Member Newsletter 2016

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A Message from the Executive Director

In 2016 the Wing Luke Museum is honored to share with you an unprecedented exhibition in which the Khmer American community shares its stories, dreams and how they’re meeting today’s challenges.

From the dedicated Community Advisory Committee members who created this exhibition over the past eighteen months, we learn that the Khmer who fled Cambodia came to this country as refugees. They are now reclaiming and showcasing culture as a way to lift up communities here and abroad.

In November, Americans were challenged to consider the plight of Syrian refugees, fleeing persecution while terrorists attacked Paris. The duly-elected Democratic mayor of Roanoke, Virginia issued a press statement barring Syrian refugees, citing President Roosevelt’s World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans as precedent. “The threat of harm to America from ISIS now is just as real and serious as that from our enemies then,” he said.

I admit my stomach turned on reading this message – have we learned anything? It has been illuminating once again to witness our own reactions within an atmosphere of fear, the real test of our principles. As the late community leader Frank Kitamoto reflected on being unjustly incarcerated by his government, “the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is fear.”

My hope for 2016 is that we can open our minds and our hearts, and find courage even within the fear. With appreciation to all of you for making possible so many stories and truths at The Wing, to share with all.

Beth Takekawa, Executive Director

Japanese American school children imprisoned in Minidoka Internment Camp with their families during WWII
On the cover: “This photo is of my grandmother [dad’s mom] arriving in the U.S. My dad filled out the paperwork to sponsor her. My grandfather (on my mom’s side) is carrying my grandmother. My grandmother is my grandfather’s sister — my parents are cousins. My dad is standing beside both my grandmother and grandfather. He is the man who is crying. I haven’t seen him cry very much, but he had not seen his mother since we left Cambodia in 1975. The man behind all of them is my uncle, who is carrying a camera around his neck. This photo was taken on August 26, 1986.”

— Chanira Reang Sperry

Courtesy of Chanira Reang Sperry

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for this exhibit wanted, more than anything, to show that Khmer and Kmer-Americans are so much more than the Killing Fields. Even before the Pol Pot regime, Cambodia had a thriving culture, rich with history and even Western pop influences (known as the ‘Golden Age of Pop’!)

The goal of this exhibit is to not only remember the past, but to highlight the future, both in Cambodia and here in the United States. See the stories of refugees coming to the Pacific Northwest and how they are flourishing.

Here is a peek into Bopha Cheng’s family story, which is featured in the exhibition.

Bopha’s father, Hong Cheng, travelled back and forth between Cambodia and Thailand to bring 40 family members to the refugee camps. During one of these numerous and dangerous trips, he became separated from his eldest son, Pola, who ended up in a camp in the Philippines and was later adopted by a family in South Carolina. Father and son were eventually reunited with the help of the Red Cross in 1993.

Hong Cheng, David Chum, Nephi Cheng, Pola Jan, Borittar Cheng, Bopha Cheng, Brandon Chum

This Khmer/English dictionary came from the University of Washington’s bookstore and has served as a navigational tool for Bopha’s parents since their arrival in Washington State in 1981. Bopha’s mother continues to refer to the dictionary to this day.

“My parents would do this every morning - they would intentionally turn on the TV to the news or whatever it was and they would listen, and they would watch. Not because they understood what they were saying, but so they could mimic some of the mannerisms... Then when they would have words they did not understand they would write it down and they would look it up in this dictionary.”

Bopha Cheng is a second generation Khmer American born in Olympia, Washington. Currently, she is a Program Manager for Highline College’s TRIO Student Support and Retention Services Program.

Bopha, front row, far right, and husband, Lang Say, second row, third from left, participate in Khmer In Action, a local organization that builds community solidarity through collective action for social change.

Photos courtesy of Bopha Cheng.
Tell me about the theme of this year’s exhibit.

Before agreeing to TV and film roles, Bruce tells us himself, “I wanted to make sure before I signed that there wouldn’t be any ‘ah-so’s’ and ‘chop-chops’ in the dialogue and that I would not be required to go bouncing around with a pigtail.” For the second exhibit, we pulled out rare materials from our collection to vividly demonstrate these stereotypes – from the Evil Villain to the Helpmate – so visitors can see how Asians and Asian Americans were portrayed in the U.S. before Bruce Lee.

What other barriers did he face?

Sometimes we forget just how much racism existed during Bruce’s time. Did you know that when Bruce was born – 75 years ago – immigration by Chinese was illegal, people of different races weren’t allowed to marry in 30 states, and people of color couldn’t live wherever they wanted? The exhibit takes this snapshot of our country and then shows how Bruce took steps to change perceptions and cross racial boundaries.

Well, Kato from The Green Hornet really took the nation by storm.

Here is where we see something we hadn’t seen before – the Sidekick overtakes the Hero. We have over 100 Green Hornet and Kato collectibles on display in the main gallery and upstairs near our Library. As you look at the images, a pattern emerges. First, there are just images of the Green Hornet, then tons of images of the Green Hornet and Kato side-by-side. Finally, there are just images of Kato alone.

In some ways, the Kato role broke barriers – but in many ways, those barriers held steadfast in Hollywood. The exhibit continues with what happened in Bruce’s career between 1967 when The Green Hornet was cancelled and 1971 when The Big Boss was released. He struggled to find work and only had a handful of roles.

Thank goodness he went overseas to film his movies.

I know! This part of the exhibit really allows visitors to go in deep, reading personal correspondence as he made his films, rare photos, and learning behind-the-scenes tidbits. There are two new interactive videos in the exhibit as well. One is narrated by Yuji Okumoto and breaks down his epic fight with Chuck Norris in The Way of the Dragon. The other video tests your knowledge of Bruce’s fight scenes with Cole Horibe and Kevin Park.

Speaking of interactives, I heard there’s a One-Inch Punch Machine?

Bruce is famously known for being able to blow back someone several feet with a punch from just one inch away. We worked with Dr. Kevin McQuade and graduate student Jake Price from the University of Washington’s Department of Rehabilitation Medicine to develop a machine that measures the g-force of your one-inch punch.
NEW EXHIBIT

SEEDS OF CHANGE, ROOTS OF POWER: THE DANNY WOO COMMUNITY GARDEN

On Display May 4, 2016 – January 17, 2017

Presented in partnership with InterIm-CDA, this exhibit celebrates this neighborhood resource that bridges generations and preserves culture, tradition, and identity. It has historical and contemporary photos of the garden, video of interviews with current gardeners sharing their stories as immigrants and the positive and healing effects of the garden.

Below are some wise words from the four gardeners (one married couple) that include memories, what they like best about working in the garden, what kinds of food they eat, and how they feel the garden will help bridge generations.

While I have been raising my crops, I learned that there is nothing free. You have to work and the results reflect how much effort you put in. The younger generation, they shouldn’t only have to wait for an opportunity or chance. They just need to be productive and I want to tell them that is probably the best way.
— Yong Sung Song

Being able to watch your garden grow and to care for it and eat it, the feeling that you get — it cannot be explained in words — there are no ways to describe it in Korean — I don’t know about in English though.
— Hee Ja Song

It’s nice to have a place like this for older people, rather than staying inside the house and lying around. Since the air is nice, I walk around this place.

Young people won’t [garden]. They won’t do it when they’re older either. No matter how I look at it, they are different from our generation. You know what the kids say? When I shared that when I was young there was nothing to eat and we were starving to death, they said to eat instant noodles. There’s no such thing as instant noodles back then. So the younger generation don’t really know — they don’t know their history — they don’t know anything.
— Sun Tok Lee

I heard that when I was younger whenever I was hungry, I said, “Mom my stomach hurts, my stomach hurts”. There was nothing to eat at that time — during President Park Chung Hee’s time. I couldn’t even eat barley rice...

When I climb up [to the garden], the air is nice. When I come up here, I hold on the rails and walk a little bit and rest, walk a little bit and rest. It’s comfortable coming here.
— Shin Min Lee
YEAR OF MONKEYING AROUND

By artist and Pokemon Illustrator Wendi Chen


**Famous monkeys:** Leonardo da Vinci, Charles Dickens, Yao Ming, Lucy Liu, Josh Hutcherson, Selena Gomez, Eleanor Roosevelt, Miley Cyrus

**Characteristics of people born in the Year of the Monkey:** Curious, clever, playful, creative, sociable, confident, optimistic, charming

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2016 Year of the Monkey Coloring Contest

Judges will be selecting 12 Honorable Mentions (who will receive Woodland Park Zoo Fun Packs). From those 12, the winner will be determined by online voting from April 15-26th, for the grand prize of $800 gift certificate from The Bellevue Collection and membership to The Wing.

Follow us on social media or check back on the website (wingluke.org/coloring-contest) for more details on the voting process.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

WHAT IS THIS?

Can you identify this item and what it is used for?

**HINT:** It’s used to catch something delicious.

Email your guess to pr@wingluke.org along with your name and contact information. Correct responses will receive a museum pass. Look for the correct answer in next year’s newsletter.

**Answer from the last issue:** Hong Wah Kues were a semi pro basketball team which traveled around the western US in 1939–1940 to play games against similar teams, even the Harlem Globe Trotters.
Perhaps you’ve had a wonderful Interpretive Lead (IL) take you around the neighborhood or received some educational materials if you’re a school teacher. But do you know what it takes to be in this department? Our staff are brimming full of knowledge (go ahead, ask them as many questions as your heart desires!) and are constantly learning. See how much work and love they put themselves through in order to give the best, most informative experience to our visitors!

These are just SOME of the topics this department is reading up on at the moment:

**FACTS ABOUT THE TOURS & EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

- **12 Employees**
- **6 Reading materials on their desks at any given time**
- **36+ Topics studied**
- **83 Zip Codes**
- **10+ Tours/day**
- **17 Types of Tours Offered**
- **138 Schools**
- **24 Low Income**
- **3 Non-U.S.**

New Board Member Tera Beach is the district director for Congressman Jim McDermott, and was the key staff person working with the Wing Luke Museum toward its designation by former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar as a National Park Service Affiliated Area. Congressman McDermott led a coalition of nine members of Congress who requested the Wing’s designation, a rare recognition of an Asian Pacific American site as one of America’s cultural treasures.

In her 17 years on Congressman McDermott’s staff, Beach has served as an essential connector for Seattle’s arts community with a senior member of Congress. She is also dedicated to the project to restore honor to the African American veterans of Fort Lawton, who were unjustly court martialed in 1944.

In her volunteer work, Beach serves on the SEAFAIR Foundation Board. While attending Ballard High School, she was a SEAFAIR ambassador who served as a member of the first post-conflict delegation of Americans to visit Vietnam.

Many thanks and farewell to departing Board members Aileen Balahadja and Sally Henriques.
A peaceful and inclusive world. This is the ideal that drives Doug and Noriko Palmer's over-arching philanthropy and their commitment to The Wing Luke Museum.

Both Doug and Noriko boast longstanding ties to the Asian Pacific Community, with Noriko calling herself a proud APA community member and Doug mentioning Bruce Lee (yes, that Bruce Lee) as “a friend as well as a teacher and virtual big brother.”

The Palmers’ connection to The Wing also goes way back. “Doug’s father was friends with Wing Luke,” Noriko says. “We’ve been involved since before the museum was a museum!” Doug adds that as The Wing has grown over the years, so has their involvement.

So what spurs their commitment? Ties to the APA community are one reason. Noriko explains that for many Asian Pacific Americans, The Wing serves as a bridge between “where we are now and where we came from. That has a very significant meaning for a lot of people.”

But more than ties to the APA community keep Doug and Noriko involved. It goes back to that over-arching philanthropic vision.

How do we create a peaceful and inclusive world? Doug hopes for “a population which understands and embraces diversity.” That’s why Noriko and Doug are both adamant that The Wing has as much to offer those outside the APA community as those within it.

According to Doug, The Wing serves as an introduction for many to the entire Chinatown-International District neighborhood as well as “a wonderful window through which folks can learn about Asian Pacific Americans and their place in the American mosaic. The Wing broadens understanding of APA history and contributions in the greater society.”

Noriko concurs, and adds that if anyone out there is thinking of visiting, volunteering or donating, her advice is simple: Do it!

As much as giving is a part of their lives, both Noriko and Doug also express gratitude for all they have been given. “We are grateful for what we have – friends, health, family and community,” says Noriko. They both point to mentors as something else they are thankful for.

As for mentors who did not go on to become international superstars, Doug is thankful to his parents, “for teaching me tolerance and encouraging intellectual curiosity and high standards.”

Noriko also fondly remembers her father for “instilling in me that girls can do anything boys can. I hope I gave my children that same feeling.”

With such strong parental role models, it is perhaps unsurprising that she and Doug both say they want to be most remembered as loving parents and grandparents.

The goal of a peaceful and inclusive world may be a ways off, but the Palmers continue to work toward this long term vision. Along the way, they’ll be encouraging their family, friends and community to enjoy and support The Wing.
Closing its doors in 2008, the late owner James Mar (1914–2012) retired and donated his family’s legacy, Yick Fung (plentiful harvest) Co., to The Wing for preservation. Built in the core of Seattle’s Chinatown-International District (C-ID) in 1910, it served as: a wholesaler of sorts to neighborhood restaurants such as Tai Tung, the oldest Chinese restaurant in the C-ID still operating; a grocery store with dry goods, preserved treats, tea, medicine, etc.; a ticketing agent for the freight company Blue Funnel Line; and temporary housing for immigrants and migrant workers mainly from China, Japan, and the Philippines. The store and its entire content moved over, piece by piece, a few doors down to the Museum. It was carefully rebuilt with the original cabinetry, hardware, equipment, and store inventory including canned goods and jars of preserved fruits and candies and is now a permanent feature of the Museum’s historic spaces.

This year we received a grant from 4Culture to facilitate completion of the cataloging and documentation of the Yick Fung Immersion Exhibit. We are taking this opportunity to have Maxine Chan, Seattle food anthropologist, assist us with replacing or discarding some of the preserved food stuffs in the store with new preserved items or reserved surplus inventory from the original store’s basement stores.

In order to preserve as much of the texture of the original store we did keep most of the dried fruit jars and contents and the packages dried or preserved foodstuffs from the original store. Best consensus practices would have automatically discarded the food and preserved only the packaging. However an accurate sense of the Yick Fung is the olfactory sensation you get when you enter the space. Preserved shrimp and fermented black beans account for much of that scent. Instead of removing that component we have left much of this intact and will now re-assess what is okay to keep and what is not and replace or discard it. Maxine’s expertise in Asian foods will assist us with that and she will also facilitate a workshop for tour docents to tell them more about the food items, their use and history and answer other questions on the content of the store and its place in the Chinese American Import Export trade and the place of the Yick Fung in the history of the neighborhood.
SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

With great appreciation, The Wing acknowledges the following supporters for the calendar year up to December 1, 2015. Thank you for making sure that Asian Pacific American stories are heard, remembered, and brought to life.

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Our Mission is to connect everyone to the rich history, dynamic cultures and art of Asian Pacific Americans through vivid storytelling and inspiring experiences. The Wing is a proud Smithsonian Affiliate, a partnership with the Smithsonian Institution.