

## **AAPI Voices and Stories Program Announces Summer 2024 Projects**

The *Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Voices and Stories: Community-based Digital Storytelling Program*, generously supported by the Mellon Foundation, aims to incorporate and amplify the voices of AAPI individuals in our teaching, research, and community engagement through partnerships with AAPI communities near ASIANetwork institution campuses. Following a selection process that took place late last year and early this year, two project locations were selected, where an academic team consisting of a Site Liaison (faculty member) and four students will be joined by another faculty member, the Faculty Associate, from another ASIANetwork college or university. ASIANetwork is pleased to announce the following projects:

### **Elevating Asian Voices Through Digital Storytelling**

ASIANetwork Institution: Webster University

Community Partner: Japanese American Citizens League in St. Louis

*This project is a partnership between the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) St. Louis Chapter and Webster University to build upon an existing collection of Japanese American oral histories by expanding the scope of oral histories and storytelling to the wider AAPI community. The project aims to integrate students into community-led initiatives by working with partners to elevate the diversity of AAPI stories in and around the St. Louis region. This initiative involves two key components. First, the collection of oral histories: by working with the community, we seek to raise awareness and draw attention to the complexities within the AAPI community, paying special attention to those voices that are overshadowed and not generally heard. Students will be trained in oral history methodologies and work closely with JACL to interview AAPI individuals who are willing to share their stories with the public. This process will teach students to think critically about how we can work with and alongside communities to elevate their stories rather than speak for them. Second, the collection of creative works: as a supplement to the stories, the team will also collect creative works that explore racial and ethnic identity, reflect nuanced points of view, reveal personal histories, and contribute to a vision for a greater understanding of Asian Americans. The project team plans to distribute these creative works across a range of platforms to bring visibility to the AAPI community in the region.*

*As Site Liaison, Dr. Elsa Fan, Chair of Global Languages, Cultures and Societies, and Associate Professor of Anthropology at Webster University, will work with four students during the spring semester to prepare to undertake oral histories and collect creative works among community partners this summer. Dr. Fan is trained in ethnographic methods and has worked with people in the United States as well as Asia. Her recent book is *Commodities of Care: The Business of HIV Testing in China* (University of Minnesota Press, 2021).*

*She will be joined by a Faculty Associate, Dr. Shaolu Yu, Chair of Asian Studies and Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Rhodes College. Dr. Yu trained as an urban geographer in an interdisciplinary environment, Dr. Yu's work draws on a mixed method approach that blends ethnography, interviews, archival research, and GIS (Geographical Information System) in documenting Asian diasporic communities in the United States. Her work has been published in numerous geography journals and book chapters.*

## **The Arkansas Chinese Heritage Project**

ASIANetwork Institution: University of Central Arkansas

Community Partner: Chinese Association of Arkansas

*This project is designed to support the Arkansas Chinese Heritage Project, a multi-media oral history archive launched in 2023 by the University of Central Arkansas' Center for Chinese Language and Culture in collaboration with the Chinese Association of Arkansas. The grant will provide for the current unfulfilled needs of the Arkansas Chinese Heritage Project, namely, cross-training in oral history and digital humanities methods, capacity building for community-led research initiatives, and broader networking with scholars undertaking similar projects throughout ASIANetwork's member institutions. The team will conduct oral history interviews with Chinese families in the rural Southern state and develop metadata based on this. They will then build a website for the Arkansas Chinese Heritage Project, offering a searchable archive of family histories, an audiovisual library of recorded interviews, and a collection of StoryMaps that integrate individual narratives into a broader history of Chinese grocers in Delta region.*

*Dr. Zach Smith, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Interdisciplinary Asian Studies Program at the University of Central Arkansas, will serve as Site Liaison for this project, working with four students. Dr. Smith specializes in modern and late Imperial China, global history, and cultural and intellectual history, and turned his attention in recent years to Chinese American communities in the Arkansas and Mississippi River Delta region.*

*The Faculty Associate, Dr. Yifeng Hu, is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). On campus, she has advocated for Asian American belonging and representation, leading the #StopAsianHate effort beginning in 2021, and initiating the AAPI History Month celebration and AAPI Film Festival at TCNJ. She testified at the New Jersey State House, leading to the adoption of a mandate for the inclusion of AAPI history in the K-12 curriculum. She co-edited the forthcoming book, *Communicated Stereotypes at Work* (Lexington Books, 2024) and has presented at numerous conferences.*

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The AAPI Voices and Stories Program consists of summer collaborative projects with local AAPI communities, resource curation and curriculum development, and training for faculty, students, and community members to carry out digital storytelling projects near their own campuses and hometowns. Please visit the ASIANetwork website for more information.

Applications to join the next cohort of grant recipients – the second year of a three-year pilot – will open in spring 2024. ASIANetwork encourages you to express your interest in this program and to contact us with any questions.

Sophia Geng (St. Vincent College) and Gordon Gray (Berea College) introduced this initiative in spring 2020 and carried it forward in a process involving roundtable discussions, group meetings with invested ASIANetwork colleagues, surveys of the ASIANetwork community, conference presentations, and development of multiple versions of the concept paper. The program leadership team includes Dr. Geng and Dr. Gray, along with Dr. Siti Kusujarti (Warren Wilson College) and Dr. Hiroaki Kawamura (University of Findlay).