

For Immediate Release  
UCLA Asian American Studies Center  
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## **"40 Years of Breaking Ground: UCLA Asian American Studies" A Major Exhibit Opens at UCLA's Powell College Library Rotunda on October 6, 2009 and Runs to December 11, 2009.**

Ever since the UCLA Asian American Studies Center was established in 1969, Asian American and Pacific Islander students, faculty, and staff at UCLA have been involved in the tumultuous societal and intellectual currents of their times, including the anti-war movement, Civil Rights and Black Power struggles, the women's, gay, and lesbian movements, anti-apartheid demonstrations, and activities around achieving equality, diversity and parity in higher education. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have a forty year history linking the traditional concerns of UCLA with the broader political concerns of the society, through speaking out, through research and writing, and through educating others.

Four decades of contributions is as complex, fascinating, and diverse as the UCLA Powell College Library's exhibit: **"40 Years of Breaking Ground: Asian American Studies at UCLA."** The opening day of the exhibit is Tuesday, October 6, 2009, 5 to 7 p.m., in the Rotunda area of the library. The UCLA Asian American Studies Center will also hold its annual Open House for new students and the general public at that time. The exhibit will run from October 6 - December 11, 2009.

Beneath the elaborate, neo-classical Rotunda of Powell College Library, Asian American staff, students and faculty have joined forces with assistance of the College Library to create a stunning visual exhibition of artwork, reproductions of vintage photographs, books, and materials that trace four decades of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have taught, studied, and contributed to intellectual diversity at UCLA.

Co-curated by UCLA's Mary Uyematsu Kao of the Asian American Studies Center Press, and Marjorie Lee, head of the Asian American Studies Center Library/Reading Room, "Breaking Ground" is the first-ever exhibition at UCLA dedicated entirely to giving the general public a visual cultural history of the premiere Asian American Studies program in the nation.

Mary Uyematsu Kao, a photo/graphic production artist, states that "Exhibiting the memorabilia that has been filed away in our archives shows a history that is yet to be told. Selecting and assembling from an overwhelming amount of material, we document a history of "firsts"- the first steering committee that started the Center in 1969, the first Tongan American Unity Conference in 1981, and the first Asian American woman to become a tenured professor in UCLA's History Department. We also showcase the Center Press' very popular first book, *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (1972) and our highly influential *Amerasia Journal* and *AAPI Nexus*. A time line from 1962 to now, with 112 items illustrates events, people, and the culture of each decade of UCLA's Asian American Studies."

Rare items from two of the renowned archival collections that were donated to the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and to the university -- the Fred T. Korematsu *coram nobis* papers and the Yuri Kochiyama papers -- will be on display, along with over 200 books that have been written by faculty, former students, and visiting scholars of the Asian American Studies Center over the years.

Co-curator Marjorie Lee, who, like Mary, obtained her M.A. in Asian American Studies at UCLA and then later went on to obtain her professional degree in library and information studies, is amazed at the idealism, expression, and selfless dedication of those who helped found the Center in the late 1960s, many who went on to become renowned scholars, lawyers, and civil rights activists.

Lee says: "The exhibit is a visual display of the many stakeholders who have helped break ground to forge Asian American Studies at UCLA . What is at Powell Rotunda is only a sampling of the politics, activism, and academic scholarship of the thousands of students, scholars, and community leaders, who helped to build Asian American Studies at UCLA. You can see the passion in their faces in the photographs and realize the extent of their concerns through looking at the books they have written."

The exhibit itself, a montage of ten panels and eight display tables, showcases rare photographs and issues of the decades, as well as a postmodernist tree created by students and alumna of the Asian American Studies Master's Program. The tree is made of entirely recyclable materials on which hang leaves that represent individual graduate students. Undergraduate students have created a poster issue covers from 36 Pacific Ties (UCLA's Asian American and Pacific Islander student newspaper) commemorating over 30 years of "student voice, empowerment and activism in artistry" at UCLA.

There are other surprises for the eye, mind, and spirit, at this exhibit. Among the "surprises for the eyes" are the documentary video projects that students have produced through the Ethnocommunications courses. A dedicated computer station will allow the public to view five of these student projects: \$40 on Pump 9: Desis in the Gas Station Business (2007); Inside (2008); Troqueros: The Life of an L.A. Port Driver (2008); Reverse Discri-mission (2008); and 810LOGY (2002). A full listing of Ethnocommunications student projects can be found at <http://www.aasc.ucla.edu/ethno/filmography.htm>

### **Exhibit Hours and Special Free Events:**

The exhibit runs from October 5 through December 11, 2009 at UCLA's Powell College Library, which is located in the center of the UCLA campus. It is in the Rotunda area of the library. Hours: Monday-Thursday 7 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; and Sunday 1-6 p.m.

There are several programs planned while the exhibit is on display. All are free and open to the UCLA community and the general public:

- o Opening day: Tuesday, October 6, 2009, when the Asian American Studies Center will hold its annual Open House for new students and the general public, at the Powell Library Rotunda, 5 to 7 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

- o November 5: Amerasia Journal presents authors from its latest women's issue "Where Women Tell Stories," 5:30-7 p.m.

- o November 18: "Pacific Ties: Breaking Ground to Asian American and Pacific Islander Student Media" at UCLA, 5-7 p.m.

For more information contact the UCLA Asian American Studies Center (telephone 310 825-2974) or co-curators Marjorie Lee ([marjilee@ucla.edu](mailto:marjilee@ucla.edu)), or Mary U. Kao ([mugao@ucla.edu](mailto:mugao@ucla.edu)).

In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Ethnic Studies Research Centers at UCLA, this exhibit is made possible in part through the generous support of Gene D. Block, UCLA Chancellor; Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, UCLA Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate Division; UCLA Institute of American Cultures; and Rosina Becerra, UCLA Vice Provost with the Office for Faculty Diversity.

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