

Special Acknowledgement

Bridge Builder, Policy Influencer, and Community Engaged Scholar – Thank You, Paul M. Ong!

Karen Umemoto and Melany De La Cruz-Viesca

With respect and admiration for his stellar record of achievement and with gratitude for his service to the campus and community, we acknowledge Paul M. Ong for his longtime stewardship as *AAPI Nexus Journal* Senior Editor, as this special issue will be his last as he inches slowly towards retirement. Paul has dedicated his career of 35+ years to the field of Asian American Studies. He has strengthened the bridge between “gown and town” through distinguished leadership and research. Many consider him the “Godfather” of Asian American policy and demography.

Paul co-founded *AAPI Nexus Journal* in 2003 with the late Don T. Nakanishi, who is the founding Associate Editor and the former Director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. In their inaugural editorial note, “To Serve, Help Build, and Analyze,” Ong and Nakanishi (2003) wrote:

AAPI Nexus is rooted in a long struggle to bridge the gulf between academia and community. The journal’s mission is to facilitate an exchange of ideas and research findings that strengthens the efforts through policy and practice to tackle the pressing societal problems facing Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

Since the inception of ethnic studies, the goal of “serving the community” has been at the heart of Asian American Studies and Pacific Islander Studies.

One of the major founding missions of the fields—generating practical research—needs to be reinvigorated. There is far too little applied and community-oriented research, and what exists is scattered. There is a critical need for meaningful venues and forums for such work.

This journal is meant to be a part of the effort to expand the arena for applied and community-oriented research.

After sixteen years, the *AAPI Nexus Journal* has published 25 issues, 550+ articles, and is now searchable through over 300 different research databases, such as the Sociology Source Ultimate collection. *AAPI Nexus* has published articles by leading Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander scholars from all over the nation. In 2009, we worked with President Obama's White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to publish, "Forging the Future: The Role of New Research, Data, and Policies for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders." Because of Paul and countless contributors' efforts, the *AAPI Nexus Journal* has become a significant forum for community practitioners, policy makers, and researchers to exchange ideas and knowledge.

Paul has also been a devoted mentor to the next generation of scholars. He mentored hundreds of students, junior faculty, and scholars over his long career. Many were published in the *AAPI Nexus Journal* and some served as guest editors. In each capacity, he worked patiently and painstakingly so that we could learn and grow in the process. We were among those lucky students and are eternally grateful for his support and guidance.

While many staff, community partners, and supporters have helped sustain the *AAPI Nexus Journal* along the way, it is truly Paul M. Ong's dedication and passion for building bridges that has developed the journal into an invaluable resource. Through the publication and dissemination of engaged scholarship, researchers and advocates have been able to influence policy issues and helped transform the lives of disadvantaged Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. For these reasons, we greatly appreciate Paul for his vision, service, and leadership to the *AAPI Nexus Journal*.

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MELANY DE LA CRUZ-VIESCA is the Assistant Director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and the Managing Editor of AAPI NexusJournal. She also serves as the Director of the AAPI Community Development Census Information Center, a partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau. Her research focuses on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander demographics and policy, in relation to asset building, housing, community and economic development, and education. She was appointed by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in 2008 and reappointed by Mayor Eric Garcetti to the City's Human Relations Commission.