

## Participant Biographies

### **Panel #1: *The Lessons of WET SAND and the Challenges of Re-Imagining Community***

*Tateuchi Democracy Forum @ National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, JANM  
111 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles Little Tokyo*

***Twenty-five years on, what does Los Angeles look like today? What's changed? What has remained the same? And what can we say that the "healing process" has accomplished? Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, director of WET SAND: VOICES FROM L.A. and her cinematographer and collaborator Charles Burnett will participate in a discussion with local community leaders to assess the successes and challenges we face in moving toward a more culturally, socially, and politically equitable society in post-Rebellion Los Angeles.***

### ***Screening: WET SAND: Voices from L.A. (2004; 57 mins)***

In WET SAND, Kim-Gibson revisits Los Angeles to learn what changes have occurred since the 1992 Civil Unrest, only to discover that living conditions have deteriorated and that few remedies have been administered to the communities most stricken. Through interviews with a multi-ethnic set of first-hand witnesses, this essential follow-up probes deeper into the racial and economic issues that not only shaped the climate of 1992 Los Angeles, but continue to affect all Americans today.



**Ayuko Babu, Founder and Executive Director of the Pan African Film & Arts Festival**

Ayuko Babu is an international cultural, political and legal consultant specializing in Pan African affairs. He has been the Executive Director of the Pan African Film & Arts Festival (PAFF) since 1992. In 2016, Mr. Babu was appointed to the California Film Commission. In addition to PAFF, Mr. Babu currently serves as a permanent member of the jury of the annual Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria. AMAA is the world's largest Pan African film awards event, covering the continent of Africa and its worldwide Diaspora. In 2015, Mr. Babu was honored by the California Legislative Black Caucus for his work as founder and executive director of the Pan African Film & Arts Festival as part of the Black History Month Celebration "A Century of Black Life, History and Culture." The special ceremony was held on the floor of the State Assembly at the state capitol in Sacramento, California. Mr. Babu was nominated for this honor by the Honorable Holly J. Mitchell, State Senator (D-30th District).

Currently he is developing formal ties with the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) of South Africa, a government agency whose mission is to develop and promote the South African film industry. Mr. Babu holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Los Angeles and attended the UCLA School of Law.

**Charles Burnett, Filmmaker**

Born in Mississippi in 1944, but growing up in Watts, Charles Burnett was one of the privileged Black students who had access to college education in those days—the 60s. He studied at UCLA's Film Department. He was first noticed in 1981 with *KILLER OF SHEEP* which won a prize at Berlin. Burnett's film *THE GLASS SHIELD*, a tense rapid-fire police drama on the corruption and racism that plagues the Los Angeles Police Department, was shown in competition at Locarno.

**Alison de la Cruz Multi-disciplinary artist, producer, arts educator and cultural organizer.**



Alison M. De La Cruz is a multi-disciplinary theatre artist, producer, facilitator, educator, cultural space keeper and maker. De La Cruz has collaborated with a broad range of artists, ensembles, administrators, educational and non-profit arts organizations to produce programs and fundraising events to create new artistic work, educational programs or cultural spaces of significance to the Asian American, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander, Latinx American, African American, LGBTQ, youth, and immigrant communities in Los Angeles. A native Angeleno, De La Cruz has been a facilitator helping diverse communities talking with each other since 1990. De La Cruz served as the Narrator and Associate Producer for *GRASSROOTS RISING: ASIAN AMERICAN*

*WORKING FAMILIES*, a documentary produced by Visual Communications that premiered in 2005. De La Cruz is the Director of Performing Arts & Community Engagement at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.

**Funmilola Fagbamila, Original member of Black Lives Matter, UCLA Activist-in-Residence Winter 2017**



Funmilola Fagbamila is a scholar, activist, playwright and artist. Having recently completed her graduate program in Black Studies at UCLA, she now serves as a professor of Pan African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. She is currently the inaugural Activist-in-Residence at the Institute on Inequality and Democracy at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

As an original member of the Black Lives Matter Movement, Funmilola has been organizing with BLM since its inception in 2013. While her artistry is multifaceted, including spoken word and hip hop, Funmilola's current project, entitled "The Intersection", is a stage play on the complexities of black political identity.

In 2015, Funmilola was honored by the United States Congress and the Black Community, Clergy and Labor Alliance for her commendable activist scholarship, service and struggle. She frequently sits on community panels regarding police brutality, criminal justice, arts activism, and overall wellness in black communities; most recently presenting at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference.

You can find out more about her work at [www.funmilola.com](http://www.funmilola.com).

**Tani Ikeda Filmmaker, Executive Director of imMEDIATE Justice**



Tani Ikeda is an Emmy nominated director who creates narratives, documentaries, music videos, and commercial films. She was recently selected as one of Film Independent's 33 Emerging Filmmakers as a Project: Involve Directors Fellow. Ikeda has directed films in China, Uganda, India, and the United States. Her work has been recognized in The LA Times, Teen Vogue, Cosmopolitan magazine and has screened internationally at festivals around the world including the Sundance Film Festival.

At the age of 21, Tani Ikeda co-founded imMEDIATE Justice, a nonprofit that fosters the talents of young women artists working in virtual reality. She is the current executive director of imMEDIATE Justice and was named one of the "25 Visionaries Who are Changing Your World," by the Utne Reader. ImMEDIATE Justice has received national attention on CNN, NBC, and Univision. Ikeda tours the country speaking at universities and national conferences about storytelling as a tool for social justice.

Tani holds a Bachelors Degree in Film Production from the University of Southern California and currently resides in Los Angeles.

**Robin D.G. Kelley**, Professor and Gary B. Nash Endowed Chair in U.S. History at UCLA



Robin D. G. Kelley is the Gary B. Nash Professor of U.S. History and Chair of the Department of African American Studies at UCLA. His books include the prize-winning, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (2009); *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* (2012); *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002); *Race Rebels: Culture Politics and the Black Working Class* (The Free Press, 1994); *Yo' Mama's DisFunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (1997). Kelley's essays have appeared in *The Nation*, *Monthly Review*, *The Voice Literary Supplement*, *New York Times* (Arts and Leisure), *New York Times Magazine*, *Counterpunch*, *Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noir*, *Social Text*, *Metropolis*, *American Visions*, *Boston Review*, *New Labor Forum*, and *Souls*, to name a few. He is currently completing a biography of journalist, social critic, adventurer, and activist Grace Halsell (1923-2000), for which he received a Guggenheim Fellowship.

**Dai Sil Kim-Gibson**, Director/Producer of *WET SAND: VOICES FROM LA*



Dai Sil Kim-Gibson is an independent filmmaker/writer who is widely known for championing the compelling but neglected issues of human rights, marked by her imprint of humanizing the storytellers and inventive formats. Her film credits include *America Becoming*, *Si-I-Gu*, *A Forgotten People: the Sakhalin Koreans*, *Olivia's Story*, *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women*, *Wet Sand*, *Motherland (Cuba Korea USA)*, and *People are the Sky*. Her films were critically acclaimed here and abroad. All of her films garnered many awards and were screened at numerous festivals worldwide, in addition to national broadcast on PBS, on the Sundance Channel in the United States.

An author of numerous articles, *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women* is her first book and her second book is *Looking for Don: A Meditation*. A former professor of Religion at Mount Holyoke College with a PhD in Religion and a federal and state employee, filmmaking is her third career.

**Moderated by Abel Valenzuela**, Professor of Urban Planning and Chicano Studies, Director of UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment



Abel Valenzuela Jr. is Professor and Director of UCLA's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment. Dr. Valenzuela is also professor of urban planning and Chicana/o studies. He received his Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Urban Studies and Planning and a BA in Social Science from the University of California, Berkeley. He studies, publishes, and teaches classes on urban poverty, immigration, and labor (workers and markets) often looking at the intersections of all three. He is one of the leading national experts on day labor (mostly immigrant men who solicit temporary daily work in open air markets such as street corners, empty parking lots, and store fronts) and other itinerant and casual labor markets. He has published numerous articles and technical reports on this and other subjects including co-editing (with Lawrence Bobo, Melvin Oliver, and Jim Johnson) *Prismatic Metropolis: Inequality in Los Angeles* published by the Russell Sage Foundation in 2000, *Immigration and Crime: Race, Ethnicity, and Violence* (with Ramiro Martinez Jr.). He has also published in *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *New England Journal of Public Policy*, *Working USA: a Journal of Labor and Society*, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, and *Regional Studies*.

## **Panel #2: *Media and Social Change***

*Aratani Central Hall @ JANM | 100 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles Little Tokyo*

***For better or for worse, our community vision and self-image has been shaped by — and in some unfortunate instances, tainted — by the way communities of color have been portrayed in mass media and popular entertainment. In this special conversation with filmmakers, scholars, and cultural workers, we will assess whether progressive change can be enacted by a paradigm shift in how we are portrayed onscreen, in print, and in other forms of commercial and independently-produced communication.***

**Justin Chon**, Executive Producer and Lead Actor in *GOOK*



Justin Chon was born in Orange County, California, and has worked as an actor for over 15 years. As a writer/director, his first feature film, *Man Up*, was distributed by Lakeshore Entertainment. He loves long walks on the beach and reading novels by candlelight.

**Gaye Theresa Johnson**, Associate Professor, UCLA César E. Chávez Department of Chicana/o Studies, Associate Professor, UCLA Ralph Bunche African American Studies Center



Gaye Theresa Johnson is Associate Professor of African American Studies and Chicana/o Studies at UCLA. Her first book, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (University of California Press, 2013) is a history of civil rights and spatial struggles among Black and Brown freedom seekers in LA. Johnson has two forthcoming edited books: *The Futures of Black Radicalism* (co-edited with Alex Lubin, Verso Press, 2017) and *Let's Get Free: Musicians on Activism in the 21st Century* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017). She is the Board President of the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), and an advisory board member for the Goldin Institute and the Rosenberg Fund for Children.

**Ananya Roy**, Director, Institute on Inequality and Democracy at UCLA Luskin



Ananya Roy is Professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare and Geography and Director of the Institute on Inequality and Democracy at UCLA Luskin. She holds The Meyer and Renee Luskin Chair in Inequality and Democracy.

Ananya's research and scholarship has a determined focus on poverty and inequality and lies in four domains: how the urban poor in cities from Kolkata to Chicago face and fight eviction, foreclosure, and displacement; how global financialization, working in varied realms from microfinance to real-estate speculation, creates new markets in debt and risk; how the efforts to manage and govern the problem of poverty reveal the contradictions and limits of liberal democracy; how economic prosperity and aspiration in the global South is creating new potentialities for programs of human development and social welfare.

**Renee Tajima-Peña**, Director, Center for EthnoCommunications at UCLA



Renee Tajima-Peña is an Academy Award nominated filmmaker whose credits include *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, *My America...or Honk if You Love Buddha*, and *No Más Bebés*. She is a founder and producer of the Nikkei Democracy Project, a multi-media collective that uses video, art, and social media to capture the power of the Japanese American imprisonment story and expose current threats to the Constitutional rights of targeted Americans. Her films focusing on Asian Americans, immigration and reproductive justice, have screened at the Cannes, Sundance and Toronto film festivals and she has been awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship, USA Broad Fellowship, Alpert Award in the Arts for Film/Video, a Peabody and a Dupont-Columbia Award. Tajima-

Peña teaches social documentary at UCLA, where she is a professor of Asian American Studies, the director of the Center for EthnoCommunications, and holds an endowed chair in Japanese American Studies.



**Jenny Yang, Writer and Comedian**



Jenny Yang is a Los Angeles-based writer and stand-up comedian who produces the first-ever, mostly female, Asian American standup comedy tour, Disoriented Comedy, and The Comedy Comedy Festival: A Comedy Festival, showcasing the best in Asian American comedic talent. In 2016, Jenny was honored as a White House Champion of Change for Asian American and Pacific Islander Art and Storytelling.

Taiwan-born and Southern California-raised, Jenny is a frequent collaborator on viral videos with BuzzFeed and Fusion that have amassed over 30 million combined views, and actor in digital projects from Comedy Central, Funny or Die, Sourcefed/Nuclear Family, and Cracked.com. In 2015, she was dubbed one of Los Angeles' "most fascinating people" in LA Weekly's annual "People" issue.

Drawing from her former career in politics, Jenny is a regular commentator on politics and pop culture with contributions featured in National Public Radio, The Guardian, NBC News, BBC News, Al Jazeera America, Complex Magazine, and Southern California Public Radio. ([jennyyang.tv](http://jennyyang.tv) @jennyyangtv)

**Moderated by Phil Yu. Blogger, *Angry Asian Man***



Phil Yu is a writer, speaker and host best known as the founder/editor of Angry Asian Man, one of the most widely-read and longest-running independent websites covering news, culture and perspectives from the Asian American community. The Washington Post calls Angry Asian Man "a daily must-read for the media-savvy, socially conscious, pop-cultured Asian American." Mixing humor with criticism, Phil's commentary has been featured and quoted in the New York Times, National Public Radio, CNN, MSNBC, Wall Street Journal, BuzzFeed and more.

***Screening: Gook (2017; 1 hr 34 min)***

Eli and Daniel, two Korean American brothers, own a struggling shoe store and have an unlikely friendship with Kamilla, a street wise 11-year-old African American girl. Kamilla ditches school, Eli stresses about the store, and Daniel tries to have a good time. It's just another typical day at the store until the Rodney King verdict is read and riots break. With the chaos moving towards them, the trio is forced to defend the store while contemplating the future of their own personal dreams and the true meaning of family.



### **Panel #3: *Artists Talk***

#### **Folder Studio**

Founded in 2013 by Jon Gacnik, Takumi Akin, and Wesley Chou, Folder Studio is a Los Angeles based design office focusing on visual systems, identities, websites, interfaces, and publications for select cultural and commercial clients.

#### **Grace Lee, Producer, Director and Writer.**



Grace Lee is a Los Angeles based Korean American filmmaker whose work explores questions of history, race, politics, and community. She directed the 2014 Peabody Award-winning *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*, which *The Hollywood Reporter* called “an entertainingly revealing portrait of the power of a single individual to effect change.” The film premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival where it won its first of six audience awards before its broadcast on the PBS documentary series *POV*. Her directing debut documentary *The Grace Lee Project* won multiple awards, played in festivals internationally, broadcast on the Sundance Channel and was called “a funny but complex meditation on identity and cultural expectation,” by *Variety*. Other feature directing credits include *Janeane From Des Moines*, set during the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival, the Emmy-nominated *Makers: Women and Politics* and *Off the Menu: Asian America*, both of which aired on PBS. Lee is a member of the Directors Guild of America, and her work has been supported by Ford Foundation JustFilms, Rockefeller Foundation, Chicken and Egg Pictures, Center for Asian American Media, Film Independent, and the Sundance Institute, where she was a Women at Sundance Fellow. In 2016, Lee co-founded the Asian American Documentary Network and was selected as an emissary for the American Film Showcase through the State Department and USC Film School. She is currently in production on *Ktown92*, an interactive documentary for the web that explores the 25th anniversary of the Los Angeles riots through the greater Koreatown community. She is a current resident of Koreatown, LA.



**Grace Misoe Lee, Graphic Artist**



Grace Misoe Lee is a Korean-American graphic designer that focuses her personal projects on communicating authentic, honest stories of historical people, places, and events. Born in Orange County and raised in Los Angeles, these contrasting environments shaped her fascination in blended cultures and her desire to create. Inspired by the exploration of youth culture and music, Grace is always listening, learning, and experiencing instant realities that help keep her enthusiastic and curious to propel her work. She earned her BFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and now resides in Koreatown, Los Angeles.

**Patrick Martinez, Artist**



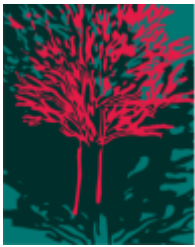
Patrick Martinez (b. 1980, Pasadena, CA) earned his BFA with honors from Art Center College of Design in 2005. Martinez's work has been exhibited in domestic and international venues extending from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Miami, and New York to the Netherlands. In 2016 Martinez exhibited at the Vincent Price Art Museum, the Cornell Fine Arts Museum in Winter Park, FL, LA Louver Gallery, Guerrero Gallery in San Francisco, and Biola University. Also in 2016, Martinez curated a large group show at Charlie James Gallery titled Southland. Martinez's work has been discussed in publications ranging from the LA Times, KPCC, KCET Artbound, Fusion, ArtNews, Wired Magazine, KCRW, and Vice Magazine. In 2017 Patrick will have his first solo museum show at the Cornell Fine Arts Museum in Winter Park, FL. Martinez lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

**Visual Communications:** Archived interviews from 1992 of on-the-ground raw footage and interviews taken in Koreatown four days after the LA Riots. Includes interviews of passerby, and Ruben Martinez, Emmy-award winning journalists. Footage documents Angelenos' feelings and perspectives about the LA Riots and the Rodney King trial.

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