

President's Message



Deborah Seiler

President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

deborah.seiler2@gmail.com

Renaissance Website:

<https://csus.edu/rensoc>

Key Dates

July 12: Black Quilters;
Planetarium tour; Japanese Tea
Ceremony

July 19: Campus Art Walk
and Mexican Muralists

July 26: New Play by Ginger
Rutland; tour Guild Theater;
lunch at Fixin's

Aug. 2: Japanese Traditional
Orchestra; lunch and talk with
Chef Okuba at Fuji's

Aug. 2: Fall At a Glance
catalog mailed

Aug. 5: Fall Catalog posted

Aug. 12: Program Enrollment

Aug. 16: Orientation and
Open House

Sept. 3: Renaissance Classes
Begin

Sept. 6: ASI Envelopes and
First Friday Pizza



Sizzlin' Hot!

Question: What's hotter than a summer day in Sacramento?

Answer: All the exciting programs remaining in our Renaissance Society Summer Program.

And even hotter?: The incredible lineup of classes for our Fall 2024 academic semester.

I hope you were able to take advantage of the wonderful tour and presentation by artist Milton Bowens at the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum followed by Ethiopian cuisine at *Abyssinia*.

Surely you did not want to miss the African Glam Fashion Show, the presentation of traditional Mexican music and dancing, or the Capital Chinese Orchestra.

If you missed any of these, you can go to our website to experience the magic, though please be aware that some of these artistic performances are difficult to capture on Zoom.

A hot tip: plan to attend as many of our summer events as possible, in person, especially some of the tours and learning lunches planned.

We look forward to a Japanese Tea Ceremony and a presentation of Black Quilters during the era of the Underground Railroad, learning about Mexican Muralists, and hearing a Japanese Orchestra, complete with traditional music and instruments. Be sure to go to our website, csus.edu/rensoc for all the latest updates and links.

As you likely know, these summer programs are free and open to the public in order to boost membership. Please bring a friend to share good times and the opportunity to connect your guests with Renaissance members and Renaissance programming.

Importantly, bring two folks you know to the upcoming Orientation and Open House on Friday, August 16 starting at 10 am in the University Union Ballrooms. This is a special event we host at the beginning of each academic semester to share useful information with new and prospective members as well as to connect with program leaders, committee chairs, and on and off campus partners.

It's just too hot to keep all the good news about our Renaissance Society under a blanket.

Enjoy your summer and share the good news!

Deborah



Meet Our 2024 Sac State Scholarship Winners!

Renaissance Society has awarded seven \$3,000 scholarships

By Judy Lewis

My name is Jasmine Asfour.



I am a first-generation college student as well as a first-generation American. While I am eternally grateful to reach my goal of entering the Doctor of Physical Therapy program here at Sacramento State, I had to face unique challenges many of my peers may not have had to face.

I grew up in the city of Stockton, California which is infamously known for its high crime rates. My family hails from Palestine, which meant navigating the challenges of adjusting to life in America amidst a language barrier, all while striving to preserve our cultural heritage and ensure it remained vibrant and cherished, rather than fading into obscurity.

Coming of age in a household headed by a single parent, with limited financial means, the prospect of attending college seemed like an unattainable dream. Instead of considering higher education, the expectation was for me to follow the path of simply working to make ends meet. The exorbitant cost of college made it feel even more out of reach, particularly given our low-income status.

In the face of these adversities, I not only broke the cycle but emerged resilient, determined, and thankful for the opportunities that education has afforded me.

I am eternally thankful to the Renaissance Society for enabling me to pursue my dreams and alleviating the financial burden associated with pursuing my doctorate in physical therapy.

My name is Jackie Chang.



I'm a Hmong American. I'm the youngest of eight siblings, born and raised in Sacramento. Coming from a low-income household, I've been determined from a young age to break the cycle and pursue higher education.

My goal is not only to improve my circumstances but also to be able to provide financial support to those facing similar challenges in the future while inspiring others who are navigating difficult paths currently.

Fueled by my aspiration to become a neurosurgeon, I have become one of the few in my immediate family to attend college. My drive to assist others, particularly those facing barriers to accessing adequate care, stems from observing numerous individuals in my community, both within and beyond my circle. I've witnessed the challenges people encounter in a variety of things, such as in obtaining healthcare, whether it's due to language barriers, a lack of healthcare providers, or financial hardships.

These difficulties are especially evident among older patients like my grandmother who despite having a big family who does their best to help, finds herself a part of this group facing challenges. This has led me to dedicate myself to serving all communities, with a focus on older adults, as they are a vulnerable population often misunderstood and grappling with individual challenges. I would like to learn more about and work with this group, especially with my emphasis on my study in Biomedical Sciences.

I am eager to put myself in different experiences, both to learn from and contribute to the well-being of people, offer understanding, and bring change by motivating others to take charge.

My name is Prynness Deloney



I'm currently a second-year student at Sacramento State, studying Health Science with a focus on making healthcare more accessible to everyone. Growing up in a low-income community, I've seen how hard it can be for people to get the healthcare they need. This has inspired me to work towards

making healthcare easier for everyone to access.

My mother has been my guiding light and source of inspiration. Despite facing numerous obstacles, she worked tirelessly to provide me with the opportunities I have today, including the chance to pursue higher education. Her resilience and unwavering support have instilled in me the belief that dedication and perseverance can overcome any obstacle.

Outside of school, I enjoy playing video games and collecting vinyl records. Gaming is a great way for me to unwind and have fun with friends. I also love the nostalgia and unique sound of vinyl records. As I

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continue my educational journey, I'm eager to channel my passion for healthcare advocacy into tangible initiatives that empower underserved communities and promote accessible, quality healthcare for everyone.

My name is Nargis Karamatova.



I am a first-generation immigrant from Uzbekistan. I came to America with my parents when I was around 6 years old. Ever since I can remember I have translated and helped my parents as much as I can. Leaving our lives behind and navigating a new world was very intimidating and still is. But we do our best every day.

My journey to obtain my degree started at Sierra College, where I later transferred to Sacramento State University. My major is Biomedical Sciences, and I am minoring in Chemistry.

I am very involved at Sacramento State University because I want to be connected to the school on a deeper level. I am a part of the SEE program, currently the president of the Student Alumni Association, and in the Sacramento State Symphony Orchestra.

These opportunities and programs have helped me on my journey of obtaining my degree and advocating for my success. I have my pharmacy technician license and recently completed a phlebotomy program. I anticipate being a certified phlebotomist and working in a hospital.

I am so grateful for The Renaissance Society for awarding me this scholarship. Receiving this scholarship is not only a financial relief but also a validation of my hard work and dedication to my studies. Your belief in my potential inspires me to continue striving for excellence in all my academic endeavors.

Once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generosity and belief in my abilities. I am truly honored to be a recipient of the Renaissance Society Scholarship.

My name is Javier Marquez.



I'm currently a junior at Sacramento State University, majoring in Social Work. My academic journey began at Butte College, where I earned degrees in Social and Behavioral Sciences, as well as Psychology, despite facing significant challenges with

addiction and mental health that nearly cost me my life.

At Sacramento State University, I remain focused in my educational pursuits, undeterred by the obstacles I've encountered throughout my life. Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of 'Amor Fati,' which means 'love of fate,' I have learned to embrace life's unpredictable events and changes. This philosophy has brought me peace, teaching me that while we cannot control what happens to us, we have the power to choose our responses.

Maintaining a GPA above 3.5, my passion for learning fuels my focus and drive. In my professional life, I serve as an Intensive Case Manager in Sacramento County and volunteer with the Compassion Prison Project. My ultimate aspiration is to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, specializing in therapy and advocating for mental health awareness within my cultural community.

Throughout this journey, the unwavering support of my daughter, parents, and family has been invaluable. Their encouragement has been a cornerstone of my resilience, and I am dedicated to continuing to make them

My name is Missael Perez.



I am a first-year Doctor of Physical Therapy student at Sac State. I was born in Los Angeles but was raised in Mexico.

When I was 11 years old, my family migrated to San Diego where I spent the following 12 years. I went to San Diego State

University to earn my undergraduate degree in Pre-Physical Therapy.

This is my first time going out of San Diego, which makes living in Sacramento more exciting. So far, I had the opportunity to speak with one of the members of the Renaissance Society during my patient interviewing assignment. She was very energetic and willing to help. This was very inspirational to me since it was my first time practicing interviewing a patient and the fact that she was so kind really boosted my desire to continue to pursue my passion for Physical Therapy.

Once I graduate, I would be honored to work in places that are under-served and predominated by the minority population. I want to encourage younger generations to pursue higher education, especially if I can lead them to the health department.

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My name is Pham Tong.



I am about to finish my first semester of the nursing program at Sacramento State University.

As a first-generation college student and a father of a 5-year-old son, I have overcome significant challenges to pursue my passion for nursing. I hold an associate degree in general science from American River College, where I graduated as a straight A student, and have successfully transferred to Sacramento State's Nursing program.

My journey through college has been marked by financial difficulties and personal responsibilities, but I am proud to be resilient and continued to excel in my studies.

In addition to my academic achievements, I have also volunteered extensively in the Cardiovascular Wellness Program in Folsom Hall last semester when I was still a Health Science major. I have volunteered over 100 hours assisting older adults with exercise screening and blood pressure monitoring before, during, and after doing exercise.

This experience has not only allowed me to apply my knowledge in a practical setting but also prepared me to be a true nursing student this semester when I go to hospital for clinical assignments.

I believe that nursing is not just a profession but a mission, and I am dedicated to use my education to make a positive impact in my community and beyond.

My commitment to learning and community service aligns with the values of Renaissance Society, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have this scholarship. I am eager to contribute my skills and knowledge to benefit mature adults and promote lifelong learning.

I am confident that my background and experiences have prepared me well for a successful career in nursing, and I am excited about the opportunity to continue learning and growing in this field.



Dining Together July

By Cheryl Nelson

Dining Together will meet at **Lemon Grass, 601 Monroe Ave.** (www.lemongrassrestaurant.com) at 5:30 PM on July 10, 2024.

Dining Together members who wish to attend should RSVP to Susan Wheeler (swheeler_1@yahoo.com) no later than July 5.

Please bring cash (including small bills) - the restaurant will not accept individual credit cards for payment. Separate checks will be provided. Parking is available.



Dining Together August

Dining Together will meet at **Joe's Crab Shack, 1210 Front St,** (<https://www.joescrabshack.com/location/joes-crab-shack-sacramento/#menus>) at 5:30 PM on August 14, 2024.

Dining Together members who wish to attend should **RSVP** to Cheryl Nelson (slynnsearch@yahoo.com) no later than August 8th. Some street parking; parking garage across street. **Please bring cash (including small bills)** – checks will be by table.



Dimensions of American Diversity
The Evolution of the African American Upper Class

By Darryl O. Freeman

The social-economic class, often referred to as the Black upper class, the Black upper middle class or Black elite, represents less than two percent of the total Black population in the United States. (Charles Schwab's 2023 Modern Wealth Survey define upper class as net worth over 2.2 million dollars).

This segment of African Americans has a history of organizations and activities that distinguish it from other economic classes within the black community, as well as from the white-American upper class.

Many of these traditions, which have endured for several generations, are discussed in Lawrence Otis Graham's 2000 book, "Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class." By the 1800s there existed a significant "Free black" community located largely in the northern States of the Union. There were communities of mixed race "mulattos" who were not enslaved.

Most free blacks in the South lived in the few large cities of New Orleans, Baltimore, and Atlanta. Although most were poor, some were able to own farmland or learn mechanical or artesian trades. Other free African Americans acquired marketable skills such as cooking and tailoring, worked in domestic fields or were able to open small businesses such as restaurants and catering firms.

Some free African Americans in the North also founded small businesses and even newspapers. They were able to secure a head-start economically on African Americans who were essentially still enslaved by their lack of access to wealth accumulation, particularly when it came to owning land.

Education became the pathway for development of the African American Upper-class. Cheyney University in Pennsylvania founded in 1854, and Wilberforce University founded in 1856, were the only Black colleges operational prior to the American Civil War. After the U.S. Civil War in the 1860s, the first historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's) were established. Those who attended these black educational institutions were able to acquire skills and academic knowledge that put them in a distinctly different economic class.

The ascent of the elite African American community in America has developed with the increase in the economic gains of African American artists, entertainers and professional athletes who have annual incomes in the millions of dollars. Black entertainers have made significant strides in the entertainment

industry, achieving high levels of success and financial gain.

Furthermore, the rise of streaming services and digital platforms has provided new avenues for revenue, allowing black entertainers to reach global audiences more efficiently.

Black athletes also play a crucial role in the sports industry, both in terms of performance and economic influence. The earnings of black athletes span across various sports, with basketball and football being particularly lucrative.

The increase in the number of African Americans achieving upper class economic status has resulted in significant philanthropic contributions. The black upper class includes highly paid professionals, business executives, and celebrities.

Forbes Magazine reported that there are almost two million black millionaires in America. (As of 2023 there are reported 24.5 million, total millionaires in America). These black millionaires such as Oprah Winfrey, Michael Jordan, and Richard Smith have donated hundreds of millions to educational initiatives and other charitable causes.

Michael Jordan has pledged \$100 million over 10 years to organizations dedicated to ensuring racial equality, social justice, and greater access to education.

While specific data on the total contributions of the black upper class to charity is not readily available, the combined efforts of high-profile black philanthropists and numerous black-led, initiatives and giving circles suggest a substantial impact in American society.

Overall, the philanthropic contributions of the black upper class are significant and play a vital role in supporting various causes, particularly those aimed at advancing racial equity and supporting economically disadvantaged communities in this country and around the world.



What Do New Members Think of Renaissance?

Last April, Renaissance member and popular seminar leader Catherine Minicucci prepared a survey that was sent to 416 new members enrolled since June 1, 2023 and received 54 responses. Here are some of the responses.

Program Participation

New member respondents participated in a variety of Renaissance Society programs. The most common type were seminars (45 people), followed by one-time presentations (34). Shared interest groups SIGs (19) were less common among respondents. Eleven participated in social events. Most respondents participated in more than one type of program.

New Members Participants by Program Type	
Program	Number
Seminars	45
Special Interest Groups	19
One-Time Presentations	34
Social events	11
Total respondents	54

Mode of Participation

The Renaissance Society offers in-person programs as well as programs via Zoom. The most common modes of participation were in person and via Zoom. A smaller number (12) of new members participated via Zoom only.

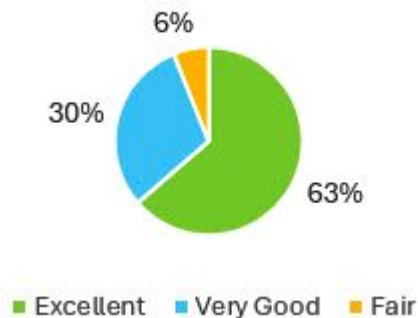
How New Members Participated in Programs	
	Number
In person	19
Via Zoom	12
Both in person and via Zoom	20
No response	3
Total	54

Program Quality

Overall, new members gave high ratings to Renaissance Society Programs: 93% rated programs as Excellent or Very Good.

New members who participated in In-person programs rated their experience more highly than did those who used Zoom or did both in person and Zoom. Almost three quarters of respondents (74%) rated their programs as Excellent compared to two-thirds of Zoom respondents and 60% of those who participated in both in person and Zoom programs. Renaissance members value in person classes, an observation borne out by reviewing the comments made in the survey.

New Members Rate Program Quality



Comments On Program Quality

Twenty-six people commented on the quality of the Renaissance Society Programs. Music and art programs received the most positive comments.

Positive comments on individual seminars:

- I enjoyed all my classes but particularly loved my music class and watercolor class.
- The most important class for me is Delving into Dementia; not fun, but so much information presented, and good discussions; great presenter.
- Seminar leaders vary in quality:
- Some courses were more interesting and more organized than others.
- I very much appreciate the time and effort that each member puts into their presentation. That being said, there are some people who "knock it out of the park" and others who are less engaging with the presentations.
- Screen or give presenters some guidelines.

Some negative comments about programs:

- The presenter used old materials, was bumbling and unfamiliar with the media.
- Rooms were stuffed with many chairs.
- Presenters very uneven, sexist

Social Events and Feeling Welcome

Eleven survey respondents reported attending social events. They were asked to what extent they felt welcome. An additional 22 new members answered the question who had not attended social events, commenting instead on whether they felt welcomed at Renaissance Society programs. The chart shows that more than half of new members felt welcomed (58%), 39% felt welcomed a modest amount and 9% did not feel welcomed. This is an area the Renaissance Society needs to address.



Respondents who offered comments were evenly split on this question: five indicated a positive experience and five indicated a negative experience.

Examples of positive comments:

- Met many welcoming folks.
- I did not attend social events but was very welcome in my classes.
- We attended the orientation and were immediately impressed by the presentation and agenda of classes. The warm supportive welcoming environment and information about the classes was extremely helpful.

Not everyone felt welcome:

- Even with the green sticker on my badge, I have never had someone welcome me.
- Feels like high school with cliques who are very familiar with each other. It is good for them and natural but hard for newcomers.
- Signs included lunch. No effort [was made] to include us. Felt left out.

Overall Comments on the Renaissance Society

The overall comments on the Renaissance Society included ideas for improvement.

- Really enjoyed my first year of membership, especially the special interest events with their great speakers/themes of Asian experiences... it would be nice to see a growth in membership diversity to promote Connection as well. Thanks for a great year! I am looking forward to next year's class offerings!
- You have a winning program and you have

energized so many people - please keep up the great work!

Some new members wanted more of a variety of offerings.

- Include more challenging and academic topics and reduce the "social justice" stuff, which was especially dominant in the spring schedule.
- I enjoyed the few I attended, but especially in the spring, I found far fewer topics that I am particularly interested in.
- More fun light seminars

Three respondents asked for more in person classes on Friday.

- I wish there were more on campus classes to choose from on Friday.
- It would be great if there were more in person (on campus) classes offered.
- More classes with small group interactions to meet others in the class.

Other comments:

- Better monitoring of chat in Zoom and hybrid classes so people can feel involved.
- More opportunities for interaction in class
- Continue history seminars.
- Suggestion for social events: How about an open mike night or shared art event or group tickets to Sac State athletics or art event?

Some members had negative experiences with the registration system:

- The electronic interface is not user friendly. Getting my class choices all calendared correctly with correct ending date is a nightmare. Each class should have a link to the calendar so we can get dates and time with every class.
- I wanted to take several classes, but they were all filled up. I had no awareness that I had to sign up on the first day or I would be shut out. Pretty disappointed.

To summarize, fifty-four new members responded to the survey. They participated in a wide variety of programs. Program quality was rated highly, with in-person classes getting the highest ratings of Excellent. Many new members felt welcomed at programs and social events, but a sizeable group did not. There were excellent comments for the Renaissance Society to consider in future planning, such as having more in person classes on Friday and continuing to work on program quality and opportunities for engagement



**California State University
Sacramento
The Renaissance Society
6000 J Street – MS 6074
Sacramento, CA 95819
80700128**

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RENAISSANCE RECORDER EDITOR

For submissions, contact

Jim Hodges

jameshodges999@gmail.com

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RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

Administrative Office

Email: renaissa@csus.edu

Website: www.csus.edu/rensoc

Phone: (916) 758-5133

Office: 350 University Ave., Suite 108
Sacramento CA 95819

In Memoriam

Longtime member Tom Holt passed away June 20 after a battle with an aggressive abdominal cancer. Tom formerly chaired the Tech Committee and loved technology and music in equal measure. He will be deeply missed by those who attended the Rock n' Roll and other music classes conducted by Bob Lang for whom he was an invaluable tech host, a problem solver, and a witty and cheerful friend.



In Memoriam

Carl Sweet died two days after his 91st birthday following a brief hospital stay. He was a long time member of Renaissance and loved the Classical Music segment. He was a retired engineer having worked on the construction of several downtown State buildings and the Space Shuttle. He loved to hike and had climbed the Matterhorn in Switzerland. He loved to say he was born and educated in Boston. He leaves his long time partner, Susan Blacksher, son Eric and three grandchildren.

