something else afterwards. I really miss it. I am not going to lie. I do miss being a pilot and flying search and rescue, but I wouldn't trade my kids or the experiences that I had as they grew up in that, the early years, for anything.

Karen Lau
[00:48:15]
Could you describe your experiences working for the Center in Excellence and Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance and the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance? How is this experience different from being active duty?

Mara Langevin
[00:48:30]
For the Center for Excellence, it was the first time for me working as a civilian and not in the military. It was still a military organization, though, so there was the hierarchy and reporting to another oath or higher authority and understanding and working with military units. It was very much similar to what I was used to as being in the military. The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance is completely opposite of the military. It is all civilians. Most of the civilians that work there have either been in the Peace Corps or worked for a non-governmental organization or humanitarian organization. So, it's like the complete opposite of the military. It was actually pretty refreshing, although some things are frustrating because the military is very efficient. There's always a standard operating procedure. People give orders. The hierarchy is very clear. In USAID, it's not quite as clear. It can be very bureaucratic. It's more of a consensus. Let's have a meeting and come to an agreement together. [It's not the format where] the leader makes the decision, and everybody follows it. It's very different … I think it's needed because in USAID, we work a lot with non-governmental organizations and U.N. organizations, and they're very much like that as well. So, it we can relate a little bit better at USAID because of the way we function with the people that we are, we work with, and we fund.

Karen Lau
[00:50:28]
Today, we see that militaries around the world are getting more and more engaged in humanitarian aid, especially with the war in Ukraine. We can see that giving weapons as aid is just as important as delivering necessary supplies and medical assistance to the people in these countries. So, my next question for you is why is the mission of humanitarian assistance so important and why is it important to you?

Mara Langevin
[00:50:52]
I think humanitarian aid is critical, and I think it's important not just to give that lifesaving assistance like food, water, and shelter immediately after somebody has experienced a disaster or a conflict. But it's also important to give them the tools that they need to be more resilient to a disaster and more self-sufficient to respond to their own needs. The foreign assistance you're giving, making regions strong, is not something that USAID does at all. We focus on humanitarian assistance, like the lifesaving assistance. But we also work in steady state where there if there is no disaster or if there is not a crisis at the time. We work with governments, and we work with non-government organizations to boost their capacity so that should there be a future disaster or a conflict, they're able to provide that needed assistance to the vulnerable populations and the people in need. It's critical. It frustrates … the Department of Defense because it's a longer-term commitment and you don't see the results quickly. And I think a lot of the military is focused on results [and needs] to see something happen right now. But the approach that USAID takes is they will provide immediate assistance if it's lifesaving and if it's needed. But we're also working on like a longer-term goal and we don't want to do something in the near term that might affect our outcomes in the future.

Karen Lau
[00:52:34]
What was your experience supporting internally displaced people in Iraq in 2009?

Mara Langevin
[00:52:42]
It was an eye opener. It was culturally very different than what I'm used to. It was very frustrating to understand the politics of what was going on in that specific situation. There were people internally displaced from the conflict that had happened there between ISIS and the Iraqis in 2014, 2015. There were people who were living in [Internally Displaced People] (IDP) camps, who needed assistance … I learned that the government … is responsible for taking care of these people, but a lot of governments don't take care of their own people. And they were forcing … internally displaced people in the camps to return to places that were not safe for them to go because they didn't want to manage camps. It was an election year and people were saying, "We have too many camps. We want to get rid of these camps." The government was trying to shut down these camps and there was no place for these people to go. Their homes were destroyed, and they were forced to live in the community that they came from. The people there would see them as ISIS sympathizers and want to hurt them. So, it was really a frustrating situation that we couldn't do anything substantive for these people. We try to work with the government, we try to work with the U.N., but ultimately, the government of Iraq is in charge of the people, the citizens in their country, and they have the ultimate say. It was very frustrating, but I still felt like we were trying to do good, and we were helping them with the little assistance that we were providing.

Karen Lau
[00:54:36]
Currently, you coordinate the DOD support to disasters in the Asia Pacific region as an adviser to the Geographic Combatant Command. How has this experience been?

Mara Langevin
[00:54:48]
Yeah, that's it's been an interesting experience also … The DOD is very results-driven, and they focus on what can we do now to make change. It has to be immediate change especially with what's going on in the world geopolitically, [especially with] the focus to Asia, the shift to Asia in the U.S. government, the security situation, the defense situation [in] Asia. We're seeing DOD wanting to use humanitarian assistance more as a tool to gain acceptance rather than to actually help people they want to give humanitarian assistance to. Helping other countries and doing good [will] maybe help the other countries see who the ideal country is … There's the big competition with China. China is also getting into humanitarian assistance in the Asia Pacific region. Do you want to be the first [country] to give humanitarian assistance rather than China so that we can look like the better country, the partner of choice? It's been challenging because U.S. works to provide assistance based on need, not based on politics. Yes, we are a government agency and sometimes we have to do things the U.S. government tells us to do, but the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance specifically tries to work within the humanitarian principles, ensuring that aid is given to those who most need it. It's been challenging sometimes working with the government and DOD.

Karen Lau
[00:56:54]
As an Asian American working on the DOD support to the Asia-Pacific region, do you have a special approach to these response missions, or do you feel a more personal connection to the people in these regions because of your heritage and your ethnicity?

Mara Langevin
[00:57:12]
I think maybe I do even though I'm half Japanese American and Japan rarely needs assistance from the United States. I don't normally see a lot of work in in Japan, but I think I know the Asian culture. There's a lot of similarities between the different Asian cultures and … I feel some type of affiliation with the people that I'm working with. A lot of times, I'll go to countries, and I'll be mistaken for that culture. I've been to the Philippines, and they think I'm Filipino because I'm half Asian, or I'll go to Korea, and they think I'm part Korean. I think maybe I get accepted a little bit more when I go to those countries because I look Asian.

Karen Lau
[00:58:26]
What is your vision for your future in humanitarian aid? Is there a specific goal that you'd like to accomplish by the end of your career?

Mara Langevin
[00:58:33]
I would love to continue working with the U.S. for a few more years and then maybe work for an NGO and actually go at the field-level. In my current job, I'm working strictly with the military … [as] the liaison with USAID … when the military provides military assistance. My goal is to be a work at the field level, helping the actual people in need and working to help them be more resilient. I think that would be my goal in the future.

Karen Lau
[00:59:17]
That's a wonderful goal. For the last part of the interview, I have some questions about your identity as a Japanese American and a Cherokee American. When I think about the history of Japanese American veterans, the first word that comes to mind is "patriotic," especially when I think about the 442nd Infantry Regiment and their service in World War II, and all of the veterans that served even when the Army was segregated. When you think about the history of Japanese Americans in the military, what comes to mind?

Mara Langevin
[00:59:48]
I think the "go for broke" 442nd Infantry Regiment is the most famous one. We had our Senator from Hawaii, Senator Inouye, who was part of the 442nd. They come to mind first and it's just so motivating. When you realize that they were fighting for our country, who was [incarcerating] their own family members, it's really hard to imagine or fathom that. But the fact that they still did it and they fought so heroically is really inspiring and motivating. It's always something you can turn to when you are feeling a little segregated in your own country. You look to them and you're like, "Wow, they got through what they were [going through and they were] able to do it." Most of them got the Medal of Honor. They were just heroes … You hear about the Navajo Code Talkers[1] in World War II as well. They were a big part of that war and winning that campaign. So, the whole Native American history, too, is like fighting for a country. [The colonizers] basically wanted to take them out and completely obliterate them from the country so that they can give the land to their different Western settlers. I think about that often and it's hard, but I still think the ideals of the United States, the larger ideals of democracy and the right for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, are important … Those are things worth fighting for, but we have to remember the past. We can't forget about it or pretend it didn't happen. You know, it's scary, the [incarceration] of the Japanese. I was thinking about what happens if we go to war with China? With that the climate today, I can see that same thing happening to Japanese or Chinese Americans … because the whole thing that happened with COVID and it's very scary … We have to be a voice for [history] and make sure that never happens again.

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[1] The Navajo Code Talkers were a group of 29 Navajo men who served in the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II by creating an undecipherable code based on the Navajo language. During the Battle of Iwo Jima, the Navajo Code Talker Marines transmitted over 800 coded messages successfully, contributing to many successes in the Pacific Theater.

Karen Lau
[01:02:41]
That's why I think Asian American studies are so critical at this point, when we just had an administration that explicitly spewed violence and hateful sentiment against an American community, a community that has constantly served the U.S. And when I think about Asian-American veterans, I immediately think of Senator Tammy Duckworth and her speech just after January 6th. She said that she was serving the U.S. no matter who the Commander in Chief was, no matter if she voted for them or not. So, I think that sense of patriotism is so unique to Asian Americans. Could you share some of your experiences with your own culture, learning about and celebrating Japanese and Cherokee culture and history?

Mara Langevin
[01:03:33]
When I was younger, I lived in Southern California, and we were fortunate because it is diverse there and there were a lot of different festivals. I remember my mother taking us to one dance festival, which is a huge Buddhist Japanese festival that would have Japanese dances with the lanterns, music, and taiko drumming. It was just really a neat thing. I remember they would have all different types of Japanese food and games that the kids in Japan would play. We would dress up in kimonos … I remember her getting me a fan because it was a dance that you had to use a fan with … We took karate. She did not teach us Japanese language … Now, in retrospect, we were upset because that would be really neat. My dad took me to powwows. So, it's interesting how very similar the festivals [are]. They have a circle dance in the [Japanese festivals]. The Cherokee are the Native American community where you also have a dance. There's drumming and music and you're dancing around the circle. It's a community building thing … The kids would get together and do the sand paintings … In our house, we had one room that was very much my mother's Japanese room, which had Japanese [items] in it and dolls. In my father's room, he had Native American paintings and carvings of bears and totems. It was really neat because you're going one room and you're in one culture and you go to another room, another culture. So, I always thought I was lucky to have that. I associate myself at times with the Japanese culture, and then I sometimes associate myself with the Native American culture.

Karen Lau
[01:05:53]
Have you been able to pass down these cultures and traditions to your children?

Mara Langevin
[01:05:58]
I have tried while my kids live in Hawaii. There's a lot of Japanese cultural events that we go to. We've been to parades; we've been to festivals. There are tons of excellent Japanese food in Hawaii. I've taught my son how to make ramen and how to make sushi. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of Native American [culture] in Hawaii. They do have a powwow every year, and I did take my kids when they were a lot younger, but I haven't taken them lately. But my son actually was able to take Native American religions in college, and he really enjoyed that

… [There are] Native American cultures in the Southwest like California, Arizona, and Nevada, [but] we don't see that as often as we see the Asian and Japanese culture in Hawaii.

Karen Lau
[01:07:07]
Since your children live in Hawaii, do you have any thoughts about the U.S.'s colonization and annexation of Hawaii [as someone who has] served the U.S. military, which has historically been very colonial and imperialist, especially towards Asian and Pacific Islander nations?

Mara Langevin
[01:07:25]
The way we annexed Hawaii was very similar to the Native American situation. I'm not Native Hawaiian, but I do have friends who are, and I have a cousin who is. There's a lot of people in Hawaii who are still angry about that, and they have protests. There are people who are so against the protests and think, "That's so long ago. It's past history. Why are they still worried about that now?" It's still part of their culture. Who knows what would have happened if they were able to keep their land? You never know. One of the most recent protests was the Mauna Kea[2] Observatory. They wanted to build another observatory on one of the mountains, which is sacred to the Hawaiian people. There were protests up there. There were people who were saying, "That's silly. There's already an observatory up there. Why are they making a big deal about building a new one?" But that's their culture. This is their land. We took that from them. I think we need to be more sympathetic to their needs and what they're feeling … I don't know the right answer to be more sympathetic to them or what to give … but I know that we can't ignore it. We can't say it's silly. It's not silly to the Hawaiian people. They've got very valid concerns and very valid history against what happened to their people.

Karen Lau
[01:09:28]
I think those are the same arguments against building the Dakota Access Pipeline, intruding on sacred land and interfering with the spirit of this community. How has your identity as both a Cherokee American and a Japanese American affected your ideals of patriotism and service?

Mara Langevin
[01:09:52]
I think when I was younger, [my identity] had little effect to it. I was very much patriotic and wanted to serve my country. As I get older, I find out more about the truth of what happened,

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[2] Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano located on Hawaii's Big Island and the world's tallest mountain, has been the site of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) protests against constructing telescopes since October 2014. In Hawaiian traditions, the mountain is an ancestor to the Native Hawaiian people, and they have a duty to protect its existence.

this suffering that people are seeing on the reservations … It's a very hard life there. There are people who, especially during COVID, couldn't get access to health care … [More] should be done. You can't forget about these people and let them handle it themselves. The people who are from those communities who serve in the military are very, very brave, kind of like the 442nd.

Karen Lau
[01:10:52]
In my past interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he described a "bamboo ceiling" that existed in the Armed Forces, where it was more difficult for minorities to get promotions. Do you believe this still exists today?

Mara Langevin
[01:11:06]
I don't know because I've been out for so long. It's been more than 30 years … I wouldn't be surprised. There are not very many Asian Americans at the top levels of many corporations or many other civilian government jobs … When I was in the Coast Guard, there weren't very many Asian American people at the higher ranks … I hope things have changed for the better. [When] I went to the Academy for the diversity events, the number of amazing Asian American and Pacific Islander people that I met [was astounding] … I was very hopeful that in a couple of years, they'll probably be really outstanding. Hopefully, they get out to the higher ranks.

Karen Lau
[01:12:31]
It's great that you were able to meet some of the Asian American leaders in person.

Mara Langevin
[01:12:35]
Yeah, some of the [young leaders] were there. They're ensigns now because they've graduated and since have gone to their ships.

Karen Lau
[01:12:47]
During the pandemic, there's been an increase in hate crimes against the Asian-American community, especially towards women and elders. Has this affected you in any way?

Mara Langevin
[01:12:57]
Yeah, it has. My sister is four years older than I am, she's an Asian American, female, elderly person. So, I worry about her and she's living in an area that's predominantly white. I worry that someone's going to go and do the stupid things that we've been seeing on the news. I don't understand it, though … Why are we attacking vulnerable populations? … It's cowardice … Part of it goes back to the previous administration, the kind of hate that they

spread with the COVID. It’s a mentality that unfortunately we’re seeing more of recently and hopefully they’ll stop.

Karen Lau
[01:14:11]
Hopefully, with more Asian Americans entering leadership positions in the military and in government, this will eliminate some of that racism, xenophobic sentiment that’s out there. What legacy do you hope to impart to future Asian Americans and women who will enlist in the Coast Guard and enter flight school?

Mara Langevin
[01:14:51]
I hope people know that you don’t have to be like a superstar to achieve. When I think about myself, I’m really humbled that so many people have reached out to me and asked me to do presentations because I never saw myself as being a superstar. I felt like I was the one of the average people in the world. I guess looking back on it, even you might not think that you’re doing a lot or affecting a lot, maybe you are. Be proud of who you are and what you’re doing … Do it to the best of your ability. Help other people … If you find yourself in a position to help other people, I think it’s important to try to help. You need to try as much as you can to help those people, even if they’re not like you, even if you don't have an affinity for them or you're not exactly like them, they need help.

Mara Langevin
[01:16:13]
In the Coast Guard and the military, if you’re in a leadership position, be a good leader … Worry about your troops and the people who are serving. They’re key. You should think of yourself as second and them first because they’re the ones you’re responsible for. As a leader, you want to make sure that your troops are well taken care of. It’s interesting because in the Marine Corps, the enlisted always eat first and the officers always eat last to make sure that that they get the best. I think that should be for all the military … I think when you’re a leader, you need to make sure that the people who you’re leading [are cared for].

Karen Lau
[01:17:13]
That’s great advice. Do you have a message for students who will be listening to this, who want to be the first to accomplish something?

Mara Langevin
[01:17:24]
Go for it. I didn’t know I was the first one going through, so I had a probably less pressure on me at the time. If you want to achieve and be the first person, don’t let anybody stop you. There are always going to people [don’t want you to] either out of jealousy or fear … Don’t … even give them the time of day. Don’t even worry about anything they say … Don’t listen to them. Focus on the people who matter. Focus on the people you’re leading. Focus on the

people who are your cheerleaders. Focus on your mentors. Don't give any energy to those people who want to bring you down.

Karen Lau
[01:18:34]
That was really inspiring. My last question is, why should Asian American history and the stories of Asian American veterans be taught in schools today?

Mara Langevin
[01:18:47]
[AAPI history] is very important because so much of that stuff is not taught and so much of the history can easily repeat itself. We can't let that happen as a nation, as a democracy, as a free, loving society. I recently just found out about the Chinese Exclusion Act, and I am surprised that was never taught when I was younger, not even in college … The things that we learned from are so important, just as important as the good things we do as a country. We have to learn from that, the negative things we do … We need to learn so we don't make the same mistakes again. If we want to progress as a society [and] as a nation, we have to learn from our mistakes and from the good things that we do to progress. It seems so logical to me that that's the way we need to progress as a society. But it just seems like we're going backwards sometimes and it's very frustrating.

Karen Lau
[01:20:02]
I completely agree. I was privileged enough to learn about the Chinese Exclusion Act in high school, but at the same time, that shouldn't be the only part of Asian American history that students are exposed to. We should only be learning about the parts where Asians are colonized or excluded. We should be learning about their accomplishments and their heroism.

Mara Langevin
[01:20:22]
Absolutely, I totally agree. I don't even remember the 442nd Infantry Regiment Team when I was in high school being taught so very rarely do you hear of any Asian American hero being taught in school. I think Hawaii might be an exception just because there's a lot of Asian Americans in Hawaii. [My daughter] had a cool course that was Asian American history … The opportunity to have it on the curriculum for kids to choose from is an important thing. There are so many Asian Americans who contributed to this country being what it is, the positive part of this country … Other Asian Americans need to learn to be inspired, too.

Karen Lau
[01:21:38]
Thank you so much for doing this interview.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Andrew Ellis
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 5, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Andrew Ellis is a Chinese American and Latino Lieutenant in the U.S. Coast Guard. In this interview, he describes his afloat assignments on Coast Guard cutters, his business school experience, and his current work in finance and budget execution.*

Karen Lau
00:00:01.320 --> 00:00:07.590
Hi everyone. Today, I am here with Lieutenant Andrew Ellis. The first question is when and where were you born?

Andrew Ellis
00:00:07.590 --> 00:00:14.159
I was born on October 6, 1993. I was actually born in the country of Panama, so I have Central American roots.

Karen Lau
00:00:23.460 --> 00:00:29.970
Could you describe your childhood, upbringing, and your family?

Andrew Ellis
00:00:29.970 --> 00:00:35.670
I was born in Panama to my mom who's full Chinese and I was raised in Panama. My dad is Panamanian. I was born there and then grew up in South Florida where I grew up by the water, learned to love the ocean, and got my taste of Coast Guard living, being so close to so many bases and being by the sea. I spent a lot of my time growing up with my grandparents when my parents were at work. My grandparents would make sure we were well-fed, and we were able to learn different languages with them.

Karen Lau
00:01:25.680 --> 00:01:33.030
When motivated you to apply to the Coast Guard Academy and what was your experience as a cadet like?

Andrew Ellis
00:01:33.030 --> 00:02:43.920
What motivated me to apply to the Coast Guard Academy was [while] in high school, my dad was really involved with my cousin and her admissions process to the Naval Academy. Through that, my dad was kind of doing a practice round for me and my brother. I'm the oldest, but it's just my brother and I. My dad would look at different options for her to go to school and search the service catalog for a great opportunity for us to get a great education [but not have to] take out some student debt and be able to have the tuition paid for. The Coast Guard Academy is a great, great school, and through my dad's search of the Naval Academy … I was able to find the Coast Guard Academy and I finally went and visited. It was almost a match made in heaven once I saw the campus.

Karen Lau
00:02:43.920 --> 00:02:57.900
Yeah, it really is a beautiful campus. I live about half an hour away from the Academy, so in high school, I'd go there for indoor track meets and I almost applied, but I ended up going to UConn instead.

Andrew Ellis
00:02:57.900 --> 00:03:04.350
Still a great school. Yeah, absolutely. I think the Coast Guard Academy puts a little bit more of a commitment on your mind. So, it's definitely a big decision so I get it.

Karen Lau
00:03:04.350 --> 00:03:16.560
You talked about this earlier about your cousin's service at the Naval Academy. Could you describe your family's history of military service?

Andrew Ellis
00:03:16.560 --> 00:03:51.390
In my immediate family, I'm actually second-generation military. My cousin just got out of the Navy, but she's a 2014 grad from the Naval Academy. I think as far as history goes, I don't have too deep of a history with my family, but my cousin … paved a way for me as I did my journey to service academies.

Karen Lau
00:03:51.390 --> 00:04:01.260
When motivated you to attend the William and Mary School of Business and what was your experience going from being an active service member to a business student like?

Andrew Ellis
00:04:01.260 --> 00:05:57.449
I've been lucky with the different stages that I've been in at the Coast Guard. Going to the Academy … I got a very big taste of being an afloat officer. That's what they mostly train you for. Probably about 70 to 80 percent of the class that's graduating are going to be on a ship, but I studied management at the Coast Guard Academy. Almost anything business-related was not only applicable to my major, but very interesting to me. Going into the Coast Guard, it's a little different, but I definitely enjoyed the leadership opportunities and lessons that I was learning in undergrad that when I got to my first ship … My captain was an afloat and finance officer. He did a very good job of saying, "Hey, you guys just graduated. Yes, congratulations, but what do you guys think about in the future? Maybe you guys thought about grad school already. Is that something you guys are interested in?" Through that interaction and hearing his experience having gone afloat on cutters and then switching back and forth between finance, it really solidified [my desire to] be on ships and pave that path. [My captain really drove home] the grad school aspect of it. I just knew that at that point about probably 6 months after graduating that I was going back to school, and I was going to business school specifically.

Karen Lau
00:05:57.449 --> 00:06:01.199
What was more challenging, business school or Swab Summer?

Andrew Ellis
00:06:01.199 --> 00:08:50.514
So, a little bit different shifting to the student life again and being a business student, so they're different. I don't know if I can compare the two. Additionally, I was in different stages of my life. Graduating high school and going to Swab Summer … I'm not sure if I was fully ready to take on life as an adult. It was definitely stressful to go through Swab Summer and have people yell at you and … they're breaking you down to build you back up. It was a lot of strain on my body, a lot of strain on my mind, but I don't know if it was necessarily hard. It was a challenge. It just was one of those hurdles I knew I needed to cross. With business school on the other hand, I was already so motivated to get to where I was. I've done 3 afloat tours prior to that and I was ready to go back to the classroom. While the classes were certainly challenging … business school definitely got me thinking and it was more of a mental stress, but I think the Coast Guard did a very good job of preparing me for both. Even without the experience going into Swab Summer … I think by the time I was ready for grad school; I had already dealt with a lot of stress from being afloat and dealing with other business interactions in the Coast Guard that I would feel pretty prepared as well. Which was more challenging? Swab Summer, just because I was a little younger, a little bit [less experienced].

Karen Lau
00:08:50.514 --> 00:08:58.284
Yeah, there are just different challenges. Thank you for sharing. Now, I have a couple of questions about your service in the Coast Guard. When you think about the history of Asian American serving since 1853 and the long history of Asians serving the Coast Guard, even before the integration of the Armed Forces, and when you reflect on your own experience aboard cutters, what comes to mind?

Andrew Ellis
00:09:14.339 --> 00:10:19.619
So, I'm reading some of the notes, and I actually didn't know that it was in 1853 that there was the first Asian cutterman. I love that. Part of the Coast Guard Academy's mission for the cadets is to graduate young men and women with the liking for the sea and its lore. I think that's what kept me going back to sea. What I like most about going back to sea is there is so much history and you're making your own stories as you serve and it's a great experience. That's a great fact that I had no idea about.

Andrew Ellis
00:10:19.619 --> 00:10:41.669
I just I know I've had great experiences underway, and I think about it and imagine what they've accomplished because in my short five years of being afloat, I've certainly seen a lot.

Karen Lau
00:10:41.669 --> 00:10:54.569
I think it's great that the Coast Guard and other branches had made so much progress since the 1850s, when a lot of the Asian and minority cuttermen were resigned to domestic and food service positions and they weren't able to do any of the real work of the Coast Guard.

Andrew Ellis
00:11:02.189 --> 00:11:56.249
I know that that is certainly a challenge that was experienced back in the 1800s and I think it's just amazing that they were able to blaze the trail for me. It's an incredible sacrifice and I know they probably went through a lot, but their experiences are probably unbelievable. I mean sure, there was probably discrimination and some hardships that they went through, but … I really am thankful because it's gotten us to a service where we still have room to grow.

Karen Lau
00:12:12.419 --> 00:12:20.279
Could you describe some of the search and rescue missions you participated in aboard the Cutters Sturgeon, Monomoy, and Tampa and what you learned about yourself on these afloat assignments?

Andrew Ellis
00:12:30.959 --> 00:14:56.759
My last afloat tour prior to grad school was Sturgeon where I was the commanding officer aboard. During my last trip, we were doing routine operations, doing fisheries patrols down in the South Texas border and we got a call. I think we were expected to pull in the next day, but duty calls and we answered. We had to go out another 60 miles offshore. There was a 30-foot pleasure craft, lost all power to the engines, we took a little bit to get out there, but through the rough seas, we got out there and were able to find the stranded there. I think there were three gentlemen on board … With the search and rescue missions that I've seen, it's always inspiring for me because [it adds] a little bit of motivation to keep doing what I do because you are practically saving their life. The gratitude that you can see in their face when you get there speaks volumes. We were able to get them all on our ship … and then our mechanics on board actually sent another one of our boats … They run back in and were able to rescue everything, not only on board their ship, but with them. They're very thankful. With any search and rescue mission, you're taking on a risk, but when you're considering the risk to save someone's life, it's a great experience and it just keeps you on and doing more.

Karen Lau
00:14:59.789 --> 00:15:11.939
Among your different afloat assignments as deck watch officer, operations officer, and commanding officer, what were the biggest challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?

Andrew Ellis
00:15:11.939 --> 00:16:23.669
My first tour on Tampa was as a deck watch officer. I think my biggest challenge there was [it being my first] opportunity to get my first set of qualifications, qualifying as the underway officer of the deck. By the end of the day, the captain's asleep and you're the only one driving the ship in the middle of the night with your watch crew, but it's strenuous … I was very thankful for the mentors I had. My captain was a great mentor. I ran into him at headquarters a few weeks ago. When he saw me, he was like, "Hey, what are you doing?" [I said], "I'm here working in finance again." So, it all came full circle for him.

Andrew Ellis
00:16:23.669 --> 00:17:14.669
My biggest mentor on that ship was actually the Boatswain Chief. She's half Asian American as well. I used to call her "mom" in a loving, professional manner, but she would do a lot for me and … for the other junior officers. She really cared that we understood the mission and understood what we had to do to qualify. I was able to talk to her and really progress my career. I think I'm indebted with how well I'm able to drive boats and ships because of her.

Andrew Ellis
00:17:14.669 --> 000:18:13.079
Out of Monomoy in the Middle East, I think the biggest challenge there was [going] from deck watch officer [to] the operations officer, so third in command on the ship, quickly moving up the ranks. I think the biggest challenge there is just that it's a one-year tour, so half the crew transfers in the summer, half the crew transfers in the winter. With the high turnover, the dynamic of the crew really shifts. It becomes tough sometimes to manage two different crews in six months. Dealing with some personnel challenges there really helped me become a better leader and who I am now. So, it just made me more prepared to take on my commanding officer duties on board Sturgeon.

Andrew Ellis
00:18:13.079 --> 00:19:40.859
I think the biggest challenge on Sturgeon is now that I'm moving up the ranks and … I'm the old man taking charge of the ship, so I think just knowing that at any point, I could make a mistake and potentially lose my job was certainly looming over in the head, because I feel like you go to school to teach you how to be captain and there's a lot of [people saying], "These are the ways that you can get fired. Make sure you don't do that, but you're going to do a great job" … It's a little daunting but … coming from a diverse background … I always feel like I'm trying to be a role model, trying to project my voice, enhance my career, and [show my brother] that he can do it, too, and he can do a really good job at what he's going to do.

Karen Lau
00:20:05.603 --> 00:20:17.514
It's great that you had so many amazing mentors who shaped your path. What do you recall about your relationships and your camaraderie with your shipmates on these cutters?

Andrew Ellis
00:20:18.689 --> 00:19:40.859
What I recall most is I'm very lucky to have met the people that I've met. At the end of the day, you can complain a lot about being out at sea in the middle of the ocean, missing the family. That weighs a lot on people, for sure … I've been lucky to have crews that [supported me].

Even out in Bahrain, we were out halfway across the world and everyone's attitude was just so positive about being with the crew and getting the job done. I think that positive attitude is something that I've really tried to keep in my life. Being able to see other shipmates that are similar, bringing up those that might be down a little bit [while] being out in Bahrain, missing their family, I think that that's what I remember most. It's great that we were able to still have fun while doing the job.

Karen Lau
00:21:45.449 --> 00:21:53.999
Throughout your career, where have you been stationed and what have been your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and the cultures at these places?

Andrew Ellis
00:21:53.999 --> 00:24:43.679
I went to the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, right by you. After graduation, I went to Portsmouth, Virginia. That was aboard Tampa as a deck watch officer. I lived in Norfolk [with a] diverse group of people. I think it is a little interesting because I don't think I've been in … an area with so many military units and such a huge Navy presence in Norfolk in that Tidewater area … It was crazy to me to see that much military … I grew up in South Florida, so I had a big melting pot down there in Fort Lauderdale, Miami. It was just interesting that I was seeing so much military … Then I went out to Bahrain on the board Monomoy. That was a year-long tour. Getting to experience the culture of South Asia, it was unlike anything else I took on. I wanted to do that role specifically for the opportunity to travel out there and live abroad for a year. It was definitely an exciting and worthwhile tour. I got to learn so much about the people, the food, and everything about the culture out in in the Middle East. So that was a great experience for me. And then finally … I went to Corpus Christi, Texas, on board Sturgeon. It's in South Texas, so there's a big Mexican and Mexican American population. I grew up in a Latino Chinese household, so I get along with both cultures, so it was like part of me was almost home … I was able to speak Spanish with some of the people.

Andrew Ellis
00:24:47.729 --> 00:25:46.919
Then, I went to Williamsburg, Virginia, and I think other than the college, it's a pretty big retirement area. I got into golf with a lot of my classmates. It was just a good opportunity to meet a diverse student body … When I was in Williamsburg, I met people from all over the country. I didn't realize certain people were brought up in different ways. It was a good experience for me.

Karen Lau
00:25:48.839 --> 00:25:59.309
It sounds like you've experienced a lot of cultures and were able to interact with a lot of different people with a lot of different stories, so that's really great to hear.

Karen Lau
00:25:59.309 --> 00:26:10.619
Have you participated in any Coast Guard responses to natural disasters like hurricanes or oil spills? If so, could you describe them?

Andrew Ellis
00:26:10.619 --> 00:27:19.529
Unfortunately, or fortunately, no, which is crazy because I grew up in South Florida with hurricanes coming through all the time. I always wanted to do something like that, but I have not been aboard in an area where that response was happening, or we were shifted away from the port. I missed Hurricane Harvey down in South Texas by about a year. I was in Bahrain when that hit. I know the crew members that were on board, the ship dealt with a lot through that. We actually had a home port shift, and I was still kind of dealing with [that] when I moved there … I wish I could have had an opportunity to do more emergency response or natural disaster response, but I haven't had the opportunity yet.

Karen Lau
00:27:32.459 --> 00:27:40.889
You mentioned that you were doing some work in finance. Could you tell me more about your current position and what your responsibilities are in this role?

Andrew Ellis
00:27:40.889 --> 00:27:47.279
Yeah, that that's correct. I just graduated from College of William and Mary with my MBA in May. In the past few months, I just transferred and started my role as the operations support appropriations manager here at Coast Guard headquarters … I do budget execution for the Coast Guard … The way the Coast Guard makes money is not through sales or revenues like a regular corporation. We ask Congress for a budget and Congress turns around and says, "Here's what we're approved for." Then I take that law when Congress creates it and determine … where the money goes … At that point, we execute the budget and make sure that the money is being spent appropriately with the purpose, time, and amount authorized by law. I'm still learning a lot. I'm not an expert by any means. It's almost like drinking from a fire hose, but when is it not with the Coast Guard? … It's getting ready for the challenge and continuing to push on.

Karen Lau
00:29:14.519 --> 00:29:35.129
Since so much of your job depends on how much money Congress gives to the Coast Guard, I was wondering if you had any thoughts on the process in which Congress portions out money to the Armed Forces, especially with the recent news about the veterans and the PACT Act.

Andrew Ellis
00:29:41.099 --> 00:29:47.939
My understanding is the so the process is pretty complicated. I'm more on the execution side, not the formulation side of the house. I pass by their offices, and I see them there earlier than I get in, and later than I get out. Because it's government, there's a certain process that we have to follow by law. We can always be better. I'm not sure if there's much appetite for change, unfortunately … It's tough to change some processes. I would love more money and to be able to say "yes" to more projects … With the lengthy process of creating that budget, it takes about three years to make the next budget.

Karen Lau
00:31:24.209 --> 00:31:45.479
Is there a specific goal or rank that you'd like to achieve before the end of your career? I've interviewed a couple of veterans who have transitioned into more administrative roles, like being a speech writer for the Secretary of Defense or retired and moved onto humanitarian aid. So, what's your vision for your future in the Coast Guard?

Andrew Ellis
00:31:45.479 --> 00:33:17.309
That's actually a really good question. Going through business school … a lot of my classmates are going through their own career transition. Meanwhile, I'm transitioning from the afloat side to the finance side … When I was talking to my dad about going into the Coast Guard Academy … I think the pensions are always attractive, coming from a finance guy … I don't know if I have a certain rank in mind or certain position at this time. I know when I was younger, when I was a cadet, I knew I wanted to do a tour out in, and I knew I wanted to do a tour out in Bahrain. When I graduated, I knew I wanted to do grad school. I think now I'm at a point where the Coast Guard has made the opportunity to be a strict finance officer or continue to go back and forth. I'm doing a little soul searching myself, but I think I could do another tour, maybe try to be a captain of another ship or even the executive officer. I haven't been an executive officer yet on-board ships, so maybe that's the next role.

Karen Lau
00:33:17.309 --> 00:33:38.309
I'm sure you'll excel out whatever future path that you choose. For the final part of the interview, I have a couple of questions about your identity and perspective. As an Asian American, how has your identity shaped your ideals of patriotism and service?

Andrew Ellis
00:33:53.759 --> 00:35:25.649
I was born in Panama, and my dad was always very proud of his Panamanian roots. My dad says before I was born, I was a citizen and he always preached patriotism and the respect of the flag … Even before I went to military school, I knew to stand up for the national anthem and put my hand over my heart. The respect for the country is something that my dad really preached. As an Asian American … I have had the opportunity to meet so many great Asian American service members in the Coast Guard [and] other branches as well. It's just great to see and I think that's what America is about. We're so diverse. [As an] Asian and Latino [service member], it's a proud [feeling] to serve and I'm proud to be … someone who can progress through the ranks and being an example for the future generation.

Andrew Ellis
00:35:25.649 --> 00:36:26.939
I had a mentor from the Coast Guard Academy, Commander Hoon Park… And he is so good about promoting the Asian American diversity in the Coast Guard. When I was at the Academy, it was great to see that he was in his role and what he was doing for our community. That would be big shoes for me to fill because I've seen the impact that he's made. I can speak to so many generations of Asian American officers who bring up his name and they know that he's impacted their life. That's something that I do strive for, but where I'm at right now, I'm proud to serve my country and I'm proud to continue doing it.

Karen Lau
00:36:56.124 --> 00:37:10.284
Speaking of diversity in the Coast Guard and promotions, in my past interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he described a "bamboo ceiling" in Armed Forces where it was harder for minorities to get promotions. Do you believe this still exists?

Andrew Ellis
00:37:14.759 --> 00:39:55.680
I know I've heard that term and I know people have experienced that. I don't want to say it doesn't exist. I will say that if it does exist, I haven't necessarily experienced it which is a good thing. We're getting towards that better and right answer. I think Commander Park is doing a very good job breaking those barriers for certain individuals, even in himself. When I was at the

Academy, he did a very good job at bringing Admiral Vojvodich who is one of the first [Asian American] flag officers. He's Korean American … It was incredible for us to see an Asian American flag officer … Even with our current Commandant, with her being the first female military commander, I think the barriers are being broken. We're getting to a better place … I've run into admirals all the time at headquarters and … some of these officers have been in the Coast Guard [for a long time]. It's incredible to hear their experiences and be in their presence.

Karen Lau
00:40:33.240 --> 00:40:40.050
What legacy do you hope to impart to future Asian Americans and Latinos who will enlist in the Coast Guard?

Andrew Ellis
00:40:40.050 --> 00:42:20.340
I think the biggest legacy is just saying, "If I could do it, you can do it." I think we are making strides to break these bamboo ceilings and barriers that we may have experienced in the past and I hope in the future, someone sees what these admirals have done, maybe even what I've done and is able to say, "If they can do it, I can, too." I think for the future generation, I just want to make sure that people are given the right the opportunity to even the playing field. And I think I've definitely seen the impact on some of the younger generation of cadets that have graduated … By being able to interact with the future generation and letting them know they're going to be alright, and they can do it, I think that's the biggest thing for me.

Karen Lau
00:42:20.340 --> 00:42:30.990
That's a great legacy to leave behind. My last question for you is, why should Asian American history and the stories of Asian American veterans be taught in schools?

Andrew Ellis
00:42:30.990 --> 00:42:35.220
That's a good question. [In] Coast Guard history, I just learned that the first Asian American cutterman was in 1853. That's something for me as an Asian American cutterman that I would have liked to know before … The melting pot of our country is what makes us great, and I think that being able to learn from all cultures, especially Asian Americans now that we're a larger minority nowadays. I think we've made a big impact on the nation, and I think that it's important to see where we came from and where we can be. I think it's good to know the roots and I think that it's important for us to see what was done in the past and be better in the future.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** Christine Igisomar
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** August 5, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Christine Igisomar is a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Coast Guard and is the first native Chamorro[1] woman to serve in the Coast Guard. In this interview, she describes the culture and history of the island of Saipan, the legacy of imperialism and colonialism on current relations between the Pacific Islands and the mainland U.S., and her service as the military aide to the Commandant of the Coast Guard.*

Karen Lau
00:00:00.000 --> 00:00:12.809
Hi everyone. Today, I'm here with Lieutenant Commander Christine Torres Igisomar. Thank you so much for being here. My first question is when and where were you born?

Christine Igisomar
00:00:13.859 --> 00:00:21.600
I was born on the island of Saipan which [has been] part of the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands since 1984.

Karen Lau
00:00:23.250 --> 00:00:27.750
Could you describe your childhood or bringing in new family?

Christine Igisomar
00:00:29.010 --> 00:00:35.670
I was an only child for 15 years and then my parents had my sister who is now 23. I'd say as an only child, my parents really took advantage of the opportunity to travel. From a young age, I was really well traveled. I also believe growing up on the island of Saipan was really the best upbringing a kid could have, having your run of the beautiful beaches, the jungles, and the farms. It was just such an idyllic childhood, and I wouldn't trade it for anything else.

[1] The Chamorro people are the indigenous people native to the Mariana Islands of which Guam is the largest island.

Karen Lau
00:01:04.770 --> 00:01:13.140
Does your family have a history of military service? If not, what was it like for you to be the first in your family to serve?

Christine Igisomar
00:01:13.140 --> 00:02:26.790
Absolutely, I think extended family members have served in different capacities. No one close to me had ever been commissioned as an officer in the Armed Forces. As I was going through that process, I didn't think that hindered me in any way. My parents instilled in me from a young age to always look for opportunities to engage people who are doing what you want to do in the future. So, I sought out folks that were [attending] other academies at the time as cadets … I talked with people who were retired officers who may not have been related to me. All these opinions and perspectives really informed my view on what I was going to do with my future. The one thing that I recognized early on was that I never spoke to any women. This small island has so many opportunities for women, but I don't think being a military officer was something that women thought of as I was growing up and so I didn't notice that that all the people I had spoken with happened to be men.

Karen Lau
00:02:26.790 --> 00:02:38.670
Thank you for sharing. What motivated you to attend the Naval Academy Preparatory School and the Coast Guard Academy? What were your experiences as a cadet at the Academy like?

Christine Igisomar
00:02:38.670 --> 00:03:20.160
The way one gets into the Naval Academy Prep Schools is you first have to apply to the Coast Guard Academy and when they see that you have officer potential, but they feel like you need a little bit of work in some areas of your academics or your physical fitness … to make sure that you're ready for the academic rigor of the Coast Guard Academy, they offer you the Prep School. I was offered the Naval Academy Preparatory School in Newport, Rhode Island. It was a year well-spent. I made friends, I got to experience college-level math and science, and really prepared myself for what was going to come at the Academy.

Christine Igisomar
00:03:20.160 --> 00:03:27.900
[During] my Academy experience, I found a core group of friends that I still am close friends with to this day. I felt that the Coast Guard Academy, having been a quarter of the size of the other service academies, allowed us to be a lot closer with our classmates because we were only about 250 strong when we graduated. The academy was so busy. From 6:00 a.m. in the

morning to 10:00 p.m. at night, you were always doing something, whether it was class, sports, meetings for extracurricular activities, [or] homework.

Karen Lau
00:04:32.699 --> 00:04:37.589
What was the hardest part of the military lifestyle for you to adapt to?

Christine Igisomar
00:04:42.029 --> 00:05:28.289
The hardest part was not being able to see family when I wanted to. We're limited in the amount of vacation days we can take, although it is quite generous at 30 days a year for all the Armed Forces. Being that I'm from so far away, a ticket for Thanksgiving [or spring break] was just impossible. I could only limit my visits home to the three weeks of summer, and the two or three weeks of Christmas holidays. Having been in the military 20 years now, the one thing that I feel that's been the hardest is having to miss out on so many wonderful cultural things.

Karen Lau
00:05:28.289 --> 00:05:33.689
If you could go back to the start of your military career, what advice would you give yourself?

Christine Igisomar
00:05:36.234 --> 00:06:06.809
I would say there's a reason why you have two ears and one mouth. You should be listening twice as much as you are talking. I think something I didn't know well enough to do in the beginning of my career, to really listen and internalize so many things I was being told. I think if I had done more listening and trying to understand things, I would have been a better officer.

Karen Lau
00:06:06.809 --> 00:06:13.979
That's good advice. Could you describe some of your experiences serving on a Coast Guard Cutter in Hawaii?

Christine Igisomar
00:06:16.524 --> 00:07:00.564
Life on any Coast Guard cutter is rough, even the ones in Hawaii. We maintained a pretty rigorous schedule of being three months in port in Hawaii, and then three to four months out at sea, either up in Alaska, or in the Eastern Caribbean. We actually also completed a patrol through Samoa. The South Pacific was also part of where our mission was. Now that I'm more senior in my career, I encourage so many young, enlisted officers to try and be out at sea as

much as possible. There’s something about being out in the middle of the ocean and seeing stars that are so clear and knowing that you are such a small part of this big world.

Christine Igisomar
00:07:00.564 --> 00:07:35.099
When you’re in the middle of the ocean, and there’s not a ship or landing site, there’s a sense of adventure that goes with being able to see parts of the world that you probably wouldn’t be able to afford to go to on a regular basis … Although it was really hard work and the hours were long, both in Hawaii and while we were doing our patrols, I think that sense of adventure of seeing the world was the most fulfilling part of my time on a cutter in Hawaii.

Karen Lau
00:07:35.099 --> 00:07:48.299
That's wonderful. In your different services assignments, including a tour in international affairs in the Caribbean and two tours in response operations, what were the biggest challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?

Christine Igisomar
00:07:51.329 --> 00:08:54.119
I would say the Coast Guard does a great job of pushing responsibility down to its most junior members. Within the Coast Guard, we have an understanding that age, gender, or background doesn’t necessarily matter when it comes to completing the mission and doing it well. In my time in the Caribbean, I always felt that I had to be extra judicious in how I conducted myself because there are some cultures, including within the Caribbean, that have no women in senior ranks. I would walk into a government building for a meeting, and I noticed that the only women in the building were the ones in the administrative stuff, which is very important work and that’s the backbone of any organization … But I noticed that I met with few women in senior positions that were the decision-makers within the Coast Guard.

Christine Igisomar
00:08:54.119 --> 00:09:30.899
In my time in response operations, I would say being able to take different inputs from people that have different backgrounds and knowing that you don’t have all the answers, it does matter to take time to allow everybody to say their peace. If you are the senior decision-maker, go with what you think is right. I believe people [will] respect you if you allow them the opportunity to provide input, even though they know that eventually you will have to make the final decision.

Karen Lau
00:09:30.899 --> 00:09:37.049
What do you recall about your relationships and your camaraderie with your fellow service members throughout your career?

Christine Igisomar
00:09:37.464 --> 00:10:30.509
I have two families, the family that I was born into … and the Coast Guard family that I've built [during] my 20 years in the Coast Guard. There are people that I've been stationed with sometimes for only one year or two years, but these are people that I could absolutely trust with my children … I believe that they trust me with the same level of seriousness and responsibility. I love the fact that I've created a family of people that I'm not related to who I can count on [to] be there for me at the drop of a hat. I'm really grateful that I can lean on these two families.

Karen Lau
00:10:30.509 --> 00:10:47.064
That's amazing. Throughout your career, you've been stationed in many places, including Hawaii, the Caribbean, Texas, California, and now, Guam. What have been your most memorable experiences interacting with the people and the cultures at these places?

Christine Igisomar
00:10:47.064 --> 00:11:53.609
I've appreciated the opportunity to live in these communities. Something that's unique about the Coast Guard is we don't have large military bases where everybody lives on the base and that there's a very fine line between what's on the base and what's off the base. A lot of Coasties tend to receive housing allowance and they live in the communities that they serve. Being part of a community and being neighbors with people that are not necessarily military-affiliated, or maybe don't even necessarily like the military, this [was an] opportunity to immerse ourselves in the cultures of all these places. [Living in] California, Virginia, and Texas has really enhanced my ability to get along with people. If not for the Coast Guard, I'd probably be in another military service where I'm only interacting with military-affiliated people on base, and I think there's a limitation to that. I enjoy [being] part of whatever community I serve in.

Karen Lau
00:11:53.609 --> 00:12:05.159
Currently, you are the military aide to the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and you are also serving in Guam. What has this experience been like and what is it like to live in Guam?

Christine Igisomar
00:12:05.604 --> 00:12:57.089
Absolutely, so I just finished my time as the military aide to Admiral Schultz who was our Commandant from 2020 to just two months ago. In my capacity as his military aide, I traveled everywhere with him, and I was allowed in every meeting he was in. This opportunity to peek behind the curtain and understand our Coast Guard senior leadership's perspective on where this organization is going is so valuable. In those two years … we traveled quite a bit and the hours were very long, but something I appreciated was the ability to hear straight from the horse's mouth the perspective of where we are as the Coast Guard and what are we doing to move ourselves forward in the right way.

Christine Igisomar
00:12:57.089 --> 00:13:41.399
Something that I noticed in my time was we spoke about the Western Pacific a lot and the opportunity to engage with these small island nations here in the Pacific to ensure that our Coast Guard, and our American values are welcome, but also beneficial to those communities in these specific islands. Having used that opportunity to listen to everything as the aide to the Commandant in Guam and being able to inform people's perspective on what we're doing and why we're doing it, I think it's just so valuable. I hope that I can lend value wherever I can during my time here in Guam.

Karen Lau
00:13:41.399 --> 00:13:52.739
Congratulations on finishing two years with the Commandant. How have your service experiences affected your life and what have you learned about yourself in your service?

Christine Igisomar
00:13:52.739 --> 00:14:58.319
I would say something my husband has noticed about me from the time he first met me as a brand-new graduate of the Coast Guard Academy is that as a young junior officer, it seemed like I knew everything already. Throughout my maturing and reaching more senior levels in the officer corps, I've come to understand that I don't know everything. I am more of a sponge now than I was as a brand-new ensign straight out of the Academy, which is a little bit of a flip flop but I'm just grateful that I understand my limitations and I'm able to adjust. Something that I've appreciated about my service is my ability to grow and change based on where I am, and the situation I am put in. I have become very flexible and amenable to things.

Karen Lau
00:14:58.319 --> 00:15:05.879
Could you tell me more about your heritage as a native Chamorro and the culture and history of the island of Saipan?

Christine Igisomar
00:15:05.879 --> 00:16:59.544
The Chamorros are the native people of the Mariana Islands. Saipan is the island that I'm from. As far as I know, we've been here for hundreds of years … From the time, I was very young, I knew I was part of a special community. We are a very family-oriented community …
There was always a family member to visit and help out. You spent your time either visiting with family, helping family, or being in church which is also a community of people that are working towards the same goals and have the same values. The Chamorro community, because of our 300 years of colonization by Spain, is majority Catholic and so I happen to be Catholic. We were also occupied by the Japanese between World War II and while World War II. I also believe that the Japanese customs and values also made their way into our culture. So, when I speak about my Chamorro culture, I don't try to go back to the original Chamorro culture as it was before we were colonized by Spain, Germany, and Japan. I consider what my Chamorro culture is right now as a mixture of all those folks that came to the Mariana Islands and were part of our history. It's very hard to forget about parts of your history. You are a living representation of that history.

Christine Igisomar
00:16:59.544 --> 00:17:47.724
It is a very family-oriented, community-oriented culture in which we take a lot of that from our time with the Japanese where the sense of community is greater than the sense of self. If I were to say there was one shortcoming of me being Chamorro that has affected my career as an officer is when I first started out as an officer, I was very nervous to talk about my accomplishments because in my culture that was something you didn't do. [This] didn't serve me well because every six months, junior officers get evaluated and this evaluation requires you to submit documentation of how awesome you are and all the great things you've done.

Christine Igisomar
00:17:53.189 --> 00:18:02.879
My turning point as a Lieutenant was to think, for the sake of my family, I have to do this. I have to understand how is it that I can talk about my accomplishments in a way that will make sure my superiors know what I've done with the sense of knowing that I never did anything by myself. Right. There's always been a team of people that have worked for me or alongside me that were part of my success. So, I think that when I talk about my success as a Coast Guard officer, I don't put my awards and citations in my biography. I always put that this is a

testament to the people that I've served with. It is a true team effort, which actually matches with my Chamorro culture … This is about the team, not so much about the individual.

Karen Lau
00:18:49.289 --> 00:18:52.649
That's an amazing answer. Thank you. How has your identity as a Chamorro shaped your ideals of patriotism and service?

Christine Igisomar
00:19:00.959 --> 00:20:12.059
This is very interesting, especially being stationed in Guam and noticing how acute the word "colonization" and that concept is to the people of Saipan and the historical experience of the people of my territory. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is quite different. Even though the southernmost island is only 40 miles north of Guam distance-wise … something that I've become more aware of in my short time being stationed out here in the Western Pacific is that the people of these islands are so patriotic. 1 in 8 people in Guam is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces which is ironic because we, as territories, are not allowed to vote for the President of the United States who is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. In addition, none of the territories have voting representation in Congress. We have representatives in the House of Representatives, but they're not allowed to vote on the floor.

Christine Igisomar
00:20:12.059 --> 00:21:25.949
When I think about wearing this uniform, I think about my people and the history of colonization by the Spanish, the Germans, the Japanese, and you could even say by the United States, what I am doing in uniform is paying back the debt of my people all to the American forces who landed on Saipan and liberated Saipan from the Japanese during the war. While staying in the Coast Guard, [wearing] this uniform for 20 years now, in my mind, I'm wearing this uniform on behalf of those people on my island that are unable to. And so, if there's one of me, and I'm able to stand up and serve the United States in my capacity as a Coast Guard officer, then this is me repaying that debt. My loyalty is absolutely to the United States of America. But I also know that one day, I will take this uniform off for good and perhaps my thoughts will change as I get integrated back to my community here in the islands.

Karen Lau
00:21:25.949 --> 00:21:51.144
That was a wonderful response. You're the first veteran I've spoken with who has brought up the topics of colonialism and imperialism. You brought up the topic of how the U.S. has liberated Saipan, but I was wondering if you could give me your perspective on times when the

U.S. has colonized other nations such as the Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. As a veteran, could you share your thoughts on this history?

Christine Igisomar
00:21:51.144 --> 00:22:35.789
As someone whose ancestors were directly affected by colonization, not just by the Americans, but also by the other [peoples, including] the Spanish, Germans, and the Japanese, I would say that I use the word "liberated" very loosely. Can you be free if you're liberated? And if you're liberated, are you truly free? And so, what I see on the island of Guam now that I'm stationed here is there is a very big sentiment that yes, we were liberated, but are we truly free because, at the moment, Guam is not able to decide its political status with the United States on its own.

Christine Igisomar
00:22:35.789 --> 00:24:10.344
In order for one to become an independent nation, or to change its status within the United States, such as to become a 51st state, they are not allowed to decide that on their own. The United States would have to be the ones to take the next step. Now, my perspective having come out here has changed greatly and it has to do with the idea that somehow someone had come along and saved us or made us independent. I believe that the people, having been at the crossroads of several conflicts, such as the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa, they were always there, and they were all independent individuals. They lived their lives in their communities and there were other great world powers that [divided] up the earth as they saw it and traded land as they saw it. But the people … have always been independent and I think it's an interesting conundrum that as an independent person, I feel that I have autonomy, but I know that the community in which I live in in Guam, and … others, as you mentioned the Philippines, they have had to struggle with regaining that autonomy after so much colonization.

Karen Lau
00:24:10.344 --> 00:24:37.739
Thank you for sharing your perspective. There's nothing that the U.S. can do to erase their colonial or imperialist presence in other countries, but at this point, in places like Guam, what do you think would be justice? Would justice the granting Guam and other places where the U.S. has presence self-determination by giving them the right to govern themselves? Or do you think justice would be making them a state with voting power and representation in Congress?

Christine Igisomar
00:24:37.739 --> 00:25:20.000
The people of Guam who [have] inhabited this particular island for millennia before the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan in the 1500s were able to decide amongst themselves what their status was going to be. Before the arrival of Magellan, it was very tribal right. The clans got together.

They made decisions. They figured out their own system of government, which maybe from an outsider's perspective, [would be called] primitive, but for them, it worked.

Christine Igisomar
00:25:20.000 --> 00:26:31.554
[Let's] use the case of Hawaii. Hawaii had a fully functioning monarchy. It had a government that was headed by a monarch. For the Hawaiian people, that worked for them.
A group of … American businessmen, did not like that and did not see it that way. And that was just a travesty and continues to be for the Hawaiian people. Hawaiian people are strangers in their own land. Unless they have the means, they cannot own their own land and Guam is the same way. I would say Saipan, where I'm from, is a little bit different because of our political status. We have something in place that only allows people from Saipan to own property and on an island, land is finite resource. Allowing the people of Guam to decide, just as they had for millennia before the arrival of Magellan, to decide what this looks like, would be the most just thing. If they decide statehood, if they decide independence, if they decide to maintain their status quo and unincorporated territory, at least they would have decided amongst themselves.

Karen Lau
00:26:33.779 --> 00:26:42.179
Would you say that the U.S. military today still has some of those colonial and imperialist values of the past or would you say it's changed?

Christine Igisomar
00:26:44.909 --> 00:28:07.619
I've lived in the United States [for] 20 years now. I left home when I was 18 years old and I'm finally close to home again. I still consider myself an outsider in the sense that I did not grew up in the mainland United States, and my history classes were about other topics that maybe were closer to home so to speak. I will admit that I don't have the full scope of understanding of [whether] the United States has progressed away from colonialism and imperialism. What I can say is here in the Pacific, there is a push to ensure that the United States' values are adopted and are agreed with by these small island nations who historically have had a good history with the United States. There is this feeling that I think, as a Pacific Islander, I feel that we are not yet seen as two equals because I could say that within the space of understanding the military buildup in the Pacific, there's not many local people in the room. That speaks volumes, I think.

Christine Igisomar
00:28:07.619 --> 00:28:56.009
And so, for me, one day, I will put this uniform away for good and I'll hang my bones here in the Pacific. This is where I'll spend the rest of my life when I retire. I care very much what is happening now, because it's going to affect me as a citizen of this part of the world for the rest

of my adult life … I would say the United States is continuously learning and growing and making strides to be better. I think for these islands, they are watching what the United States is doing [very closely] and are aware that perhaps in some circles, Pacific Islanders are not yet given that for equal participation in these very big decisions affecting the Pacific.

Karen Lau
00:28:58.349 --> 00:29:03.899
My next question for you is what unique challenges, if any, have you faced in the Coast Guard due to your status as a woman of color?

Christine Igisomar
00:29:11.459 --> 00:30:06.959
The times where I haven't done so well as an officer in the Coast Guard was when I tried to sound and be like someone I was not when I became an ensign in the Coast Guard. The ideal Coast Guard officer that people held up and lauded … did not look or sound like me. So, in my naive mind, I thought that the best way to become a good Coast Guard officer was to look and sound like them. And I didn't do so [well]. I wasted precious time trying to do this when I really should have been learning my trade and learning how to be a good manager and leader of people. When I realized that regardless of how I sound [or] how I look, what matters is how I take care of the people below me and how hard I work for the people above me. Those things will win the day each and every time.

Christine Igisomar
00:30:06.959 --> 00:31:14.039
It's a bonus that I happen to be a woman of color, because I can provide perspective in certain circles where maybe they need to hear it from someone like me. But I don't think I have ever used the fact that I'm a woman and a woman of color to get ahead or to do that. I do not want to be put in a position one day where I was selected solely for those things, and then come to find out I am unqualified to do that particular job. That would devastate me. Because in the Coast Guard, as with other military services, this is the life and death thing that we have to think about. I want a qualified person, and if I am the most qualified person, then I will absolutely take that job, I think people have appreciated that about me, I don't think I have ever played the "race card" [or] the "woman card." I will bring up the fact that I am a Pacific Islander woman and I'm very proud of it, but I don't think that has affected my ability to get the jobs that I've wanted or to move ahead in the service.

Karen Lau
00:31:14.039 --> 00:31:26.369
In my past interview with a Korean American Coast Guard veteran, he described a “bamboo ceiling” in the Armed Forces where it was more difficult for minorities to gain promotions. Do you believe this still exists today?

Christine Igisomar
00:31:30.359 --> 00:32:50.874
I would say I have yet to come across a bamboo ceiling in my career, and I say that because I don't know how far up I’ll go. I may hit what is called that “bamboo ceiling.” But what I know is I use my personal traits to my advantage. There is there is this idea that to be a good officer, you have to be loud, and you have to be the biggest person in the room. Perhaps for some Asian American Pacific cultures right, that is just not the way we operate. For Coast Guard officers … that perhaps are not the loudest in the room, there’s something to be said [about] walking into the room and commanding attention. And there is a beauty, I think, in silence. Silence allows you the opportunity to really hear the person and what they’re saying to maybe dissect it and interpret it … When you do finally open your mouth [and] when you finally act, people are just blown out of the water.

Christine Igisomar
00:32:50.874 --> 00:33:24.989
In my career personally, I’ve done my job to the best that I can. Along the way, I believe I’ve been able to share my unique culture with my colleagues and my superiors. I hope that they’ve appreciated the opportunity to learn from me. I’ve not tried to find a bamboo ceiling somewhere … I firmly believe that you find what you’re looking for. I’m not going around looking for a bamboo ceiling, at least in my career.

Karen Lau
00:33:24.989 --> 00:33:33.419
Is there a specific rank or goal that you would like to achieve by the end of your career? What is your vision for your future in the Coast Guard?

Christine Igisomar
00:33:34.074 --> 00:34:31.109
So, I’m at a crossroads. I have 4 years before I hit the 20-year mark when I’ll retire. I believe that if I continue to do a good job, I believe one more promotion is going to happen before I hit that 20-year mark. I believe that if I do make my 20-year career, and then I decide to retire from there, I will do so with my head held high. I also know that my family has a big part to play in that. I have a husband and two boys … I want to make sure that if I continue past 20 [years] that it is with their full support, which means that my boys have to be independent and

hardworking, doing well in school and doing well in their activities in order for me to have the bandwidth to be able to move onto the next thing past 20 years and same with my husband. Right. As long as my husband is able to be a support system.

Karen Lau
00:35:11.039 --> 00:35:17.999
What legacy you hope to impart to future Pacific Islanders, Chamorros, and women who will enlist in the Coast Guard?

Christine Igisomar
00:35:20.519 --> 00:36:20.099
I think something for them to live by when they do this career of theirs in the Coast Guard is to do right by people. I've always found that when you do right by others, your subordinates, your colleagues, and your superiors, your career takes care of itself. Regardless of what background they come from as Pacific Islanders, my hope is that they'll do right by others in the time that they're in the Coast Guard and I believe that [advice] will keep them climbing the ladder … We exist not to earn accolades; we exist not to put more gold on our uniforms and to wear bigger shoulder boards. I think we exist to be good to others and treat others well. If that is any type of legacy that I leave as an example to others coming behind me, then I would have done my job.

Karen Lau
00:36:20.099 --> 00:36:29.069
My last question for you is, why should Asian American and Pacific Islander history and the stories of AAPI veterans be taught in schools?

Christine Igisomar
00:36:30.899 --> 00:36:34.229
I believe that the story of America is the story of all that shared heritage and history that we bring to the United States of America. To leave any part out would only be a disservice to our fellow citizens. I believe that in order for a citizen of the United States to really achieve their full potential, they need to be well-educated and well-aware of their neighbors, the people in their community, the people who serve in uniform on their behalf, and that includes Asians and Pacific Islanders. And so, AAPI history is the history of all of us. We are only made better if we understand people and where they come from, because that fosters a sense of unity, a sense of esprit de corps[2] in the United States Armed Forces. If you have that, you can really take on any enemy, any adversary.

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[2] Esprit de corps is a French term meaning group spirit, good morale, comradeship, and a shared purpose.

Karen Lau
00:37:28.769 --> 00:37:32.009
Is there anything else that you would like to share today?

Christine Igisomar
00:37:32.009 --> 00:38:21.180
I think AAPI Heritage Month should be every month of the year … At some point, Asians and Pacific Islanders have emigrated to the United States … The values … that we all hold, taking care of our elders, respecting our neighbors, thinking of the community versus thinking of [ourselves] first, I think these are contributions that should be celebrated and should be adopted by people who aren't Asian or Pacific Islander. Imagine if everybody did that. I think we would be better off as a society, as a community, as an armed force.

Karen Lau
00:38:21.180 --> 00:38:27.000
Thank you so much, Lieutenant Commander Igisomar. It's been a pleasure to get to know you and learn from you today.

Christine Igisomar
00:38:27.000 --> 00:38:35.370
Thank you, Karen. I really appreciate you doing this. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share and I really wish you the best in this project.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview (edited)**
**Interviewee:** ret. Coast Guard Captain Jeffrey Lee
**Interviewer:** Karen Lau
**Date:** July 15, 2022

Interview Recording Link

*Summary: Captain Jeffrey Lee is the first Korean American graduate of the Office Candidate School. In this interview, he reflects upon his service in the U.S. Coast Guard, his relationships with his mentors, search and rescue missions, and the "bamboo ceiling" in the Armed Forces.*

Jeffrey Lee
00:00:17.219 --> 00:00:58.350
When you go to sea, are you doing a job for 12 years? You don't really think about the number of people you saved or the number of people who died on a daily basis. You don't really think about [whether you should] keep a logbook of this … [For example,] I saved this one and this one got away from me. I'm pretty sure that's the same for every law enforcement [officer].

Jeffrey Lee
00:00:58.350 --> 00:01:02.580
Okay, so I was talking to a shipmate of mine who lives in Oklahoma, he's a member of the Cherokee tribal council right now. And we are trying to remember a couple of the larger cases that we worked on, and he actually … was on board for a lot of them.

Jeffrey Lee
00:01:16.260 --> 00:01:42.360
But you figure I probably did twelve years at sea, which means for a Coast Guard cutter, you're assigned to the ship for a year, and you are away from the home port target for about 180 days, which means that in a year, you are gone half the year which is pretty much the same for the U.S. Navy, although they do it all in one point or one voyage. So, they go away for 6 months to come back with the Coast Guard that goes out for 3 months, comes back in for 2 or 3 months, and goes back out for 3 months, which may actually be more upsetting to the families and crew … On the smaller ships, it's about the same number of hours, but they don't count days. They count hours.

Jeffrey Lee
00:02:04.950 --> 00:02:28.500

And so, the patrol boats I've been on, and the icebreakers I've been on, I've been on the smaller [boats]. You do a lot of patrolling, you do a lot of operations, but it's not necessarily saves. And there are some days where you get big cases. On some days, you get smaller cases, and some days, people get away from you, but it's not one of those things you think about daily.

Jeffrey Lee
00:02:28.500 --> 00:02:41.340
So, if you figure I did a 25-year Coast Guard career. I did 12 years at sea, and then 3 years at the Joint Rescue Coordination Center, which is 15 years of operations and not all the other administrative jobs are just administrators' jobs … They're kind of in between the other things you do.

Jeffrey Lee
00:02:50.910 --> 00:03:07.950
I was talking to a Navy friend of mine … He had 4 commands. I had 4 commands in the Coast Guard which is very unusual. He had 4 commands in the Navy, which is also very unusual. His name is Captain Kevin Campbell.

Jeffrey Lee
00:03:07.950 --> 00:03:22.350
You're talking about how long you go away, and you sign a contract to do whatever the job takes, but in order to get command, maintain, and go from command, you have to be successful.

Jeffrey Lee
00:03:22.350 --> 00:03:42.180
Timing is a lot of it. People would tell you about luck. I'm not a real big believer in luck. I think you make your own luck. But timing is a lot of it and then who your mentors are, the people that you go to get advice, the people that help you out.

Jeffrey Lee
00:03:42.180 --> 00:04:09.870
That's critical. If you don't have the right mentors, that's not that's not something you can choose … You can't say, "Karen, can you be my mentor?" I think that that came up in the late 90s and early 2000s, people were saying, "Hey, go pick a mentor." It depends on where you're working. It depends on where you are and that's a timing issue. That's a placement issue. It's not necessarily something you're actively looking for.

Jeffrey Lee
00:04:09.870 --> 00:04:31.079
It's kind of strange that somebody would say, “Karen, be my mentor.” Certainly, you would agree to that, but it's not something that's normally done. So that gets back the timing [and] who your first boss is, your next bosses, and then how you transition from one job to another.

Jeffrey Lee
00:04:31.079 --> 00:05:07.079
People tell me, especially my wife, [that] I have a problem with authority figures working over me which is probably true. I've had problems working for other people for years that didn't necessarily I don't agree with [them]. But a lot of times, I think I have a better way of doing things and I'm not so necessarily…taking my solution [and] saying, “No, that's not going to work.” Or, trying to drive [them] in a different direction without explaining why sometimes this is a good reason for things. Sometimes, there isn't.

Karen Lau
00:05:15.209 --> 00:05:22.439
Could you tell us a little bit about where and when you were born? [Please]… describe your childhood.

Jeffrey Lee
00:05:48.329 --> 00:05:59.729
I was born in Pasadena, California. They call it the Big Valley and I was born, I believe, in St Joseph's Hospital in January of 1959. Back in the ‘60s, that area of El Monte, California was mostly Chicano, pretty much… One of the areas… that [my family] could move to from Hawaii [was Chicano].

Jeffrey Lee
00:06:26.069 --> 00:06:36.359
And so, my earlier family ties are from Korea on both sides. They came to Hawaii to pick coffee beans and sugarcane and do all kinds of manual labor. So, my childhood started in El Monte, California. And then we lived there. I was born in 1959 and we lived there until 1965.

Jeffrey Lee
00:06:49.949 --> 00:07:32.549
My father wanted to move to a… more affluent area because he thought that we were more affluent than the Chicano, the Mexican American people. That’s not something that we

would do these days, but I consider my father … in fact, I had discussions with my brothers and my mother that my father was a social climber.

Jeffrey Lee
00:07:32.549 --> 00:08:00.479
He always thought that he should have more, or he should have better than what he had. He grew up in the slum in Kaimuki in Honolulu. And there were 5 boys [with] never enough to eat. He was also trying to do better, and I think it was a detriment to his own upbringing. He was also a child of the Depression, meaning that he always wanted to stake out what was his and get it, so I [wouldn't] have to live through that.

Jeffrey Lee
00:08:00.479 --> 00:08:37.259
So, we moved to Huntington Beach California in 1965 which, at that point, was a sleepy little beach town. Duke Kahanamoku, the Hawiian surfer, had been there, and staked it out because it had some of the best waves in the country … Actually, we were able to walk into the house and the development they were building, into the framing, and actually pick our rooms while it was being built, so it was all brand-new housing.

Jeffrey Lee
00:08:37.259 --> 00:08:52.229
I think we were the only family on that block [that was] Korean American. In fact, I don't remember seeing any Korean Americans at all growing up.

Jeffrey Lee
00:08:52.229 --> 00:09:26.699
There was another Japanese American family, the Fujitas. They were down the street. Our friend was Rodney Fujita; he was a good friend of mine and my brother, Doug. And Mr. Fujita was a graphic artist for NASA. So, he was the guy responsible for those paintings of the spaceships and how they were supposed to look. It was really cool what he was doing with the airbrush. So, most of his work was done at home which, at the time, was unthought of and unheard of, but that's where [their] studio was.

Jeffrey Lee
00:09:26.699 --> 00:10:11.669
But between the Fujitas and the Lees, I think we were the only Asian American or people of color in that neighborhood at all. In 1965, I can't remember seeing another person of color in

that neighborhood at that time. This is the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. So, I guess we moved uptown into the white neighborhood. There was another [Asian American] family. I think they were Japanese Americans and went to the Methodist church we went to.

Jeffrey Lee
00:10:11.669 --> 00:10:32.699
But we were trying to fit in as the ideal model minority family at the time. And so, everybody thought that we were just great; “oh, the Lees are just great; they have 3 kids; they live in a nice house; they go to church.”

Jeffrey Lee
00:10:32.699 --> 00:10:50.999
My father, because he was an accountant, volunteered his time to the church to come in and take care of the books for the church. So, they liked him for being that good with numbers. We’re all smart kids, friendly, and never got in any trouble.

Jeffrey Lee
00:10:50.999 --> 00:11:16.739
And the Fujitas were Catholics, so they went to St. Bonaventure, which is the Catholic church, right around the corner … We never saw them in the church, so we were actually the only minority family at the United Methodist Church in Huntington Beach in the ‘60s.

Jeffrey Lee
00:11:16.739 --> 00:12:04.319
And then later on there was another … Japanese American family … that had moved into town … Being Asian Americans, we weren’t Chicanos, we weren’t Mexicans, we weren’t Blacks. So, I think we were more accepted. I don't know if that's a proper term, but … during the racial unrest of the ‘60s, I think that our white neighbors were glad that we were Asian Americans, and not say, Black Americans … It's hard to believe now that things have changed so much.

Jeffrey Lee
00:12:04.319 --> 00:12:09.479
Growing up in Huntington Beach, California … I was the only Asian kid around besides my brothers and because we were smart, we tested off the scale on all the intelligence tests they had at the time. We were moved around from school to school. What they were doing in that school district, which is the Huntington Beach Spring View School District, was they would take the smart kids and put them into the poorer neighborhoods that … [were lower]

performing schools so they could bring up [their] scores.

Jeffrey Lee
00:12:41.909 --> 00:13:54.569
It wasn't something that if you thought about it today, you take the gifted kids … [and] bus them into the schools that had the lowest performing scores to boost the scores. What they did then was they took all of us smart, geeky kids and they put us into the schools that had gang issues and the less well performing kids to bring the scores up. This, at the time, seemed like a good idea, but in the end, ended up ostracizing the smarter kids … Those of us who were able to adapt became more streetwise ... And that was probably an interesting social economic experiment that didn't go very well.

Jeffrey Lee
00:13:54.569 --> 00:14:52.409
So, I was at 3 different schools and that school district from the 1st to 8th grade. At one point, my mother took me to her school. She was a teacher for 35 years and she worked in different school districts. She was put in place called the Cypress School District in Cypress, California. She used to tell me that when she first started teaching there, she taught at the 6th grade level, but as the years went by, she started going lower and lower in grades because the students became more and more sophisticated. That's the word she used. So that by the end of her teaching career, 3rd graders were acting more like 6 graders in their ability to react to things in life and how they were as students. So, the 6th graders are actually more like high school students.

Jeffrey Lee
00:14:52.409 --> 00:15:13.619
Anyway, in the 2nd grade, she actually took me out of school in Spring View School District and took me to her school in Cypress because she didn't think I was getting the proper education there. I think I went to 4 different schools from K-8th grade and then we went to the high school.

Jeffrey Lee
00:15:13.619 --> 00:15:57.479
So, at the junior high, we went to Rancho View. That was probably the most formative school. It was a K through 8, but the gifted students only went there from 6th through 8th grade. In fact, I know many of them now on social media. Many of us have master's degrees from high level institutions, so I went to Harvard. And another friend of mine, Debbie Bozanic Moysychyn, she

had her doctorate … from Yale, so most of us who went to that school ended up doing very well in educational and professional pursuits.

Jeffrey Lee
00:15:57.479 --> 00:16:34.289
And then some of the other students who went there ended up in gangs and going to prison. In fact, one of my friends there, Scott Leonhart, last time I saw him, he was in the back of the police car with handcuffs on … So, the school district mixing us up like that, I don't know if that made us more aware or less aware or more ostracized than we were as kids.

Jeffrey Lee
00:16:34.289 --> 00:17:18.419
From there, I went to Marina High School which was one of the prefab high schools in the '60s, prefab meaning they built it out of huge blocks of cement … In Huntington Beach, California, it was one of two high schools at the time. I think it was built in 1963 … and was built for 2,000 students. When I was there, it had 4,300 students. And it … had been the largest high school this side of the Mississippi River. There were 4,300 students in that school that was built for 2,000.

Jeffrey Lee
00:17:18.419 --> 00:17:23.669
So, it was very crowded in it and once again, because of where it was, there was very little minority representation. There were probably 99% white [students]. But it was in a pretty rich area of town. Most of the families had somebody working at NASA. At the time in Huntington Beach, [many people] worked at NASA … on the Apollo program.

Jeffrey Lee
00:17:52.439 --> 00:18:14.939
Everybody was doing pretty good. There was one Black family I knew … They were the Browns … [They had] 3 kids in the school, but they were the only Black family in town. So, between us, the Fujitas and the Browns, we were the only minority kids at school.

Jeffrey Lee
00:18:14.939 --> 00:18:32.549
So, my oldest brother, Patrick, graduated in 1972. And then my older brother, Douglas, graduated in 1974. And then I graduated in 1977.

Jeffrey Lee
00:18:32.549 --> 00:19:04.919
During the years we were there, the Vietnam War was raging. Those kids who didn't go to college ended up getting drafted into the Army. But because a lot of us were in the higher socioeconomic track, [we] ended up going to college and getting the educational deferment. So, we didn't actually go to Vietnam, although I know a lot of kids who did at the time.

Jeffrey Lee
00:19:04.919 --> 00:19:30.479
My cousin, for instance, [was] a different story. My cousin Nathan Kong, who was 23, was born in Hawaii and grew up in Honolulu … He ended up going to Vietnam as a ranger. [He was] a First Lieutenant in the Army and ended up dying in a little village called Binh Tuy.

Jeffrey Lee
00:19:30.479 --> 00:20:27.389
It was February 20, 1971 … Because he was Asian, he could pass for Vietnamese and he said, sometimes it helped. Sometimes, it didn't help. At the time, they were in a hot landing zone. The Ranger Battalion got it and he was working with the Vietnamese Rangers … so he died out in the field as a 23-year-old. He was my older cousin … by about … 10 years … He will always be my older cousin even though he passed away.

Jeffrey Lee
00:20:27.389 --> 00:21:42.149
So, we're in high school from 1973 to 1977. My older brother, Doug, was there as a senior when I was there as a freshman, and they cut you some slack there for not just [being] a geeky freshman. You're a geeky freshman with a senior brother and that helps cut some slack … It's the early '70s. I guess people are getting drafted. Smarter kids [were] going to college [with] the educational deferment, not going to Vietnam which was important … The lower socio economic [class of] students without the educational deferment were actually going to Vietnam and dying.

Jeffrey Lee
00:21:42.149 --> 00:22:23.849
I remembered my brother, Patrick, who graduated from high school in 1972, he was right in the thick of it. He had a draft card with the number 34. And if you remember how the draft worked at the time, everybody got a card with their birth date on it and on that birthday. His was February 4th. They would roll out … a bingo roller and whatever number came up, everybody

who was below that number would report into the draft center, recruiting processing center.

Jeffrey Lee
00:22:23.849 --> 00:22:32.399
That late in the war, if you had a number less than 200, you're probably going to be drafted and probably going to be going to the processing center, and you can either join the Marines or the Coast Guard, or some other military service, or you go right into the Army.

Jeffrey Lee
00:22:40.409 --> 00:23:03.689
So, my brother's number was 34, which means that he was going if his number came up. Anything less than a 100 and he was going … We knew some people who went. Some people who didn't come back.

Jeffrey Lee
00:23:03.689 --> 00:23:12.389
I remember very vividly memories of my brothers sitting, watching the draft that used to be carried out live on TV. At like 6 o'clock in the morning, they would do the draft and he would watch to see which numbers were coming up. By the time he was 18 in 1972, I'm pretty sure they stopped the draft, so he didn't get drafted, but it was a very scary time for him. I mean, he was an Eagle Scout. He was a member of the band. He had all those things going for him. He was a smart kid.

Jeffrey Lee
00:23:59.309 --> 00:24:02.699
If you didn't get into college for some reason, you would end up going to the war in Vietnam … I didn't know the draft was broken around socioeconomic lines. So those kids who were in the draft were really kids of color, those kids who are not going to college, those kids who had lower incomes. Those are the kids getting drafted so if … you read history now … think about the disproportionate numbers of Black, Hispanic, and Asian kids who went to Vietnam.

Jeffrey Lee
00:27:24.269 --> 00:28:19.829
I was an Eagle Scout who was the drum major of the band. I was also on the college track, so I was headed off to school. I only applied to 2 colleges as well. At the time, you could apply to the University of California system and apply for 5 colleges within the system. So, I applied to UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis, and UC San Diego. I got accepted to San Diego, which

was where my brother was going … So, I went to UC San Diego as a freshman and my brother Douglas was there as a senior.

Jeffrey Lee
00:28:19.829 --> 00:28:51.269
He was studying electrical engineering … I applied … [to be] a mechanical engineering sciences major [because] I figured he's smart. I'm smart. I could do it and I ended up graduating with a degree in English and American literature. What do you do with that? [You] can't get a job. It's 1981 and the inflation was very much like it is today, but it had lasted years.

Jeffrey Lee
00:29:24.114 --> 00:29:38.514
So, I ended up getting a job at a Black weekly newspaper up in Los Angeles, called The Wave. It's probably still open … So, this newspaper was in Compton where they had the riot.

Jeffrey Lee
00:31:14.849 --> 00:32:50.999
I remember walking next to a recruiting station for the Coast Guard, one of very few. There was a flip sign that said, "Uncle Sam says I want you for the United States Coast Guard" … At that time, my wife, then-girlfriend, whose father had been in the Navy, said that if you have a degree, you can go to an Officer Candidate School. You can be an officer. So, I called the Navy and they said, well, with your degree, you can be … a supply officer. That doesn't sound very exciting. So, I called the Marines and they said you can be a supply officer.

Jeffrey Lee
00:32:50.999 --> 00:32:55.349
I call the Air Force. They said you can be a supply officer.

Jeffrey Lee
00:32:55.349 --> 00:32:59.249
I call the Army. They basically said you can be a supply officer.

Jeffrey Lee
00:32:59.249 --> 00:33:22.019
I called the Coast Guard and they said you can do whatever you want. Do you have a degree? You can be whatever you want. Come on down. So, I went down to the recruiting station in San Jose. It was a very small station with like one guy in there. So, I always thought that the Coast

Guard was like the Navy.

Jeffrey Lee
00:33:22.019 --> 00:33:28.379
I am talking to the recruiter, and he said, “Well, it looks like you got everything. You’ve never been convicted of a crime. You got the right background. You're an Eagle Scout, you’re a drum major, you have a college degree, and you’re a citizen. You have everything it takes to get into Officer Candidate School. So, he said come on down and we'll take this test.

Jeffrey Lee
00:34:28.829 --> 00:34:40.559
So, I said, “I’ll come down and take the test.” And then he told me later on, “You have the highest mechanical score that I have ever seen.”

Jeffrey Lee
00:35:29.249 --> 00:35:49.889
I got a call saying, “Hey, congratulations, you got in … Well, you’re going to the next office, the candidate school class.”

Jeffrey Lee
00:36:07.109 --> 00:36:25.889
It seems reasonable to me that [since] the Coast Guard was a bigger place, the number of Korean Americans in the United States at that time would have much greater representation [in the Coast Guard]. It does today, but at that time, at that time, it did not.

Karen Lau
00:45:57.180 --> 00:46:08.700
I think we’ve just wrapped up the questions about your childhood. Could you tell me more about your family's history of military service on both your mother’s side and your father’s side?

Jeffrey Lee
00:46:12.000 --> 00:47:37.890
So, when I was growing up as a young guy, I didn’t realize that I had military service in my family going back to World War II. I don’t think any of us were involved in the service in World War I. I’m pretty sure that on both sides, all of my uncles served in World War II. When they entered the service, there was [rampant] racism against Black soldiers. My uncle Sam, who

served in World War II as a Korean, said that he never got treated poorly. But I mentioned this before, but there was a bamboo ceiling.

Jeffrey Lee
00:47:37.890 --> 00:47:44.430
He was an intelligence officer, but he could never get past O5, or [the rank of] a lieutenant colonel in the Army.

Jeffrey Lee
00:48:01.225 --> 00:48:41.670
My uncle Clarence was in the army. I think my uncle Herbert was in the Army. This is on my father's side. My father was in the Air Force. My uncle Richard … was in the Coast Guard … My uncle Danny was in the Army as well. [[Daniel "Danny" Hong was on my mother's side of the family. My Uncle Arthur T.Y Lee, Command Chief Master Sergeant, USAF (ret), Hawaii Air National Guard (HANG), served his entire career in the U.S. Air Force and was the Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) to the HANG Commanding General. He died 31 December 2011 at the age of 81.] They joined the service because of the draft at the time, and they also didn't have any prospects [while] they were living in Hawaii.

Jeffrey Lee
00:49:05.550 --> 00:49:13.410
But I do remember, my uncle Clarence was the oldest of those 5 boys, telling me that he was treated pretty poorly. They used a lot of descriptors like "monkey." He got beat up on, but I don't think it was any worse than anybody else.

Jeffrey Lee
00:49:44.970 --> 00:49:49.200
And my dad, Frederick, was the company boxer so when he got into bootcamp, he went into the Air Force as a company clerk … He was a private 1st class … But, you know, in the postwar '50s, [being] in the army for minorities had to be pretty bad.

Jeffrey Lee
00:53:02.220 --> 00:54:31.200
Now, on my mother's side … [My uncle Sam learned Japanese in Kohala Camp, in Hawaii – when he was 17 or 19 years old. He also used Japanese while he was doing his paper route in Hilo as a boy (before WWII). The U.S. Army sent him to the Japanese Language School in Michigan after he was commissioned.]

Jeffrey Lee
00:54:31.200 --> 00:55:07.410
I'm thinking about a story he told me about his 10-man intelligence group. I think he was a Second Lieutenant. And they were behind enemy lines somewhere in the tropics. And he had a First Sergeant and eight of the guys working for him. And they were doing intelligence gathering and his First Sergeant had orders to shoot my uncle on the head if capture was imminent, because he had too many secrets, and he had [known] too much about intelligence gathering.

Jeffrey Lee
00:55:07.410 --> 00:55:10.800
That was top secret at the time and my uncle didn't know about it until after the war.

Jeffrey Lee
00:56:30.780 --> 00:56:35.100
My uncle David was an Air Force airplane mechanic. So, even though he had a college background, he was probably drafted into the Air Force.

Jeffrey Lee
00:58:12.750 --> 00:58:32.880
So, my father's generation and my mother's generation were fiercely proud to serve the United States partially because they were Asian Americans, partially because we were fighting in the Asian theater, fighting against the Japanese, fighting against Koreans, fighting against the Vietnamese.

Jeffrey Lee
00:58:37.350 --> 00:58:43.830
In fact, my mother showed me a button that she used to wear that said, "I'm not Japanese" [while she was] living in Hawaii at the time. In World War II, every Asian American was suspected of being a Japanese spy which was pretty difficult. I mean if you think about the internment camps here in California, because Korean Americans and Koreans were considered enemy aliens until 1943 because of the annexation of Korea by Japan, I'm pretty sure that there were Korean Americans and Koreans who were also swept up into the internment camps.

Karen Lau
01:02:41.455 --> 01:02:59.040
I've really enjoyed listening to you share your family's history of military service, particularly

your uncle Sam's experience as an intelligence officer in World War II. Could you tell me about your experience serving in the Coast Guard? What roles did you perform in? Where did you serve?

Jeffrey Lee
01:05:11.070 --> 01:05:19.110
I checked in with the duty officer at Officer Candidate School and I was the only Asian guy there. So, I thought this can't be right, this has got to be a mistake.

Jeffrey Lee
01:06:42.090 --> 01:06:50.370
And at this point, I'd only seen movies about what bootcamp is like and I had no idea how intense it was going to be.

Jeffrey Lee
01:07:21.180 --> 01:07:27.510
There were 27 people in the graduating class, [the second-smallest class in modern OCS history]. So, it starts obviously, you know, like boot camp at 5:30 in the morning and then they all get in your face.

Jeffrey Lee
01:08:19.740 --> 01:08:26.370
After they shaved everybody's head, you put you in that big green jacket and you had that bag and the rifle. And you're standing out there. It was January or February, snow on the ground.

Jeffrey Lee
01:09:12.240 --> 01:10:06.210
I remember thinking as I'm standing there in the snow that I really screwed up this time. I remember thinking, "Jeff, you've really screwed up this time. There's no escape. You're going to be here and so I remember the OCS instructor, the lieutenant telling us that that gate is the only thing you've got between you and running through the battlefield town. And even the fence doesn't have barbed wire on it. So, if you wanted to run, you could probably get over that fence and you could run, but we will find you in the battlefield, maybe not tomorrow. Maybe not the next day, but we will find you and I remember standing here thinking, "Oh my God, what's it going to be like?"

Jeffrey Lee
01:10:06.210 --> 01:10:10.470
So, actually I did well. I wasn't very fast, so I couldn't run, but because I had been an Eagle Scout, because I'd been a drum major, I could actually lead the platoon around marching.

Jeffrey Lee
01:10:56.580 --> 01:11:07.860
I didn't actually know at the time, probably didn't know for another 5 or 6 or 10 years that I was the first Korean American to go through Officer Candidate School. If you figure that has been around since 1790, and we've been through all the wars … Now, it seems incredulous.

Jeffrey Lee
01:11:37.560 --> 01:12:15.870
I wonder about that now, the Coast Guard has always been known as the most white, all male service and a lot of that has to do with station keepers, lighthouses, and load stations because it used to go from father to son. Although the Coast Guard has a long history of having Black [people] in the service, they were always relegated to some role of being a steward or working in the kitchen.

Jeffrey Lee
01:12:15.870 --> 01:12:20.820
Or, like, my uncle, being a steward working in a ship's office. We didn't really get to drive the boats. That was one thing my uncle told me. He said a recruiter told him that he would be able to drive the boats, [but] he never got to drive the boat. It makes me wonder how I, in 1983, could be the first Korean American to go through [Officer Candidate School].

Jeffrey Lee
01:14:28.045 --> 01:14:42.715
So, the first Chinese American that graduated from the Coast Guard Academy, Jack N. Jones, I knew him, and I worked for him out in Honolulu.

Karen Lau
01:15:39.990 --> 01:15:47.760
Do you remember the specific years in which you served and the names of any ships or bases?

Jeffrey Lee
01:15:58.800 --> 01:16:11.220

So, the first thing I did out of OCS was I went to Coast Guard headquarters where they send a lot of the reserve officers to. Coast Guard headquarters.

Jeffrey Lee
01:17:00.600 --> 01:17:10.260
And I got into that job as a classified material controlling officer. It was working on sort of military readiness, OMR, the Office of Military Readiness, and I worked in a vault. There were 3,000 secret documents in there, at least 150 top-secret war plans and countless confidential books and papers in there.

Jeffrey Lee
01:20:35.610 --> 01:21:07.200
And I stayed there for 2 years, and I remember talking to Captain Leahy. He says, "Jeff, what do you want to do?" And I said, "I want to be in the Coast Guard … I didn't sign up to work in a vault. I didn't sign up to work in a library."

Jeffrey Lee
01:21:07.200 --> 01:22:04.560
He said, "Well, that's where you are now. In order for you to get out to the fleet, you have to do a good job here no matter how much you don't like it … the only way you're going to get to sea in the operational Coast Guard is you're going to have to do 2 years here … How does that make you feel?"

Jeffrey Lee
01:22:24.150 --> 01:22:28.320
He goes now, "You can be honest." I said, "I feel like I'm getting cheated."

Jeffrey Lee
01:22:28.320 --> 01:23:14.490
"Because you are," he says. He says, "I can't do anything about that because that's above my pay grade, but this is where you are, and you have to do a good job." He goes, "no matter how much a s*** sandwich [this is]." I remember him using that phrase and I'd never heard a senior officer say anything like that before. He said, "no wonder how much a s*** sandwich this is, you have to take a bite. It's always better with mayonnaise." He says, "but you got to do your time. We're going to talk about this until you've been here a little while and you prove you can do the job."

Jeffrey Lee
01:24:47.370 --> 01:26:34.320
It took me some years before I saw another Asian American officer, and that was the academy graduate. We're all so proud to serve. [My uncles] were proud that I had made it through and that I was a commissioned officer in the Coast Guard.

Jeffrey Lee
01:26:34.320 --> 01:31:47.100
All the senior officers were white. I didn't see any minority officers [at headquarters] at all. I never met another Korean officer until I've been in the service for 20 years.

Karen Lau
01:35:16.644 --> 01:35:30.234
I've really enjoyed listening to you talk about the conversations that you've shared with your mentors. What do you recall about your relationships in camaraderie with some of your shipmates? Are you still in touch with any of them today?

Jeffrey Lee
01:35:31.254 --> 01:35:32.484
Actually yes, I am. In fact, I was talking to Lieutenant Johnny Kidwell yesterday. I was the executive officer on the Hamilton, which is a high endurance cutter, 378 feet long.

Jeffrey Lee
01:37:47.159 --> 01:38:59.099
I remember talking to the executive officer, John Tozzi … He had this "welcome aboard" talk with me. He said, "Number 1, you get a gold star in my book because you volunteered for this. You're not here, because the Commandant says every Academy graduate goes to sea … There are a lot of your shipmates that are going to resent you for that. They don't know what you are. You've got that little "R" at the end of your name that says, "Coast Guard Reserve.""

Jeffrey Lee
01:38:59.099 --> 01:40:25.349
Again, this is the third person who said, "Keep your head down. Do a good job. Learn as much as you can." He said, "This is why you joined. This is the adventure part. I'm going to make you the weapons officer."

Jeffrey Lee

01:40:25.349 --> 01:41:02.999

It's about not working at headquarters writing memos. It's about going to sea. And from that day forward, I had the bug. I really wanted to do the best job I could. And I remember, when we left the dock, and we're like, "Oh, my God. The ship is leaving the dock. I'm going to Alaska. This is the coolest thing ever."

Jeffrey Lee

01:41:02.999 --> 01:41:25.679

We were in Seattle at the time, home port, and I thought, "this is just this is what I joined for … How many people get to do this? How many of us are out there actually getting on a Coast Guard cutter and heading to Alaska?" And I remember thinking, "After 2 years at headquarters, working in a cubicle, that this was [worth] it."

Karen Lau

01:43:38.849 --> 01:43:49.769

Could you tell me more about your path leading to the rank of captain and any challenges you faced with promotions?

Jeffrey Lee

01:43:59.639 --> 01:44:31.199

While I was a weapons officer, Chief Coombs took me aside because all the junior officers usually have a chief. He goes, "Lieutenant … I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure you succeed. Any questions you have, you can come to me … We all understand that you're here because you want to be here."

Jeffrey Lee

01:48:36.329 --> 01:49:14.849

And I was assigned to command of an 82-foot patrol boat, which in the Coast Guard, getting early command is quite the plum … They only award the commanding officer jobs to the best and brightest and you have to get a pretty good recommendation from your command, the captain, in order to get a command.

Jeffrey Lee

01:49:14.849 --> 01:49:45.899

We went everywhere. We went to Alaska, we went down south to Peru, Guatemala, Panamá, Mexico. I ended up getting recommended for command of the Point Stuart which is an 82-foot

patrol boat. And it was parked at the time in San Diego. It's now been decommissioned. When it was parked in San Diego, I remember being an O-2. I think I had 3 ribbons, then got command. But I was the only officer to get command from that year group.

Jeffrey Lee
01:51:35.249 --> 01:51:40.649
After the 82-foot patrol boat, I ended up going to the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) in Honolulu. Joint because of the Air Force and Navy component. I worked there for 3 years, and while I was there, the captain of the Coast Guard Cutter Cape Cross, which is a 95-foot patrol boat, got fired … So, I took over that role for 6 months, and then I went back to the JRCC and from there, I went to the Biscayne Bay icebreaking tug up in the Great Lakes. It's a 140-foot icebreaking tug. I did that for 3 years.

Jeffrey Lee
01:53:29.009 --> 01:53:32.219
And I ended up going back to and ended up getting to be the Captain of the Hamilton so that's 6 sea tours, 12 years of sea time. So, in between there, I was working at the Joint Rescue Coordination Center, working at the Afloat Training Group for the Navy. So, an awful lot of operational time.

Jeffrey Lee
01:55:35.069 --> 01:55:43.649
There are only 247 or so captains in the Coast Guard at any one time. So, when I retired, there were 246, so I was number 247 or 246. Of the Asian American captains, there were only 2 of us. And then later on, when Pat Trapp retired as well, then there was none. There was no captain and there were no Asian American captains in the pipeline. There were no O-5s [the rank of Commander in the Coast Guard], but there were O-4s [the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Coast Guard].

Karen Lau
01:56:19.409 --> 01:56:27.479
As a Korean American veteran, do you feel that your service in the Coast Guard has been recognized to the same extent as your white counterparts?

Jeffrey Lee
01:56:40.469 --> 01:57:36.239
Well, that's a great question. I don't think my white counterparts were as noticeable as I am as

the lone Korean American captain … As a role model of where you can be, I think I played a big part in that when I was at the Academy as a professor and as a teacher.

Karen Lau
01:58:14.339 --> 01:58:23.879
Is there anything else that you would like to share about your service or your life after your service in the Coast Guard?

Jeffrey Lee
01:58:23.879 --> 02:00:20.249
Well, I would say that the Coast Guard is the best thing I've done in 25 years. When I joined, I had no idea how much of an opportunity it would be and if you think about it. At 12 years at sea in 4 commands, I went to Harvard. And now I'm living the life of the retired military gentry.

Jeffrey Lee
02:01:06.419 --> 02:01:10.139
So being an American to me means service beyond self. I don't know how many times I've taken the oath of office to protect and defend the Constitution, but you know, it seems to play out right now during the January 6 hearings that people who take the oath often violate the oath.

Jeffrey Lee
02:01:35.219 --> 02:02:00.089
And being a member of the Armed Services, I've often heard that you signed a blank check to Uncle Sam, including giving your life as the utmost measure of service, and I had several near death experiences.

Jeffrey Lee
02:02:54.749 --> 02:04:37.289
I think the most saves in any period was … the Chinese smuggling ship Wing Fung Lung… So, there was a Chinese smuggling ship coming from the Fukan province in China, and they had smuggled over 250 people from China to the United States. And that was December 6th, 1999. And the other high endurance cutter, the Cutter Monroe, intercepted this Chinese vessel of 250 Chinese migrants, and they were trying to go to San Francisco. But they had been on a voyage from hell that I don't know if they went around Cape Horn, because they couldn't go through the Panama Canal. And when we intercepted them, I actually thought they were off the coast of San Francisco when they were actually at the Guatemala, El Salvador border.

Jeffrey Lee

02:04:37.289 --> 02:04:46.979

So, we actually intercepted them with the Coast Guard Cutter Munro … We tried to steer them into port. Several of them started jumping off the ship because they would rather commit suicide than to go onto the port.

Jeffrey Lee

02:05:01.979 --> 02:06:00.119

And one of my boarding officers actually made it down to the ship and described it as being a slave ship over 250 people on board, and every surface of the ship was covered and everyone had a little plastic bag of a white T shirt and pair of shoes and cotton slacks, so that when they got the port, their thinking was they could get on port and run away. The real number was 233 Chinese migrants and we delivered them to Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala. I consider that one of my biggest saves.

Jeffrey Lee

02:06:25.739 --> 02:07:25.979

One of the other biggest cases I worked on was the crash of the Alaska Airlines Flight 261. I think that was January 31st, 2000. Everybody died in that case. We were in port, San Diego, and we got recalled to become the on-scene commander … The Alaska Airlines flight had crashed into the Pacific Ocean, the Channel Islands off of Long Beach, and everyone perished. All 200 plus souls. And we were out there for more than a week as the on-scene commander. That was probably the largest loss of life in a single incident.

Jeffrey Lee

02:07:43.529 --> 02:08:27.539

In another case, this is September 24, 1999. This was the Hamilton. This was the case of the Russian fishing vessel Gissar. These guys are up in the Bering Sea fishing illegally. So, when we bought Alaska from Russia, they claimed a certain line in the ocean and we claimed another line in the ocean, depending on which type of navigational chart you use.. So, there's a slice of ocean between Russia and the U.S., we call the disputed zone, kind of like Star Trek.

Jeffrey Lee

02:08:47.309 --> 02:09:25.079

So, at the time, this was back in the late '90s, Russia was really having a hard time economically, so they were selling fishing permits to anybody who had the money to fish. And in the United States, we were patrolling as the Coast Guard [since] part of our mission is

species enforcement. We were steaming up and down this line to make sure that none of the foreign vessels of Russian boats fished in the United States' waters. It seems petty, I guess, but protection of natural resources was one of the Coast Guard's jobs.

Jeffrey Lee
02:09:25.079 --> 02:09:29.849
So, the Russians claimed that these fish were actually Russian fish. If they were only on the Russian side, but obviously that's not true. Pollock and cod swim around the Bering Sea in a great big circle and so, we were trying to keep these Russians from fishing in the United States' waters. And so, we caught this Russian fishing vessel, the Gissar. They had crossed what we call the Maritime Boundary Line, the MBL.

Jeffrey Lee
02:09:29.849--> 02:10:42.899
Anyway, so they were 437 yards into the U.S. waters, which doesn't seem like that much, right? It's four football fields. But we ended up seizing them, their catch, their crew, 74 people. But it became an international incident … It became very tense … We ended up, at the end, handing the Russian fishing boat over to the Russian Federal Port Guards, but not before we were circled by a whole group of three big Russian factory boats.

Jeffrey Lee
02:10:42.899 --> 02:10:46.319
So, we're kind of out there by ourselves and I remember the captain on the radio said, "Are you ready to go to war over fish?" So, we're like, "no." We were told by the U.S. State Department to just continue to drift with the Gissar. The Russians thought we were drifting into the Russian area, but we were actually drifting more into the U.S. area, but that was a very significant case.

Jeffrey Lee
02:11:10.289 --> 02:12:22.769
Let's see, see, there's another one … This is the container ship Gatun, the Coast Guard Cutter Sherman, and the Hamilton. This is when I was the captain of the Hamilton, so it had to be about 2006. I think that we had some human intelligence, HUMINT. That means that we had somebody on the inside of their organization working for the U.S. whether it be customs, border patrol, could be any number of agencies. So, we had somebody feeding us intelligence about where this water vessel, the container ship Gatun, was heading.

Jeffrey Lee

02:12:22.769 --> 02:12:57.899

It was headed up from Panama or Columbia. We caught them at the Panamanian-Costa Rican border. And the intelligence we had said that they had a container full of 40 tons of cocaine. So, it'd be one of those great big containers you see on the side of the street or at the shipping terminals. It was filled with 40 tons of cocaine which at the time, I think was worth 1.6 billion dollars.

Jeffrey Lee

02:12:57.899 --> 02:13:39.329

But because we used human intelligence, we didn't want to burn this guy or girl or whoever it was. So, we had to stop the ship at sea. I think it's a 1000-foot ship. We stopped the ship at sea, and we couldn't go right to the container, so we had to pretend like we were searching the ship and then kind of happen upon it … Once we got the container open, it wasn't on top nor was it in the middle of the stack. You've seen container ships, right? And it was sort of in the middle of a stack. By the time we got to it, we had been there for … a couple of days.

Jeffrey Lee

02:13:39.329 --> 02:14:29.939

And we couldn't talk about it because it was classified, so there's no big press release … This was 40 tons of cocaine. I think this was one of the largest the Coast Guard has ever had, but because it was all based on human intelligence, we couldn't really talk about it. There are a couple of other cases that weren't necessarily bigger or smaller but were significant in my mind as search and rescue cases.

Jeffrey Lee

02:14:29.939 --> 02:14:38.459

Like I said, they used to call me "doctor death" when I was working at them during rescue center because while I was on watch for that 24-hour period, lots of people died.

Jeffrey Lee

02:14:46.319 --> 02:14:52.469

The Joint Rescue Coordination Center had responsibility for … 14 million acres of ocean … They went from just starting with the Oregon-Washington state line out into the ocean down to Antarctica and beyond. 14 million square miles of ocean, it's a big area.

Jeffrey Lee

02:15:40.289 --> 02:16:04.589

So, but the hardest part about that job, the is bringing their relatives into the operations center and explain to them why their husband, wife, or their son's not coming back and why we're not necessarily going to send somebody out 1000 miles out to sea to either go on a container ship or send a C-130 Hercules aircraft to try and save that person. Or if they're already missing, or if we're calling off the search. That was probably the toughest part of that job.

Karen Lau

02:16:24.089 --> 02:16:31.169

The only thing that I'm missing is the year that you began your service and the year that your service ended.

Jeffrey Lee

02:16:34.169 --> 02:16:39.569

I joined the service in 1983, commissioned in May, and then I retired in April 2008, think that was right. I think that gives me just under 25 years. I rounded out 25 years of service.

Karen Lau

02:16:57.539 --> 02:17:07.079

Thank you so much for doing this interview. It was really great to learn more about your family's history and your experiences both during your childhood and your service.

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**“History is *not* the past. It is the stories we tell about the past.**

**How we tell these stories - triumphantly or self-critically, metaphysically or dialectally - has a lot to do with whether we cut short or advance our *evolution as human beings.*”**

**— Grace Lee Boggs**

For all students yearning to see themselves in the pages of their textbooks
For all educators striving to cultivate belonging in the classroom
For all advocates demanding to Make Us Visible