

President's Message



Deborah Seiler

President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

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Renaissance Website:
<https://csus.edu/rensoc>

Key Dates

Friday, Jan. 5

Printed "At A Glance" Mailed

Monday, Jan. 8

Spring Catalog Posted

Tuesday, Jan. 16

Program Enrollment Opens

Friday, Jan. 26

Orientation and Open House
(Golden Plate Award
Presentation)

Monday, Feb. 5

Spring Classes Begin

HOPE

Welcome to 2024 and the Renaissance Society Spring Semester

For me, the new year brings hope for a better world, one filled with peace, justice, and environmental and humanitarian progress. I look forward to national elections with both anticipation and trepidation. I worry about many issues as I'm sure you do as well. Happily, I'm also enriched by the learning I glean from our peer presenters as well as outside experts on the many subjects we consider. Lifelong learning energizes me with hope for the future.

I especially look forward to our social interactions, whether through our philanthropic efforts, mentoring with Sac State students, or celebrations we share with our own members. My heart radiates with warmth and hope when I attend.

Most of all, I look forward to a "better" Renaissance Society. What do I mean by "better"? For starters, one that expands our membership. We ended the 2022-2023 fiscal year with 1,722 members and currently stand at 1,511. Let's all work collectively to spread the good word about the amazing organization we have inherited and continue to nurture through our volunteer efforts. Help us reach the 2,300 peak membership we achieved before the pandemic.

I also mean a Renaissance Society that is more welcoming, diverse, and inclusive. For those of you who attended on campus classes this past Fall semester, you know I cautioned, then joked, then warned, then finally fined those of you who failed to wear your badge. "What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Sure, The Bard knew this, but I believe a name helps us connect with one another. Personal connection promotes warmth and dialog. And with warmth and dialog come acceptance, understanding, and a sense of belonging which must be the hallmark of our organization.

The words "diversity" and "inclusion" may sound like buzz words. And truly they are just words if there is no positive action to back them up. Positive action means reaching out to the diverse communities in our region to invite their members to join at no or low cost. It means striving to create programming that spans the globe. It means partnering with various organizations to expand our reach. And it means working hard to create a helpful and welcoming home for our newcomers.

I hope you will join me at our January 26 Orientation and Open House to learn more about our society's efforts and meet the many groups and organizations, both on and off campus, with whom we share the good news of all that we offer to members, Sac State students, and members of the community.

I invite you to join me in my hopes for a better future for Renaissance, our community, and the world.



Deborah



How Do Members Prefer To Get Renaissance Information?

A completed "Media Survey" provides some answers
By Rick Atkinson, Chair of the Communications & Marketing Committee

Back in March of 2022 Deborah Seiler recruited her husband, Jim Hodges, to edit the monthly Renaissance Recorder newsletter. Jim explained to Communications Committee members, "As editor, I simply insert text boxes and picture boxes and fill them with words and pictures given to me by members. I continued the columns and content contained in previous editions of The Recorder."

In August of 2023, Jim, Communications Committee members, Deborah, and I began to discuss the ways in which Renaissance members get information about Renaissance Society. We thought, "Given that the Weekly Update, Twitter, and Facebook are able to provide information in a more timely manner than a monthly newsletter, should Renaissance even have a newsletter? If the answer is, 'Yes, we want a newsletter,' how often? (currently there are 11 monthly editions). What should the newsletter contain? Does it matter that newsletter content may be duplicative of information in the Weekly Update, Sac State's Renaissance website, Twitter, or Facebook?"

In November I, as Communications Committee Chair, sent a "Media Survey," to members. (I'd like to thank Janet Heath for her help). Here are some of the results from over 320 respondents:

The survey shows that 63% of respondents ranked the Weekly Update as their number one source of Renaissance Society information.

Ranking:

- (1) Weekly Update
- (2) The Renaissance Recorder newsletter
- (3) the Renaissance Society website
- (4) Facebook
- (5) X [Twitter]

Concerning The Renaissance Recorder:

How often do you read the Recorder?

62% Often, 23% Sometimes, 9% Rarely, 4% Never

Do you find the Recorder useful?

50% Very, 43% Somewhat, 5% Not Very

Do you usually read the President's Corner

71% Yes, 29% No

Do you read the Forum Presentation Schedule?

84% Yes, 15% No.

Do you read Member Profiles?

56% Yes, 43% No

Do you read Volunteer Highlights?

67% Yes, 32% No.

We are pleased to learn that 85% of respondents read the Recorder and 93% find it very or somewhat useful.

We will continue to provide information in a timely and useful manner through our five methods of communication..



Martin Luther King Celebration

By Debbie Martinez



The annual MLK Celebration Sacramento, will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2024 at Sacramento State University. This is the 25th year the event will be held to honor and remember the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Renaissance has been a long time supporter of the MLK Celebration Sacramento and we want to have a strong showing of attendance this year. Tickets are \$100 each (+\$8.55) and the deadline is January 22, 2024. Tickets are limited so purchase your ticket today at their website:

<https://www.mlkcelebrationsacramento.org/>

Let Debbie Martinez (Debraly78@pacbell.net) know you are coming, so she can arrange to have Renaissance members seated together.



Born from an idea in a Renaissance Seminar
Washington Commons Cohousing – An Update

330 G Street, West Sacramento

By Anne Geraghty

Ten years ago an idea for a new cohousing community was born out of a Renaissance Society seminar co-led by Gloria Reynolds and Anne Geraghty. Renaissance Village Homes was organized in 2013 to undertake the process of creating a new cohousing community.

Its three-word name speaks to:

- its Renaissance Society origins,
- Village - to the sort of community desired – a friendly village, and
- Homes - to assure people that it was not going to be communal – that everyone would have their own private dwelling.

After locating a potential site in West Sacramento, Renaissance Village Homes changed its name to Washington Commons; its name relating to its site in the Washington District of West Sacramento and Commons for its desire to have a community focus.

In fact, cohousing is based on the combination of community and privacy. There is the opportunity to share ideas, meals, and governance but at the same time, each member has their own private home.

Members worked with a professional team over several years to bring the project to its current state of near completion.

Over 40 individuals both singles and couples are anticipating moving into Washington Commons in February. Members have come from this region, the Bay Area and other states and countries including Arizona, New Hampshire, South Korea and Israel.

Washington Commons will have 35 one and two-bedroom condominium flats in a 4-story building designed to take advantage of the site's southern exposure and the Delta Breeze.

Members are looking forward to walking and bicycling along the Sacramento River (one block away) and to nearby locations including the Crocker, Sutter Health Park, and downtown Sacramento.

A few homes are still available. Information can be had at Washington-Commons.org.

Congratulations Washington Commons!



**Two Music Students Awarded
\$1,000 Grants**

By Robert Seyfried



On Friday, December 8, 2023 participants of the Renaissance Classical Music Seminar met in Room 223 of Capistrano Hall and awarded \$1,000 grants to two music students from the Sac State School of Music.

The recipients, Lalique Montesini and Kenya Abdallah, are percussion majors and were chosen by the faculty of our school. Additionally, both of these percussion students were recently selected as winners of the Festival of New American Music competition.

Following the award ceremony, both Kenya and Lalique played selections to the delight of the class and the visitors, who included the Dean of our school, Dr. Stephen Blumberg, Professor Jordan Shippy and members of the faculty.

Needless to say, this ceremony was a delight for all and the seminar leaders, Marjorie, Leo and Bob again thank our quite wonderful classmates for their continuing generosity.



Ask Diana Gin Anything About Libraries

By Judy A. Lewis



Hometown girl Diana Gin has spent the majority of her life in Sacramento. The oldest of five children, she lost her father at age 16 and her mother when she was 21. The family lived in the New Helvetia housing project and she is now a resident of the South

Land Park neighborhood.

After graduating from C.K. McClatchy High School, Diana worked her way through college while attending Sacramento City College and Sacramento State University. She graduated with double majors in Ethnic Studies and Social Sciences. During this time, Diana was employed by the Sacramento Public Library. After receiving a grant, she earned a Master's degree in Library Science from the University of Southern California.

She worked with the Sacramento Public Library for 24 years and also had some hours with the Sac State library, Sacramento City College library and taught a Library Technology class at the community college.

When budget cuts hit the Sacramento public library system, Diana landed a position with Sacramento County's Animal Control Department as an Administrative Services Officer. This was followed by Personnel Analyst and Human Resource Manager positions with the Department of Human Assistance. In this capacity she was responsible for personnel investigations.

After the various county departments centralized their personnel services, Diana finished out her 37-year career as a Human Resource Manager with Sacramento County's Department of Personnel Services. Since her 70th birthday arrived on 1-30-22 and Chinese New Year landed on 2-1-22, she decided that 2-2-22 would be an appropriate date to retire. After learning about the Renaissance Society, she registered for about 20 classes, as well as hitting the road to explore the world and fill in

her bucket list. She has visited all seven continents. Diana has enjoyed sharing her travels to Cuba and Madagascar with members of the Travel and Adventure class, as well as joining many Zoom classes and a technology workshop.

Her goal of visiting all 50 states was reached as she made it to North Dakota in October of this year. It turns out that North Dakota is the final state for many reaching this goal. They even award a certificate to those reaching this destination.

Although her left hip and knee have been acting up, she did recently walk across the Golden Gate Bridge when a friend visiting from out of state had her heart set on that accomplishment.

Besides the Renaissance courses, she keeps active by attending exercise classes at the Belle Coolidge Park and at the YMCA. She reports that Senior Fitness classes at the Belle Coolidge Library, in addition to offerings at the YMCA, keep her moving.

In addition, Diana ushers at local theaters and serves meals to seniors at the Asian Community Center. And she looks forward to whittling down the stack of books she has waiting to be read.



Save the Date

February 5 *Programs Begin*

March 18-24 *Spring Break*

April 1 *Caesar Chavez Day Observed*

May 10 *Programs End; Annual Meeting*

May 17 *Spring Program Leader Workshop*



Arab American Influence in the Developing U.S. Culture

By Darryl O. Freeman

According to the Arab American Institute (AAI) there are approximately 3.7 million Arab Americans living in the United States. Both the AAI and the U.S. Census Department agree that around 67% of Arab Americans are descendants from seven countries: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, and Iraq.

According to the U.S. Census, Arab Americans reside mainly in the states of California, Michigan, New York, Florida, and New Jersey, although they can be found residing in all 50 States.

The suspicions, distrust, and general animus toward Arab and Muslim Americans has not always been a part of the US public temperament. Unbeknownst to most Americans, several of the country's founding fathers possessed a keen interest in the history of Arab trading around the world and possessed a nuanced understanding of the religion of Islam.

Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams among other learned political leaders of the American Colonies, owned a copy of the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an, and had a working knowledge of the religion of Islam.

In fact, President Thomas Jefferson in 1805 hosted what turns out to be the first official iftar (the meal eaten by Muslims at sunset to break their fast during Ramadan) at the White House. In an effort to secure American interests in the Mediterranean region, Jefferson being aware of the dining restrictions for Muslims during Ramadan, arranged to have a meal for the visiting diplomat from Tunisia precisely at sunset.

The first Arab Muslim Mosque in United States was built in Chicago, Illinois, in 1893. It was one of the buildings in the "Street in Cairo," exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition. Muslim performers from Egypt, Morocco and Palestine were imported to the United States as exhibitors. It was torn down with other buildings after the fair, but had exposed millions of people to the culture and religion of Arab Muslim Americans.

A common misconception is that all Arab Americans are Muslim. While most Arab countries have a predominantly Muslim population, only approximately 25% of Arab Americans practice Islam, according to the Arab American Institute. Arab American cultures have become more familiar as a part of American life.



First Mosque in the United States (The Library of Congress circa 1893)

In an effort to demonstrate their patriotism and assimilation, Arab parents have allowed their children to join the Boy and Girl Scouts of American. Progressive Arab political organizations have emerged accepting LGBTQ and feminist doctrines.

Filmmakers have produced documentaries and movies, including a more diverse imagery of Arab Americans navigating life in the United States. Arab Ancestry Americans like Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple. Inc (Syrian), Hoda Kobb, NBC Today Show anchor (Egyptian), Candy Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (Lebanese) and singer, dancer and choreographer Paula Abdul (Syrian/Jewish) contribute significantly to the development of American culture.

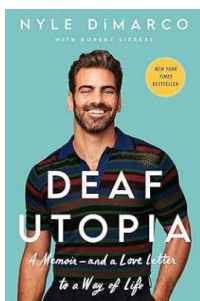
Since 1961, 35 Arab Americans have served in the U. S House of Representatives. Since 1973, six Arab Americans have served in the United States Senate. The U.S. House of Representatives currently has five Arab-American members. The Arab American community has and continues to demonstrate a dedication to both private and public service in this evolving American society



READINGS ON DIVERSITY

By Robert Benedetti and Roberta Gleeson

Deaf Utopia: A Memoir—And a Love Letter to a Way of Life by Nyle DiMarco and Robert Siebert

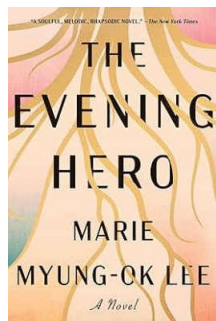


A heartfelt and inspiring memoir and celebration of Deaf culture by Nyle DiMarco, actor, producer, two-time reality show winner, and cultural icon of the international Deaf community

Before becoming the actor, producer, advocate, and model that people know today, Nyle DiMarco was one of a pair of Deaf twins born to a multigenerational Deaf family in Queens, New York. At the hospital one day after he was born, Nyle “failed” his first test—a hearing test—to the joy and excitement of his parents.

Deaf Utopia is more than a memoir; it is a cultural anthem—a proud and defiant song of Deaf culture and a love letter to American Sign Language, Nyle’s primary language. Through his stories and those of his Deaf brothers, parents, and grandparents, Nyle opens many windows into the Deaf experience.

The Evening Hero by Marie Myung-Ok Lee



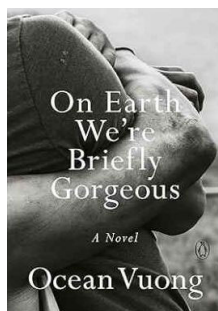
A sweeping, lyrical novel following a Korean immigrant pursuing the American dream who must confront the secrets of the past or risk watching the world he’s worked so hard to build come crumbling down.

Dr. Yungman Kwak is in the twilight of his life. Every day for the last 50 years, he has brushed his teeth, slipped on his shoes, and headed to Horse Breath’s General Hospital, where, as an obstetrician, he treats the women and babies of the small rural Minnesota town he chose to call home.

Yungman’s life is thrown into chaos—the hospital abruptly closes, his wife refuses to spend time with him, and his son is busy investing in a struggling health start-up.

Toggling between the past and the present, Korea and America, Evening Hero is a sweeping, moving, darkly comic novel about a man looking back at his life and asking big questions about what is lost and what is gained when immigrants leave home for new shores.

On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous: A Novel by Ocean Vuong

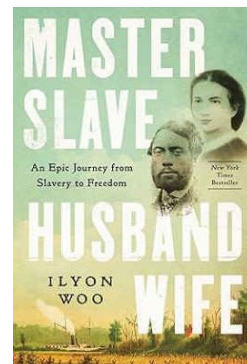


Poet Ocean Vuong’s debut novel is a shattering portrait of a family, a first love, and the redemptive power of storytelling.

On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous is a letter from a son to a mother who cannot read. Written when the speaker, Little Dog, is in his late 20s, the letter unearths a family’s history that began before he was born - a history whose epicenter is rooted in Vietnam - and serves as a doorway into parts of his life his mother has never known, all of it leading to an unforgettable revelation.

With stunning urgency and grace, Ocean Vuong writes of people caught between disparate worlds and asks how we heal and rescue one another without forsaking who we are. The question of how to survive, and how to make of it a kind of joy, powers the most important debut novel of many years.

Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom by Ilyon Woo



The remarkable true story of Ellen and William Craft, who escaped slavery through daring, determination, and disguise, with Ellen passing as a wealthy, disabled White man and William posing as “his” slave.

In 1848, a year of international democratic revolt, a young, enslaved couple, Ellen and William Craft, achieved one of the boldest feats of self-emancipation in American history. Posing as master and slave, while sustained by their love as husband and wife, they made their escape together across more than 1,000 miles, riding out in the open on steamboats, carriages, and trains that took them from bondage in Georgia to the free states of the North.

But even then, they were not out of danger. With the passage of an infamous new Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, all Americans became accountable for returning refugees like the Crafts to slavery. Then yet another adventure began, as slave hunters came up from Georgia, forcing the Crafts to flee once again—this time from the United States, their lives and thousands more on the line and the stakes never higher.



Renaissance Society Major Donor Celebration

By Mike Pidd

In 1993, Lou Weintraub and Doug Fulton had a dream of awarding scholarships to deserving Sac State students. They started with self-funding two \$500 scholarships. Twenty-nine years later and thanks to the generosity of our members and a \$25,000 bequest from the Doug and Gini Fulton Estate, we now award seven \$3000 scholarships annually. On Saturday evening November 4th we held our second annual Major Donor Recognition event to our most generous donors from the 2023 year. President Deborah Seiler graciously hosted this wonderful evening of celebration of hors 'oeuvres, music and wine at her home. The celebration also was a wonderful opportunity to introduce our 2023 scholarship recipients.

Vice President of Student Affairs Aniesha Mitchell and her deputy Charles Nelson plus Director of Development Rebekah Rabihoff represented Sacramento State. Aniesha spoke so eloquently sharing her vision, student needs and her appreciation of the Renaissance Society.

Scholarship recipients Michelle Silva, Kim Lopez-Leone, and Alyssa Lee were introduced and were able to get an opportunity to show their appreciation and share their goals with the R/S group.

We are grateful that the generosity of our members donating to the scholarship fund has continued to grow over the years. Christina Budwine spoke regarding the struggles and efforts that students may have and that their education is something that can never be taken away from them. "I find joy in the pursuit of

learning; whether I take a class, develop a seminar, join a group, or give my support to provide scholarships for deserving students. Learning is not just getting a degree. A degree may open doors, but learning feeds curiosity. It keeps our brains alive, while the engagement and participation keep us vital and healthy."

Scholarship recipients are so grateful of the impact their scholarships have made on their lives. Education costs are a such a challenge for most students. We wish nothing but success to all students. As we finish up the Holiday Season, please consider adding the Renaissance Scholarship Fund to your gift list. Your donation will have a long-lasting impact.

To support Sac State students, choose one of these effortless ways to make your contribution:

Donate online at
<https://tinyurl.com/RenaissanceFunds>

Donate by check made payable to *University Foundation at Sacramento State* with *Renaissance Scholarship* in the notation line. Mail it to The Renaissance Society, 350 University Avenue #108, Sacramento, CA. 95819-6074.



DINING TOGETHER

By Cheryl Nelson

Dining Together will meet at
Danielle's Creperie
(<https://daniellescreperie.com>),
3535 Fair Oaks Blvd suite B,
at
5:30 PM on January 10, 2024.



Dining Together members should RSVP to Laurye Brownfield at Lauryebrownfield@gmail.com no later than January 4, 2024.

Separate checks will be provided and credit cards are accepted. Parking is available.



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WE WON THE GOLDEN PLATE AWARD! AGAIN!

For the third consecutive year, Renaissance has won the **Golden Plate Award** for the highest contribution to the ASI Food Pantry's Thanksgiving Food Basket Drive! Here are the numbers:

ASI's fund raising goal for the drive: **\$8,000**

Renaissance contributions between Oct. 2 and Nov. 17: **\$14,352**

(online giving: 102 donations totaling \$9,170 – largest single donation: \$1,000)

(cash/check giving: \$5,182 – largest single donation: \$1,500)

Total Contributions: **\$24,000**

Members, you are the best! The new award (and an updated photo) will be presented at Orientation on January 26.

