

11th Annual
Asian Pacific Islander American
Heritage Month celebration

More Than a Song: APIA Singers

An Activity Book

**APIA Biography Project
Asian American Studies Department
College of Ethnic Studies
San Francisco State University**



More Than a Song: APIA Singers

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THE APIA BIOGRAPHY PROJECT



Lorraine Dong and Jeannie Woo, Directors

The Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) Biography Project began in 2012 under Asian American Studies (AAS) Professors Lorraine Dong and Jeannie Woo at San Francisco State University. The project's primary mission is to provide free and accessible APIA resources for children and adults through events and a website. It is a Community Service Learning project based mainly on the works created by AAS 512 (Asian American Children's/Adolescent Literature) students at San Francisco State. It is funded by private donations and the University's Instructionally Related Activities grant.



Email: apiabiography@gmail.com // Website: apiabiography.sfsu.edu

2024 APIA Event Cosponsors

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY (SFPL)



Established in 1878, the San Francisco Public Library, a 27-branch library system, serves San Francisco through its diverse and extensive collections, programs, and exhibits. In 2013, the APIA Biography Project launched its inaugural event at the Merced Branch library. In subsequent years, the Magazines and Newspapers Center at the Main Library collaborated with the APIA Biography Project to celebrate APIA Heritage Month. Then in 2022, the Library's Children's Center and Chinese Center joined to support this annual program. SFPL champions community engagement in its mission to provide "free and equal access to information, knowledge, independent learning, and the joys of reading for our diverse community."

Website: sfpl.org

THE ASSOCIATION OF CHINESE TEACHERS (TACT)



Founded in 1969, The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT) is a nonprofit organization in San Francisco. Over the years, it has been involved in issues such as affirmative action, bilingual education, curriculum development, and educational advocacy for the APIA community. TACT awards scholarships to high school seniors and holds yearly professional development events. Beginning in 2013, TACT has been cosponsoring the annual APIA Heritage Month celebration with the Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University and the San Francisco Main Public Library.

Website: tactsf.org

SQUARE AND CIRCLE CLUB



Square and Circle Club was founded in San Francisco Chinatown in 1924 by seven adolescent girls to aid flood and famine victims in China. Since that compassionate beginning and to this day, the Club has continued its tradition of supporting and caring for the needs of the community. Through the years, in addition to volunteering and assisting numerous community organizations and individuals, Square and Circle has grown and evolved as a multi-tasking philanthropic organization. It is the oldest Chinese/Asian American women's service organization in the nation. The Club became an APIA Heritage Month cosponsor in 2016 and is now also serving as the Project's fiscal agent. S&C is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

Website: squareandcircleclub.org

More than a Song: APIA Singers

Preface

Joyce D. Bantugan

Throughout history, many social justice movements and singers have used music to invite, unify, and shape a broader audience's social and political consciousness. This can be found within the many protest songs during the Civil Rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements, to name a few. Decades later, we see a shift in the American entertainment industry with an increasing popularity of Asian American pop culture and social justice awareness. And, like many artists of color, artists of Asian descent have struggled to secure a space within the American mainstream music industry. Despite the many barriers they have encountered, including racism, discrimination, pigeonholing, a lack of representation, and some lack of familial support, many Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) singers have managed to overcome and break into the industry.

First and foremost, it is essential to distinguish the different identities between APIA and Asian singers. APIAs are individuals who were either born or became naturalized United States citizens. Asians are born in a country outside of the United States and are citizens of that country. Asian artists experience their own struggles within their Asian mainstream entertainment industry. This activity book discusses APIA singers, a minority struggling in a predominantly white mainstream music industry.

As mentioned above, social justice and music have been intertwined from the pre-1990s to the present. In 1973, the Yellow Pearl produced the first Asian American music album, *A Grain of Sand*, full of songs of protest that showcased their perspectives on social issues of that time. In the 1980s, The Jets participated in the "Just Say No" campaign to discourage children from taking drugs. In 2020, Keshi joined 88Rising's "Asia Rising Forever" online music festival to fundraise for Asian Americans Advancing Justice. In addition to working alongside various civil rights organizations, many artists have written music that addressed various sociopolitical issues—for example, Anderson .Paak's music addresses police brutality, civil unrest, unemployment, and the pandemic claiming the lives of minorities, and Ruby Ibarra's music speaks out about colorism. Overall, what all of our Wall of Fame APIA singers have in common is how their music and presence have challenged the predominately white mainstream American music industry, which is notoriously impenetrable.

Unfortunately, some APIA singers cannot penetrate the American music industry. Instead, some move abroad to pursue their careers. While their English-speaking abilities and Western influence are desirable traits for catering to a rising international market, APIA artists still encounter issues in Asia, such as difficulty learning the Asian language. And though there were successful APIA singers who achieved international fame – e.g., f(x)'s Amber Liu, Girls Generation's Tiffany Young, Jay Park, and Leehom Wang – it is unlikely they would have achieved the same level of international fame as they have abroad. This is due to strong anti-Asian sentiments in the United States, the rise of sharing social media platforms like Tik Tok, and the different approaches Asian companies incorporate to ensure success, e.g., collaborating with other non-Asian artists and developing fanbases abroad. It was not until the 2000s that a wave of Korean pop culture started spreading steadily in popularity in the United States. Once the 2010s hit, songs like "Gangnam Style" by PSY and the K-pop group BTS emerged. And with the

influence of social media, we began to see a spread of Asian music. As a result, the pop music market in Asia grew into a multibillion-dollar industry that offered more opportunities for work and exposure, which appealed to new artists.

Despite K-pop's success and breakthrough in the American music industry, it does not necessarily aid in the success of Asian American artists, especially for those who do not "look" like what many consider Asian – namely those who are Asian Indian or mixed-heritage. Artists like Bruno Mars, Tyga, and Anderson .Paak have Asian heritage but are not typically referred to as Asian American artists. As a result, many up and coming APIA singers have discussed in interviews that they did not have an APIA role model and desired to become an example. Reasons for this lack of representation stem from Asian Americans remaining trapped within anti-Asian sentiments, cultural definitions of success, the perpetual foreigner syndrome, and a model minority myth that continues to stereotype the APIA community. These perceptions pigeonhole APIAs and lead to underrepresentation in all media, including music. As a result, breaking into the music industry continues to be an ongoing struggle unique to APIAs in the United States.

Like any aspect of the music industry, there is no guaranteed path to finding fame and success. Hard work, persistence, dedication, and community support are crucial to finding some form of success. Unfortunately, many barriers still exist within the industry that prevent the rise of more APIA singers. We are slowly progressing with the changing landscape of the American media industry. For those APIA singers fortunate in breaking past those barriers, they are gradually working towards disrupting the industry's norms and are outspoken, in their words and actions, and on their identity and stance on various sociopolitical issues. Their lyrics and actions are truly "more than a song."

This Activity Book for elementary school students is created by Asian American Studies students at SF State University to honor some of the past and present APIA singers. This year's commemoration kicks off the APIA Biography Project's 11th Annual APIA Heritage Month Celebration at the San Francisco Main Public Library on April 28, 2024. Then for the entire month of May 2024, with the full collaboration of the San Francisco Main Public Library, our annual APIA Wall of Fame is displayed at the Children's Center with a separate display at the Chinese Center showing how Square and Circle used music to serve the community. In addition to these events, the APIA website (apiabiography.sfsu.edu) features activities and a variety of resources. This year's cosponsoring community partners include the San Francisco Main Public Library (SFPL), The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT), and the Square and Circle Club (S&C).

2023-24 APIA BIOGRAPHY PROJECT PLANNING COMMITTEE

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APIA Singers – Selected Resource List
Compiled by Jerry Dear, SFPL Magazines and Newspapers Center Librarian
with AAS 512 Students at San Francisco State University
(April 2024)

Note: Some songs have explicit content; listener discretion advised.

BOOKS (Grades 8 and up)

Beram, Nell, and Carolyn Boriss-Krimsky. *Yoko Ono: Collector of Skies*. Amulet Books, 2013.

[Grades 9-12]

SFPL call no.: 700.92 On6b and available on Boundless and Hoopla

Carver, Lisa. *Reaching out with No Hands: Reconsidering Yoko Ono*. Backbeat Books, 2012.

[Grades 8-10]

SFPL call no.: 700.92 On6ca and available on Hoopla

Cot, Jonathan, and Christine Doudna, editors. *The Ballad of John and Yoko*. Dolphin Books, 1982.

[Grades 9-12]

SFPL call no.: 780.2 L548co

Dong, Arthur. *Forbidden City, USA: Chinese American Nightclubs, 1936-1970*. DeepFocus Productions, 2014.

SFPL call no.: 792.7097 D7174f

Herbert, Emily. *Bruno Mars*. Omnibus Press, 2014. [Ages 9-12]

SFPL call no.: 780.2 M3501h

Higgins, Nadia. *Bruno Mars Pop Singer and Producer*. Lerner Publications, 2013. [Ages 8-12]

Available on Boundless and Hoopla

Ho, Don, and Jerry Hopkins. *Don Ho: My Music, My Life*. Watermark Publishing, 2007.

Leavit, Amie Jane. *Bruno Mars*. Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2012. *Blue Banner Biography*. [Ages 9-12]

Miyamoto, Nobuko. *Not Yo' Butterfly: My Long Song of Relocation, Race, Love, and Revolution*. Edited by Deborah Anne Wong. U of California P, 2021. *American Crossroads*. [Ages 16-18 or Grades 10-12]

SFPL call no.: 792.8028 M6993a

Smith, Emily. *Tyga Handbook – Everything You Need to Know about Tyga*. Emereo Publishing, 2013. [K-12]

Villegas, Mark R. *Manifest Technique: Hip Hop, Empire, and Visionary Filipino American Culture*. U of Illinois P, 2021. [Grade 9-12]

SFPL call no.: 973.0499 V714m

Wang, Grace. *Soundtracks of Asian America: Navigating Race through Musical Performance*. Duke UP, 2015. [Grades 8 and up]

SFPL call no.: 781.773 W1843s

Wong, Deborah. *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. Routledge, 2004.

SFPL call no.: 780.973 W8462s

Zauner, Michelle. *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir*. Knopf, 2021.

SFPL Call no.: 780.2 Z193a and available on Boundless, Libby by Overdrive

ARTICLES

Fujimori, Leila. "UH Law Professor Was Asian-American Activist." *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 17 Jan. 2006, archives.starbulletin.com/2006/01/17/news/story08.html.

Nash, Phil Tajitsu. "Remembering Chris Iijima." *Common Dreams*, 7 Jan. 2006, web.archive.org/web/20140225130754/https://www.commondreams.org/views06/0107-26.htm.

FILMS & CONCERTS

Bruno Mars: The Finest. Directed by Jordan Hill. 1091 Media, 2018. *Hoopla*. Available on Hoopla

Flower Drum Song. Directed by Henry Koster. Universal-International Picture, 1961. SFPL call no.: DVD F FLOW, BLU F FLOW

Forbidden City, U.S.A. Directed by Arthur Dong. DeepFocus Productions, 1989.

Girls & Peace in Seoul. Directed by Girls' Generation. Dongwon Entertainment & SM Entertainment, 2015.

Jin: Making of a Rap Star. Directed by Dee, Frank Mosca, Mario Romeo, Leslie Sabin, and Waah, Harrington Talents and Ruff Ryders Pictures, 2003. [Ages 13-15]

Phantasia: 4th Tour in Seoul. Directed by Girls' Generation. Dongwon Entertainment & SM Entertainment, 2017.

A Song for Ourselves. Directed by Tadashi Nakamura. Downtown Community Media Center, 2009.

MUSIC ALBUMS

Anderson .Paak

.Paak, Anderson. *Malibu*. Obe/Empire, 2015.

SFPL call no.: CD R&B ANDE and available on vinyl LP: PD R&B ANDE

---. *Oxnard*. Aftermath/12 Tone Music, 2018.

SFPL call no.: CD RAP ANDE and available on vinyl LP: PD RAP ANDE

---. *Venice*. Obe/Platinum Standard / Steel, 2015.

SFPL call no.: CD RAP ANDE

---. *Ventura*. Aftermath/12 Tone Music, 2019.

SFPL call no.: CD R&B ANDE and available on Hoopla and as an LP: PD R&B ANDE

Larry Ching

Ching, Larry. *Till the End of Time*. Forbidden City Records, 2003.

SFPL call no.: CD 781.64 CHIN

H.E.R.

H.E.R. *H.E.R.* RCA, 2019.

SFPL call no.: CD R&B HER

Don Ho

Ho, Don. *Christmas Album*. Rhino/Warner Bros., 1967. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

---. *Don Ho: Again!* Rhino/Warner Bros., 1966. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

---. *Don Ho Show*. Rhino/Warner Bros., 1966. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

---. *Don Ho's Greatest Hits*. 143/Warner Bros., 1966. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla and available on vinyl LP: PD 784.5 Ho

---. *Tiny Bubbles*. Rhino/Warner Bros., 1979. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

The Jets

The Jets. *The Best of the Jets*. MCA Records, 2001.

SFPL call no.: CD R&B JETS

Keshi

Keshi. *Gabriel*. Island Records, 2022. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

Bruno Mars

Mars, Bruno. *Doo-wops and Hooligans*. Elektra Entertainment Group, 2010.

SFPL call no.: TEEN CD POP MARS and available on Hoopla

---. *Unorthodox Jukebox*. Atlantic, 2012.

SFPL call no.: TEEN CD POP Mars; Available on Hoopla; Available on vinyl LP: POP MARS

---. *XXIVK Magic*. Atlantic, 2016.

SFPL call no.: CD POP MARS and available on Hoopla and on vinyl LP: PD POP MARS

Jay Park

Park, Jay. *Ask Bout Me*. Roc Nation Records, 2018. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

---. *Count on Me EP*. Vitamin Entertainment, 2010. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

---. *Nothin' on You EP*. Rhino, 2010. *Hoopla*.

Available on Hoopla

---. *This Wasn't Supposed to Happen*. AOMG, 2019. *Hoopla*.
Available on Hoopla

Mike Shinoda

Shinoda, Mike. *Post Traumatic*. Warner Bros., 2018.
SFPL call no.: CD ROCK SHIN and available on Hoopla

Tyga

Tyga. *Careless World: Rise of the Last King*. Cash Money Records/Motown Records, 2012. *Hoopla*.
Available on Hoopla

---. *Hotel California*. Explicit deluxe ver. Cash Money Records, 2013. *Hoopla*.
Available on Hoopla

---. *Kyoto*. Last King/Empire, 2018.
SFPL call no.: CD RAP TYGA

Miyoshi Umeki

Umeki, Miyoshi. *Teach Me Tonight*. Jazz Elite S.P., 2014. *Hoopla*.
Available on Hoopla

---. *Why Talk*. Jazz Elite S.P., 2014. *Hoopla*.
Available on Hoopla

Tiffany Young

Girls' Generation. *Holiday Night: The 6th Album*. SM Entertainment, 2017.
SFPL call no.: KOREAN CD POP GIRL

---. *I Got a Boy: The 4th Album*. SM Entertainment, 2013.
SFPL call no.: KOREAN CD POP GIRL

---. *Lion Heart: The 5th Album*. SM Entertainment, 2015
SFPL call no.: KOREAN CD POP GIRL

---. *Mr. Mr: 4th Mini Album*. SM Entertainment, 2014.
SFPL call no.: KOREAN CD POP GIRL

---. *Oh!: Girls' Generation 2econd Album*. SM Entertainment, 2010.
SFPL call no.: TEEN KOREAN CD WORLD GIRL

---. *Run Devil Run*. SM Entertainment, 2010.
SFPL call no.: KOREAN CD WORLD SONY

---. Sowŏn Ŭl Mal Haebwa: The 2nd Mini Album. SM Entertainment, 2009.
SFPL call no.: KOREAN CD WORLD GIRL

**APIA
SINGERS:**

**PRE-
1990S**



Kaylee Huey (SFSU 2022)

Larry Ching

Chinese and Hawaiian American

BORN: August 27, 1920 (Kauai, Hawai'i)

DIED: July 5, 2003 (San Francisco, California)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: "Larry Ching Day" was declared by San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown on June 28, 2003.

MORE THAN A SONG: Larry often fought back racism. "We're supposed to take some of that – but we don't." (*Forbidden City, USA: Chinatown Nightclubs, 1936-1970*, 2015)

(see biography p. 17)



Chae Joon Lee (SFSU 2023)

Don Ho

(Donald Tai Loy Ho)

Chinese, Hawaiian, Portuguese, Dutch, and German American

Born: August 13, 1930 (Honolulu, Hawai'i)

Died: April 14, 2007 (Honolulu, Hawai'i)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Hawai'i Ambassador of Aloha (1988)

MORE THAN A SONG: Don promoted Hawaiian culture and never forgot the servicemen whom he would often call to the stage to sing or to perform the hula.

(see biography p. 17)



Celina Lieu (SFSU 2023)

James Shigeta

(James Saburo Shigeta)
Japanese American

Born: June 17, 1929 (Honolulu, Hawai'i)

Died: July 28, 2014 (Los Angeles, California)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Golden Globe Award, Most Promising Newcomer-Male (1960)

MORE THAN A SONG: James Shigeta's singing and acting challenged mainstream America: "Why in the heck did I have to be white and blue-eyed and blond?" (*Hollywood Chinese: The Chinese in American Feature Films*, 2019)

(see biography p. 17)



Nikki Hachey (SFSU 2022)

Pat Suzuki

(Chiyoko Suzuki)

Japanese American

Born: September 22, 1930 (Cressey, California)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Theatre World Award, Outstanding New York City Debut Performance (1959)

MORE THAN A SONG: Pat is a civil rights activist for Asian Americans and speaks up about her Japanese American internment experience.

(see biography p. 18)



Amaya Romero (SFSU 2023)

The Jets

(LeRoy, Eddie, Eugene, Haini, Rudy, Kathi, Elizabeth, and Moana Wolfgramm)
Tongan Americans

Born: 1965 to 1973 (see The Jets biography for details)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: 1988 Grammy Award Nomination for
“Rocket 2 U”

MORE THAN A SONG: The Jets participated in the 1980s “Just
Say No” campaign to discourage children from taking drugs.

(see biography p. 18)



Maxwell Quan (SFSU 2023)

Miyoshi Umeki

Japanese American

Born: May 8, 1929 (Otaru, Hokkaido, Japan)

Died: August 28, 2007 (Licking, Missouri)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Academy Award, Best Supporting Actress
(*Sayonara* 1957)

MORE THAN A SONG: Miyoshi scratched her name off her Oscar statue and trashed it to teach her son that material things are not important and do not represent her. (*Entertainment Weekly*, 2 Feb. 2018)

(see biography p. 19)



Samantha Pearce (SFSU 2023)

Yellow Pearl (1972-1974)

(William “Charlie” Chin, Chris Kando Iijima, and Nobuko JoAnne Miyamoto)
Chinese American and Japanese Americans

Born/Died: see Yellow Pearl biography for details

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Wrote, sang, and produced the first album of Asian American music

MORE THAN A SONG: Among Yellow Pearl’s songs of protest. “We Are the Children” (1973) is among their most popular:

Sing a song for ourselves.
What have we got to lose?
Sing a song for ourselves.
We got the right to choose.
We got the right to choose.

(see biography p. 19)

APIA Singers: Pre-1990s Biographies

Note: Some songs have explicit content; listener discretion advised.

Larry Ching (p. 10)

Larry was born to a Chinese father and a Hawaiian mother who studied music in Europe. He was a self-taught singer. When Larry moved to San Francisco at the age of eighteen, he became a singing bartender in Chinatown and then a main attraction known as the “Chinese Frank Sinatra” at the Forbidden City Nightclub. Larry did not like the white audiences that often taunted Asian American entertainers on stage with racist slurs. On many occasions he fought back physically and got in trouble. In 2003 at the age of 82, Larry celebrated the release of his debut album, *Till the End of Time*, consisting of classic Hawaiian love songs and songs that he had been singing since the 1940s. He passed away a week later in San Francisco.



Don Ho (p. 11)

Don was one of nine children. His father owned a bar named Honey's that exposed Don to music at a young age. After attending college with a football scholarship and graduating with a sociology degree from University of Hawai'i, he entered the US Air Force and was stationed in Mississippi and California. In 1959, he returned to Hawai'i to take care of his mother and began singing at Honey's. He later moved the bar to Waikiki, where he was noticed by record companies. This led to performing in Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, and New York City. In 1966, Don released his most famous song “Tiny Bubbles.” His subsequent album also entitled *Tiny Bubbles* was on the Album Top 200 for almost a year. A bronze statue of Don stands in Waikiki's International Market Place.



James Shigeta (p. 12)

James was the third of six children of a nisei father and issei mother. He studied creative writing briefly at New York University. When he entered and won first prize in *The Ted Mack Amateur Hour*, he decided to embark on a singing career. He began singing in supper clubs, sometimes under the name of Guy Brion. During the Korean War, James was a Staff Sergeant in the US Marine Corps and sang for the troops. He went to Japan afterwards, not knowing any Japanese, and became a singing sensation, dubbed the “Frank Sinatra of Japan.” James' acting career began with a few roles in Japanese movies. When he returned to America, he landed a groundbreaking role as an Asian American romantic lead in *The Crimson Kimono* (1959). Then his singing and acting skills landed him in another major romantic lead role as Wang Ta in the musical film version of *Flower Drum Song* (1961).

**Pat Suzuki (p. 13)**

Pat is a nisei and the youngest of four daughters. She grew up in a farm town and had the nickname of “Chibi,” Japanese for short or small child. When Pat was eleven years old, her family was interned at the Granada War Relocation Center in Colorado during World War II. After graduating from San Jose State University with teaching credentials, Pat traveled to Europe and New York. She was broke and became one of the backup actors in the touring production of the play, *The Teahouse in the August Moon*. While performing in Seattle during the 1950s, she was discovered by Bing Crosby. At the time she was nicknamed “Miss Pony Tail,” a name that was used to entitle her 1958 debut album. Pat sang her hit song “I Enjoy Being a Girl” while performing in the original Broadway stage production of *Flower Drum Song* (1958). Soon after, Pat received a Grammy nomination for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance (1960) and sang at John F. Kennedy’s presidential inauguration in 1961. At the time of this printing, Pat is 93 years young and continues to make occasional appearances.

**The Jets (p. 14)**

LeRoy Wolfgramm (b. July 19, 1965, Tonga) – vocals, electric guitar

Eddie Wolfgramm (b. August 14, 1966, Torrance, California) – vocals, tenor saxophone, percussion

Eugene Wolfgramm (b. September 24, 1967, Tonga) – vocals, conga, alto saxophone

Haini Wolfgramm (b. January 25, 1968, San Francisco, California) – vocals, bass guitar

Rudy Wolfgramm (b. March 1, 1969, Salt Lake City, Utah) – vocals, drums

Kathi Wolfgramm (b. September 6, 1970, San Diego, California,) – vocals, keyboards, percussion

Elizabeth Wolfgramm (b. August 19, 1972, Salt Lake City, Utah) – vocals, keyboards, percussion

Moana Wolfgramm (b. October 13, 1973, Salt Lake City, Utah) – vocals, keyboards, percussion

Parents Maikeli and Vaké Wolfgramm immigrated to America from Tonga and had 17 children, two of whom were adopted (Eddie and Eugene). The family are members of the Mormon Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Eight became The Jets, a family band based in Minneapolis, Minnesota that began performing in 1977. From 1985 to 1990, they went on three world tours and had five Top 10 hits on the “Billboard Hot 100.” Songs by The Jets strive to express pride in their Tongan American heritage. Once, they donated all proceeds from a concert to Eastern Arizona College Fine Arts to support their Polynesian college students. On April 9, 2010, The Jets had their 25th anniversary reunion show in Minneapolis and then went to the Philippines to perform and celebrate their 30th anniversary. As of 2022, there are two touring groups of Jets: The Jets (Elizabeth, Eddie, Kathi, and Moana) and The Jets Original Family Band (Haini, LeRoy, and Rudy).

**Miyoshi Umeki (p. 15)**

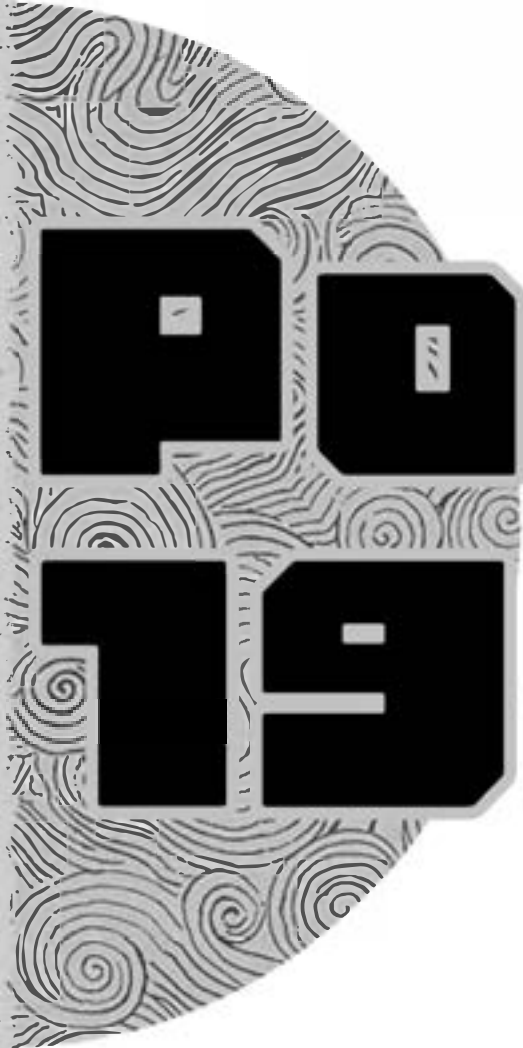
Miyoshi was the youngest of nine children. Her father owned an iron foundry. Miyoshi always had a love for American pop music. She practiced singing with a bucket over her head to avoid annoying her parents, taped piano key patterns to the dining room table to rehearse, and sang with a GI band for ninety cents a night in her teens. After World War II, she became a nightclub singer in Japan under the name of Nancy Umeki and recorded for RCA Victor Japan for four years. She sang mostly American jazz in both Japanese and English. When she moved to the United States in 1955, she released singles and albums with Mercury Records. She became a naturalized US citizen to reside in America to pursue her career. A year after receiving her Best Supporting Actress Oscar for *Sayonara* (1957), Miyoshi received a Tony Award nomination for best leading actress in the Broadway musical production of *Flower Drum Song* (1958). For the 1961 film version, she received a Golden Globe nomination for best supporting actress. She later became well-known among American households as Mrs. Livingston in the television series, *The Courtship of Eddie's Father* (1969-72). Miyoshi died of cancer at the age of 78.

**Yellow Pearl (p. 16)**

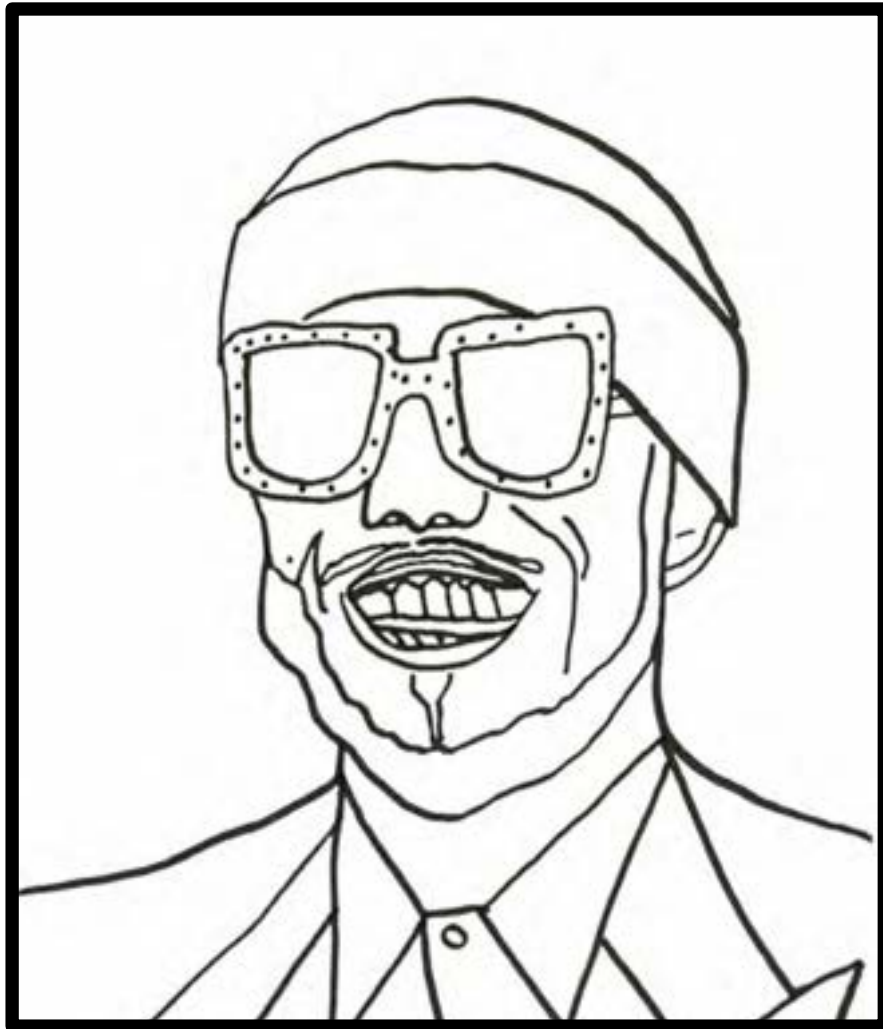
William David "Charlie" Chin (b. 1944, Jackson Heights, New York City, New York)
 Chris Kando Iijima (b. December 19, 1948, New York; d. December 31, 2005)
 Nobuko JoAnne Miyamoto (b. November 14, 1939, Los Angeles, California)

Nobuko pursued a love for dance and music when World War II started; Chris' parents were activists who inspired him to protest at a young age; and Charlie worked in a shirt pressing factory with his father. Chris and Nobuko began as a team writing and singing folk-inspired protest music. Charlie joined them later to form a band, calling themselves Yellow Pearl. Troubled by the many issues facing America, the three have been active in voicing the problems facing Asian Pacific Islander Americans. Nobuko writes songs about climate change, Asian hate, and Black Lives Matter. As a law professor and legal scholar, Chris wrote critical articles on discrimination against Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians, especially on the theft of Hawaiian ancestral land. Charlie performs history to educate the community about its past. The trio's 1973 album, *A Grain of Sand: Music for the Struggles by Asians in America*, is recognized as the first album of Asian American music. The track list consists of twelve folk songs, political ballads, and protest songs.

**APIA
SINGERS:**



**Post-
1990s**



Avalon Distaso (SFSU 2023)

Anderson .Paak

(Brandon Paak Anderson)

Korean and African American

BORN: February 8, 1986 (Oxnard, California)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: Eight-time Grammy Award winner
* MTV Video Music Awards for Best R&B * Soul Train Music
Awards Centric Certified Award

MORE THAN A SONG: Anderson's music and lyrics address many social issues on police brutality, civil unrest, unemployment, and the pandemic that claimed the lives of minorities.

(see biography p. 33)



Waimin Louie (SFSU 2023)

China Mac

(Raymond Yu)
Chinese American

BORN: February 5, 1982 (Brooklyn, New York)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Featured in the 2014 HBO Documentary *University of Sing Sing* to highlight how inmates can receive a college education and redemption at Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

MORE THAN A SONG: China Mac's songs, "Buck a Cop" (2014) addresses police brutality, and "They Can't Burn Us All (2020) addresses Asian hate crime and violence:

Moment of truth,
they show their colors when the virus hit
I'm American

(see biography p. 33)



Elena Curnyn (SFSU 2022)

H.E.R

(Gabriella Sarmiento Wilson)
Filipina and African American

BORN: June 27, 1997 (Vallejo, California)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: Mult -Grammy Award winner for Best R&B Song, Performance, and Album * Multiple awards from Apple Music, BET Awards, Soul Train Music Awards, and MTV Video Music Awards * 2022 Children's and Family Emmy Awards for Outstanding Short Form Program, "We the People" * Academy Awards, 2021 Best Original Song, "Fight for You" * 2020 iHeartRadio Music Awards, Artist of the Year * 2019 NAACP Image Awards, Outstanding Female

MORE THAN A SONG: "I Can't Breathe" (2020) expresses the pain, anger, and frustration after the death of George Floyd:

I can't breathe
You're taking my life from me
I can't breathe
Will anyone fight for me?

(see biography p. 34)



Jessica Valdez (SFSU 2022)

Ruby Anne Ibarra

(Ruby Anne Ibarra)

Filipina American

BORN: February 25, 1991 (Tacloban, Philippines)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: 2023 Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Music

* 2021 San Francisco Immigrant Youth Commission, Youth Leadership Award

MORE THAN A SONG: Colorism is a topic Ruby speaks out about through her music. In Ruby's song "Background" (2017) she paints an image of scrubbing her skin to the point of physical pain in an attempt to make her skin lighter (*Rappler*, Lago 2019).

(see biography p. 34)



Cesar Azdar Rueda (SFSU 2023)

IZ (Braddah IZ)

(Israel Kamakawiwo'ole)

Hawaiian American

BORN: May 20, 1959 (Honolulu, Hawai'i)

DIED: June 26, 1997 (Honolulu, Hawai'i)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: NPR's "The Voice of Hawai'i" (2010) *
1997 HARA, Male Vocalist of the Year, Favorite Entertainer of the Year,
Album of the Year, and Island Contemporary Album of the Year * 1994
Entertainer of the Year, Hawai'i Academy of Recording Arts (HARA)

MORE THAN A SONG: "Hawai'i '78" is a political track of modern-day
colonization in Hawai'i:

The life of this land is the life of the people
and that to care for the land
is to care for the Hawaiian culture

(see biography pp. 34-35)



Cesar Azdar Rueda (SFSU 2023)

Keshi

(Casey Thai Luong)
Vietnamese American

BORN: November 4, 1994 (Houston, Texas)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: 2022 Billboard Top New Artist Debut

MORE THAN A SONG: In 2020, Keshi joined 88Rising's "Asia Rising Forever" online music festival to fundraise for Asian Americans Advancing Justice, an Asian American civil rights organization.

(see biography p. 35)



Tiara Bais (SFSU 2022)

Bruno Mars

(Peter Gene Hernandez)

Filipino, Puerto Rican, and Jewish American

BORN: October 8, 1985 (Honolulu, Hawai'i)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: Multiple Grammy Award winner for record of the year, song of the year, best male and pop vocal album, album of the year, and best R&B performance and albums * Billboard Music Awards' top R&B artist, top R&B male artist, top R&B album, top R&B song, and top R&B tour * Multiple awards from NAACP Image Awards and MTV Video Music Awards * 2017 American Music Awards Artist of the Year

MORE THAN A SONG: Bruno is active in supporting fellow musicians and children's causes around health and education and is part of DoSomething.org and MusiCares.

(see biography p. 35)



Zhao Xianqing (SFSU 2023)

Raveena

(Raveena Aurora)

Indian Punjabi American

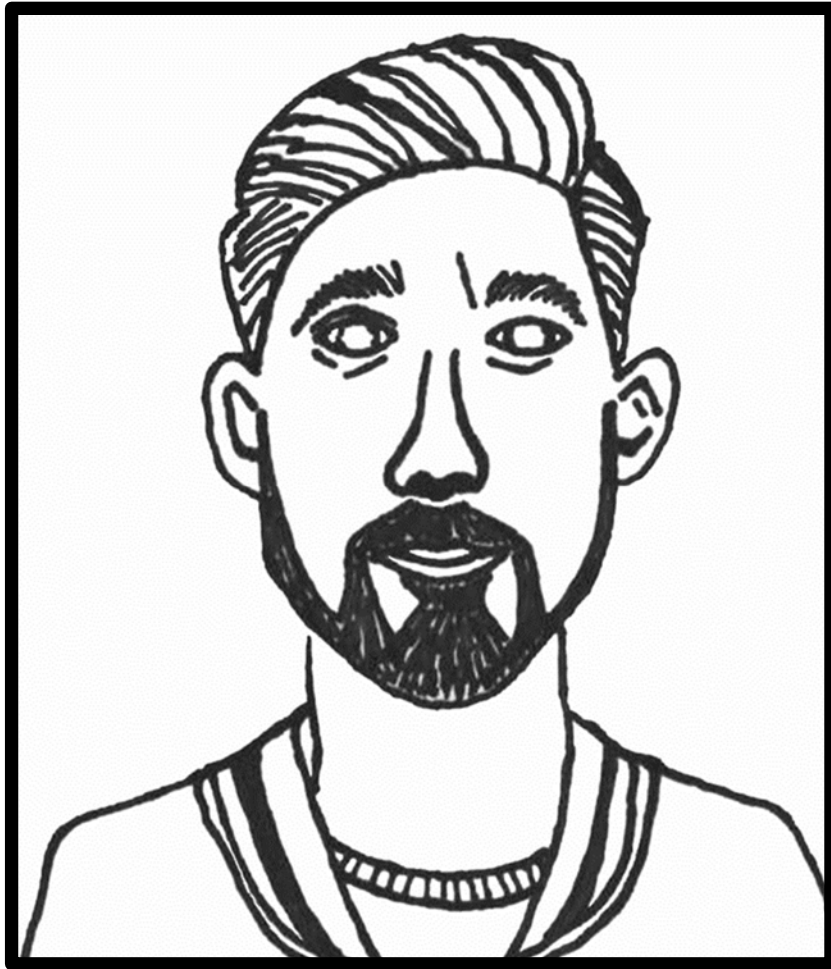
BORN: September 30, 1993 (Massachusetts)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: Raveena's album *Lucid* (2019) was named one of the Best Albums of 2019 by NPR.

MORE THAN A SONG: "If Only" (2017) addresses female empowerment:

Into sunlight I could get over you
I'm going without you I said I'd meet you off the freeway, you're lonely
You still don't understand, a woman is holy
Your fake apologies would work on the old me

(see biography p. 36)



Meg Brittain (SFSU 2023)

Mike Shinoda

(Michael Kenji Shinoda)
Japanese and European American

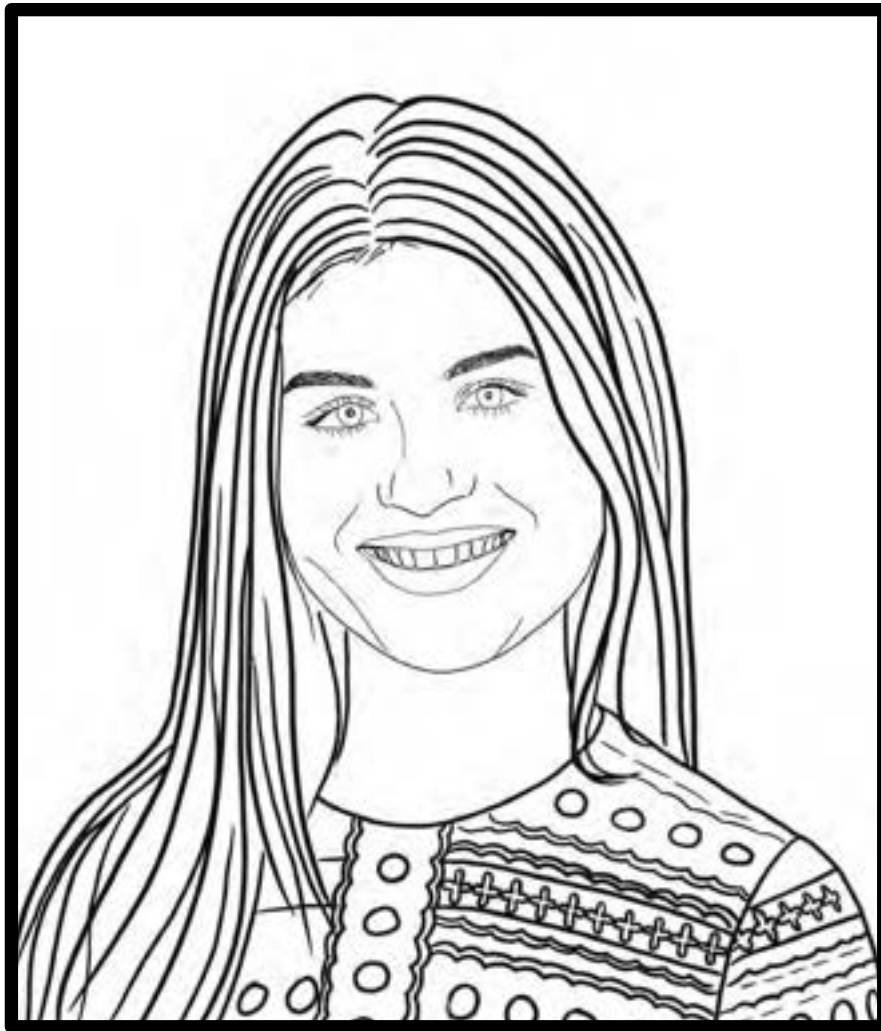
BORN: February 11, 1977 (Agoura, California)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: Mult -Grammy Award Winners for Best Rap and Best Hard Rock * Multiple awards from iHeart Radio Music Awards and MTV Video Music Awards * -4/2007-8/2012/2017 American Music Awards, Favorite Alternative Artist * 2011 UN Global Leadership Award for Humanitarian Philanthropy * 2001/2003 Billboard Music Awards, Modern Rock Artist of the Year

MORE THAN A SONG: Mike's song, "Kenji" (2005), draws from his father's time as a Japanese American child during World War II and documents the family's experience in the internment camps:

Now, the names have been changed but the story is true
My family was locked up, back in '42
My family was there, where it was dark and damp
And they called it an internment camp

(see biography p. 36)



Samantha Ng (SFSU 2023)

Phillipa Soo

(Phillipa Anne Soo)

Chinese and European American

BORN: May 31, 1990 (Libertyville, Illinois)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: 2023 Ensemble Grammy Award, Best Musical Theatre Album, *Into the Woods* * 2021 Primetime Emmy Award, Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or Movie, *Hamilton* * 2016 Ensemble Grammy Award, Best Musical Theater Album, *Hamilton* *

MORE THAN A SONG: In an interview with *Refinery29*, Phillipa stated, “I think that we’re living in a time when people are fearful and uncertain and are looking to find an answer to the chaos, but I think in terms of the rise of Asian hatred, I made it a personal goal of mine to uplift Asian stories and Asian American stories and at the same time lift up my own story.” (Vrajlal 2021).

(see biography p. 37)



Angelyn Fronteras (SFSU 2023)

Tyga

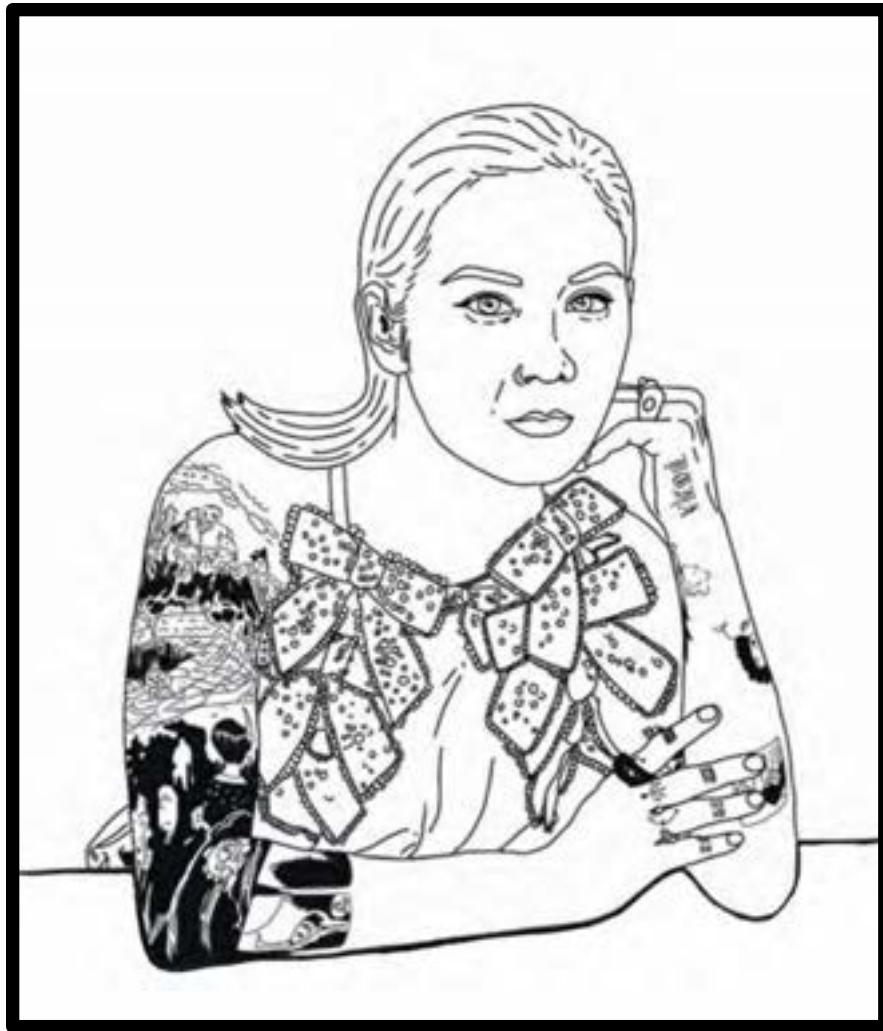
(Micheal Ray Nguye -Stevenson)
Vietnamese and Jamaican American

BORN: November 19, 1989 (Compton, California)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: 2012 MuchMusic Video Awards, MuchVibe Hip-Hop Video of the Year

MORE THAN A SONG: Tyga has publicly addressed the exploitation of capitalism and his ongoing support of Black Lives Matter with donations to social justice organizations such as National Bail Out Fund and Aware-LA.

(see biography p. 37)



Kristin Soriano (SFSU 2022)

Michelle Zauner

(Michelle Chongmi Zauner)
Korean and Jewish American

BORN: March 29, 1989 (Seoul, South Korea)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: 2022 Grammy Awards, Japanese Breakfast Club Nominated Best New Artist; Best Alternative Music Album * 2022 GLAAD Media Award, Japanese Breakfast Club Outstanding Breakthrough Artist Nomination * 2022 Libera Awards, Japanese Breakfast Club Record of the Year, Best Alternative Rock Record, Creative Packaging and Marketing Genius

MORE THAN A SONG: In 2022, Michelle partnered with Goose Island Brewery to release a limited-edition beer to raise money for “Heart of Dinner” that helps elderly Asian Americans with food insecurity.

(see biography pp. 37-38)

APIA Singers: Post-1990s Biographies

Note: Some songs have explicit content; listener discretion advised.



Anderson .Paak (p. 21)

Anderson .Paak had a rough childhood with his South Korean born mother and African American father. His father was addicted to drugs and alcohol before being sent to prison for domestic abuse. Anderson .Paak was surrounded by music as a child, first as a drummer in his church's band. He later started to record music in his bedroom. As an adult he was fired from his job which left him homeless and broke. He applied for many jobs, but they all turned him down. Then a rapper named Dumbfoundead hired him as an assistant in charge as a videographer, writer, producer, and editor. That was where he got his first big break and caught the eye of Dr. Dre who signed him in 2016 to his record label, Aftermath Entertainment. In that same year, Anderson founded the Brandon Anderson Foundation to support and uplift communities through access to arts and education. One of his music videos, "Lockedown" (2020), is about the recovery from a protest that escalated in violence. In 2021, Anderson .Paak partnered with Bruno Mars to form the super musical duo "Silk Sonic," and their album *An Evening with Silk Sonic* (2021) won them four Grammy awards, including Record of the Year and Song of the Year. A fun fact about Anderson .Paak is that the dot in his stage name represents all the details he put into his work.



China Mac (p. 22)

China Mac grew up in Chinatown surrounded by gang activity. His mother worked two jobs to support the family when his father went to jail. At the age of eight, Mac joined the Ghost Shadow Gang and committed crimes that led him in and out of group homes, juvenile detention, and prison. He always had a love of hip-hop and used rap to express his frustrations. A visit from his mother while in prison motivated China Mac to use freestyle rap skills to improve himself. In 2013, he was released from prison and founded Red Money Records and gained some fame in the United States with his first album *M.I.T.M.* (2017) and subsequent album *Yin and Yang* (2019). He became an activist in 2020 during the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes when the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the country. China Mac co-organized rallies in Brooklyn, Los Angeles, and San Francisco to raise awareness around anti-Asian hate crimes. These marches adopted a rally call of "They Can't Burn Us All" which later became the title for his rap single. He continues to unite Asian Americans and other marginalized communities to fight against racism.



H.E.R. (p. 23)

H.E.R. is a Grammy, Emmy, and Oscar winning singer born and raised in Vallejo, California. She struggled with self-acceptance for being “too Asian for the Black kids, and too Black for the Filipino kids.” She later realized she could be both. Influenced by Prince and Lenny Kravitz, H.E.R. learned to play the bass, guitar, piano, and drums, and later wrote her own songs at the age of nine. A child music prodigy, she went on various talk shows but her first big break came when she was featured on *Radio Disney: Next Big Thing* at twelve.

At fourteen, she signed on to RCA Records and at nineteen, released her first mini-album *H.E.R. Volume 1*. Feeling the pressure to continue her education, she almost did not become a singer. However, she believed music gave her the freedom to express herself and be a musical role model for other young female singers. H.E.R. noted “at the time, there were no female artists that were kind of doing trap R&B with lyrics that weren’t superficial” (*Los Angeles Times* 2018). She adopted the acronym H.E.R. to stand for “Having Everything Revealed” to highlight everything that she is. She recently performed at the 2024 Super Bowl halftime show. H.E.R. continues to be a voice for women and Black Lives Matter.



Ruby Ibarra (p. 24)

Ruby was born in the Philippines and grew up in San Lorenzo, California. She is a rapper, music producer, and spoken word artist who incorporates English, Tagalog, and Waray in her work. While working on her music, her day job was a scientist trying to find cures for diseases including COVID-19. She developed a love of rap and was inspired by politically conscious Filipino rapper Francis Magalona. Ruby’s big break came when she released her *Lost in Translation* mixtape on Sirius XM

radio in 2012. She was later signed to independent record label Beatrock Music in 2015. Her first album, *Circa 1991* (2017) addresses issues of immigration, Filipino American identity and culture, trauma, and women empowerment. In 2021, she received the Youth Leadership Award in San Francisco and appeared on the cover of *The New York Times Style Magazine*. Ruby continues to use her music to fight against colorism and misogyny in hip-hop and Filipino culture. In 2023, Ruby co-founded the record label Bolo Music Group that highlights Filipino American artists and the Pinay Rising scholarship program for Filipina students in higher education.



IZ (Braddah IZ) (p. 25)

IZ was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai‘i surrounded by music. After being exposed to numerous Hawaiian musicians, he started performing at age ten in front of his elders with a ukulele. His childhood nickname was “the kid with the ukulele.” Together with his cousin, they formed Makaha Sons of Nī‘ihau which blended contemporary and traditional Hawaiian music, and toured the United States. IZ’s *Alone in IZ World* (2001) debuted #1 on Billboard’s World

Chart. He had already gained commercial success when he went solo with his album *Facing Future* (1993) with the medley of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World.” It

reached the Billboard charts. This song was later featured in over forty-two movies and shows including the movie *Fifty First Dates* (2004). Pixar's short film *Lava* also featured IZ's cover of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" in 2014. The song was selected in 2020 for preservation in the US National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress. IZ always supported Hawaiian rights and independence. He used his own music to promote awareness and the second-class status that Native Hawaiians have in the tourism industry.



Keshi (p. 26)

Keshi grew up with Vietnamese parents in Texas where he learned how to play piano at age thirteen from his grandfather. Growing up in Texas, Keshi felt out of place from his Asian American heritage particularly where "he wasn't the same as his American friends either, who would have the traditional American experience of barbeques and all" (*Vice* 2019). He became more exposed to music in high school and was influenced by the show *Drake and Josh*. Keshi became an oncology nurse to be safe, but he still loved music and released his self-composed songs on Soundcloud in 2017. Keshi released *The Reaper* in 2018 and gained recognition and fame when K-pop idols including BTS started to like his music. In 2019, he quit his nursing job and signed on to Island Records. Then his *Gabriel* (2022) debuted as #27 on the Billboard Artist 100. Keshi's stage name came about because his future fiancé's parents could not pronounce "Casey" and ended up pronouncing it like "Keshi" which he later adopted.



Bruno Mars (p. 27)

Bruno is a multi-Grammy winning artist who grew up with his four sisters in Hawai'i to a Filipina mother and a Puerto Rican Jewish father. By the age of four, he was part of this father's singing group and taught himself to play piano, bass, guitar, and percussion. Later, his parents divorced and Bruno followed his father, living in the "slums of Hawai'i" on rooftops and car tops. Influenced by Hawaiian music and his younger days as an Elvis and Michael Jackson impersonator, he moved to Los Angeles in 2003 to pursue his music career. He adopted the stage name "Bruno Mars" to "avoid being stereotyped" since the industry wanted to push him as a Latino artist. Bruno's big break came as a producer and songwriter with the Smeezington's, working with artists such as Brandy, Sean Kingston, and Flo Rida. This led to being featured in B.O.B.'s "Nothin' on You" (2010), which peaked in the music charts and eventually his solo debut album *Doo-Wops & Hooligans* (2010), garnering favorable reviews and winning him the first of many Grammys. In 2021, Bruno partnered with Anderson .Paak to form the super musical duo "Silk Sonic." Their album *An Evening with Silk Sonic* (2021) won four Grammy awards including Record of the Year and Song of the Year.



Raveena (p. 28)

Raveena grew up in a traditional Indian Punjabi American family in Massachusetts and later in New York. Her family immigrated from Punjab, India to the United States to flee the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. She loved music growing up. She was influenced by Bollywood and Ella Fitzgerald. She sang around the house and started performing in community talent shows at the age of five. Raveena wanted to be a musician and her parents were hesitantly supportive. It was hard getting into the industry. First, there were no South Asian girls like her in the media. Next, colored women were exoticized in the media. Lastly, people told her that a South Asian woman could not be a singer in the United States. At multiple record labels, people would tell her “we can’t sign you, you’re brown...there’s no space for you.” This did not stop Raveena, but made her more determined. She continued to write her own songs, perform, and build her skills around music. Her big break came in 2015 when she started working with record producer Everet Orr, releasing new music on Soundcloud, and amassing a large online following. Her albums *Shanti* (2017) and *Lucid* (2019) explored themes of female empowerment, trauma, healing, and spirituality. In 2022, she signed with Warner Records and continued promoting her Indian Punjabi American culture and background in her music videos and songs. In that same year, she also became the first woman of Indian origin to headline the Coachella Music Festival. Raveena joined *Kajal Magazine* to continue giving voice to the South Asian diaspora. Her musical style is a combination of R&B, soul, jazz, experimental, and pop.



Mike Shinoda (p. 29)

Mike grew up in California to a Japanese American father and a European American mother. As a child, he loved to paint and studied classical piano since age six. He eventually branched out to jazz and hip-hop before picking up the guitar. Mike was asked to be part of a youth musical theater, but he was worried because of a solo part. After working with the director to rewrite the songs in a way that was authentic to his voice, he performed on stage and was transformed by the experience. In college, Mike obtained a degree in graphic design and illustration while continuing to pursue his love of music. When in high school he co-founded the rap rock, alternative metal, and electronica band that would eventually become Linkin Park in 1996. He was the co-lead vocalist, songwriter, and producer. The path for Linkin Park was tough. After forty-four rejections from record labels, they finally got a record deal with Warner Bros. Records and was launched to stardom with their debut album *Hybrid Theory* (2000). Music helped Mike rise to fame and also helped him to explore his identity as a Japanese American and other social issues. He formed a side project called “Fort Minor” in 2004 that focused on his hip-hop background with tracks bringing awareness to Japanese American internment during World War II. When his bandmate died, Mike publicly shared his experience and became an advocate for mental health support and acceptance. He also fights to protect the environment and with his band Linkin Park, they founded “Music for Relief” in 2005 to help victims of natural disasters. Mike still uses art and painting to express himself.

**Phillipa Soo (p. 30)**

Phillipa is a mixed heritage Chinese American growing up in the suburbs of Chicago. Her mother was a theater administrator and would often take Phillipa to see musicals which inspired her to take dancing, singing, and acting lessons. Phillipa was later accepted into the Juilliard School's acting program in 2012 to pursue her dream of performing. She was cast in her first off-Broadway play in 2013 that would later attract the attention of Lin-Manuel Miranda who asked her to take part in a 2014 reading of *Hamilton*. She won the role and gained fame for originating the Broadway role of Eliza in *Hamilton* (2015). This earned Phillipa a Best Actress in a Musical Tony nomination and the Grammy awarded to the cast for best Broadway Musical Album. An interesting fact is she learned to beatbox during *Hamilton*. Phillipa faced financial hardship in pursuing her dream and has spoken about the importance of financial aid and scholarships for performing arts students. She established "The Eliza Project" in 2015 for children in orphanages to use the arts as a means of expression. Additionally, she is involved in various social justice initiatives with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. Phillipa has dedicated her work to providing a voice for Asian Americans and others with marginalized backgrounds.

**Tyga (p. 31)**

Tyga was born in Compton, California, and moved to Gardena, California at age twelve. He lived with his Vietnamese mother and Jamaican father. Influenced by Eminem, Lil Wayne, and other rap artists, Tyga entered rap contests at a young age and made his demo mix tape *Young on Probation* in 2007. Travis McCoy of Gym Class Heroes brought Tyga into the US music industry where he was signed to DCD2 Records, and then to other labels such as Young Money Entertainment and GOOD Music. In 2011, he received a Grammy nomination for Best Rap/Song Collaboration. Tyga has been called out for his controversial lyrics on women. He simultaneously raps about the exploitation of capitalism and his support of Black Lives Matter.

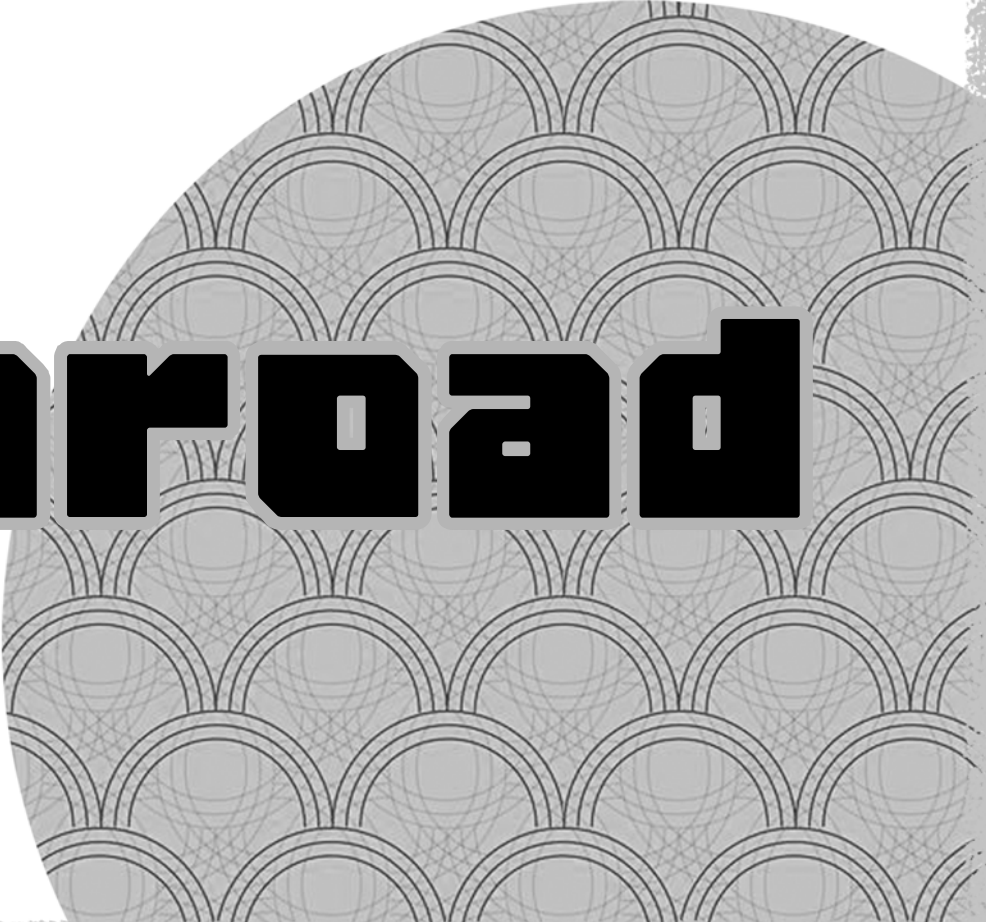
**Michelle Zauner (p. 32)**

Michelle is a musician and best-selling author who was born in South Korea but moved to Eugene, Oregon at nine months of age. Growing up in a predominantly white community, she recalls hating being part Korean, barely speaking Korean, and struggling with having no Asian friends. Michelle said that no part of her felt Korean unless it came to food. That was why she looked forward to the mother-daughter summer trips to South Korea where they would visit family. At fifteen, Michelle asked her mother for a guitar and took weekly lessons. She would write songs as a form of self-expression and as an outlet for her emotions. She continued her music career in college by forming small bands, but her mother did not want her to become a musician. Michelle formed her Indie pop band "Japanese Breakfast Club" in 2013. With little success she quit in 2015 to work in advertising. Her mother's death led Michelle to take her grief to create

two albums, *Psychopomp* (2016) and *Soft Sounds from Another Planet* (2017). Both gained attention and critical acclaim. This jumpstarted her music career again. Michelle is also a bestselling author. Her memoir *Crying in H-Mart* was released in April 2021 and became an instant hit, staying on the *New York Times* nonfiction bestseller list for sixty weeks. In 2022, she became one of *Time*'s 100 Most Influential People in the World-Innovators. While encouraging more Asian American participation in music, Michelle also advocates speaking up on Asian American issues and calling out anti-Asian racism in the United States.

**APIA
SINGERS:**

**Who
Made
it
Abroad**





Timothy Woo (SFSU 2022)

Coco Lee

(Ferren Lee)
Chinese American

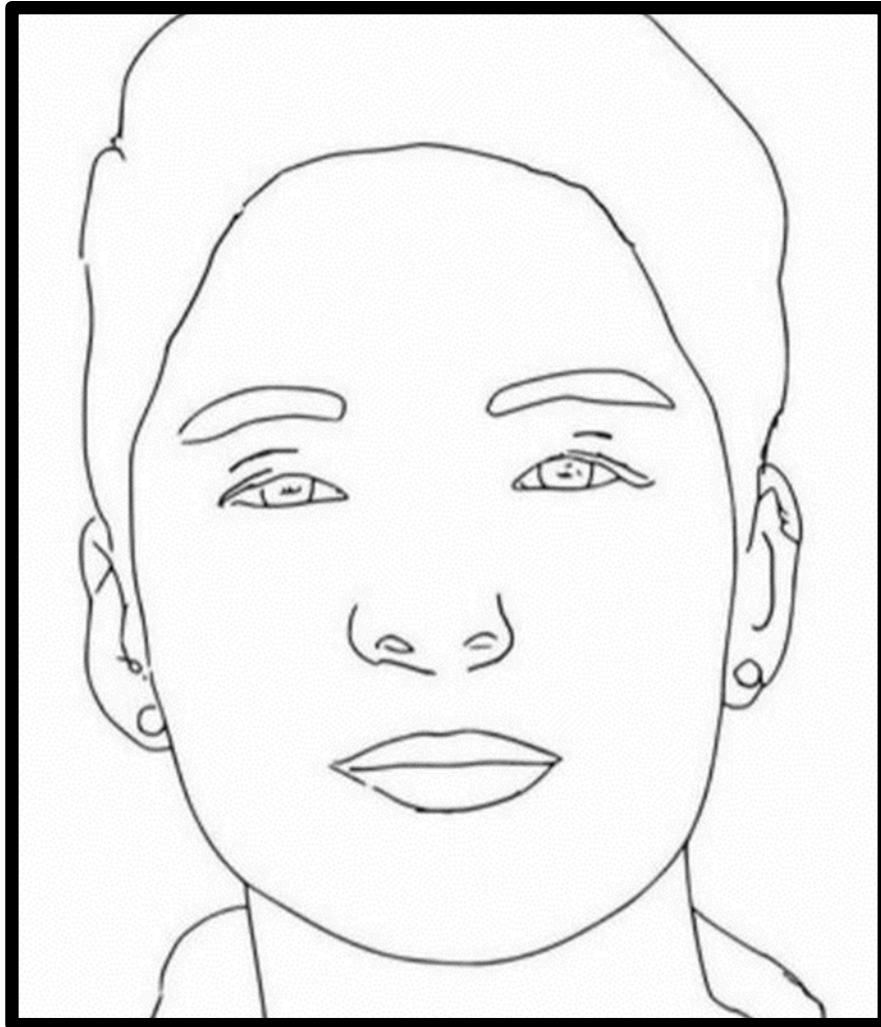
Born: January 17, 1975 (Hong Kong)

Died: July 5, 2023 (Hong Kong)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: First Chinese American to sing at the Oscars and at an NBA game.

MORE THAN A SONG: Coco sang for causes: “We Meet the Future” and “Hand in Hand” for SARS, an anti-tobacco song titled “From the Beginning ‘til the End,” an anti-racism song titled “A Dream of One,” and “BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag)” to encourage people to recycle their shopping bags for the environment.

(see biography p. 47)



Tiffany Wong (SFSU 2022)

Amber Liu

(Amber Josephine Liu)
Taiwanese American

BORN: September 18, 1992 (Los Angeles, California)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: 2015 Mnet Asian Music Award, Best Female Newcomer Award

MORE THAN A SONG: Amber has a history of supporting Black Lives Matter and #stopasianhate. During the rise of anti-Asian hate, she tweeted her shock and opinions that called more attention to the situation.

(see biography p. 47)



Rachel Wong (SFSU 2021)

MC Jin

(A -Yeung Jin)
Chinese American

BORN: June 4, 1982 (Miami, Florida)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: TVB Anniversary Awards (Hong Kong), Improved Male Artist and Favorite Male Character (2011) * *106 & Park*, Fr - style Friday Hall of Fame (2002)

MORE THAN A SONG: The song, “Stop the Hatred” (2021) co-produced with Wyclef Jean, was inspired by MC Jin’s son, Chance, who shouted “stop the hatred” during a Stop Asian Hate rally in New York City in 2021:

Turned targets, I speak up for my people's sake
From this pandemic, I'm hopeful that we'll see escape
Until then, love's the only vaccine for hate

(see biography p. 48)



D' Andre Pope (SFSU 2022)

Eric Nam

(Eric Nam; Nam Yoon Do)
Korean American

BORN: November 17, 1988 (Atlanta, Georgia)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: 2023 TIME100 Impact Award (for work on mental wellness) * 2019 Top 10 Music Podcasts by Spotify (K-pop Daebak with Eric Nam) * 2018 Honorary Ambassador of the South Korean Winter Olympics * 2017 “30 Under 30” Asia by Forbes * 2016 *GQ Korea* Man of The Year

MORE THAN A SONG: “We are hurt, exhausted, full of sorrow and angry – rightfully so. But we must continue to persevere. We must all continue to be active in creating the change that we so badly want and need for ourselves and our future generations.” (Eric Nam, *Time*, 19 Mar. 2021)

(see biography pp. 48-49)



Melody Chen (SFSU 2023)

Jay Park

(Park Jae-beom)
Korean American

BORN: April 25, 1987 (Edmonds, Washington)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: 2022 MAMA Awards (Korea), Best Hip Hop & Urban Music * 2021 Korean Hip-Hop Awards, Label of the Year * 2017/2018/2021 Korean Hip-Hop Awards, Artist of the Year * 2014 SBS MTV Best of the Best, Best Hip-Hop Music Video * 2012 Asia Model Awards, Popular Artist Award

MORE THAN A SONG: Jay is partnered with several AIDS-fighting charities like MAC and InStyle, campaigned for breast cancer awareness, promoted cleaner environments for the world, and donated to the Black Lives Matter movement.

(see biography p. 49)



Serafina Papi (SFSU 2022)

Leehom Wang

(Alexander Leehom Wang)

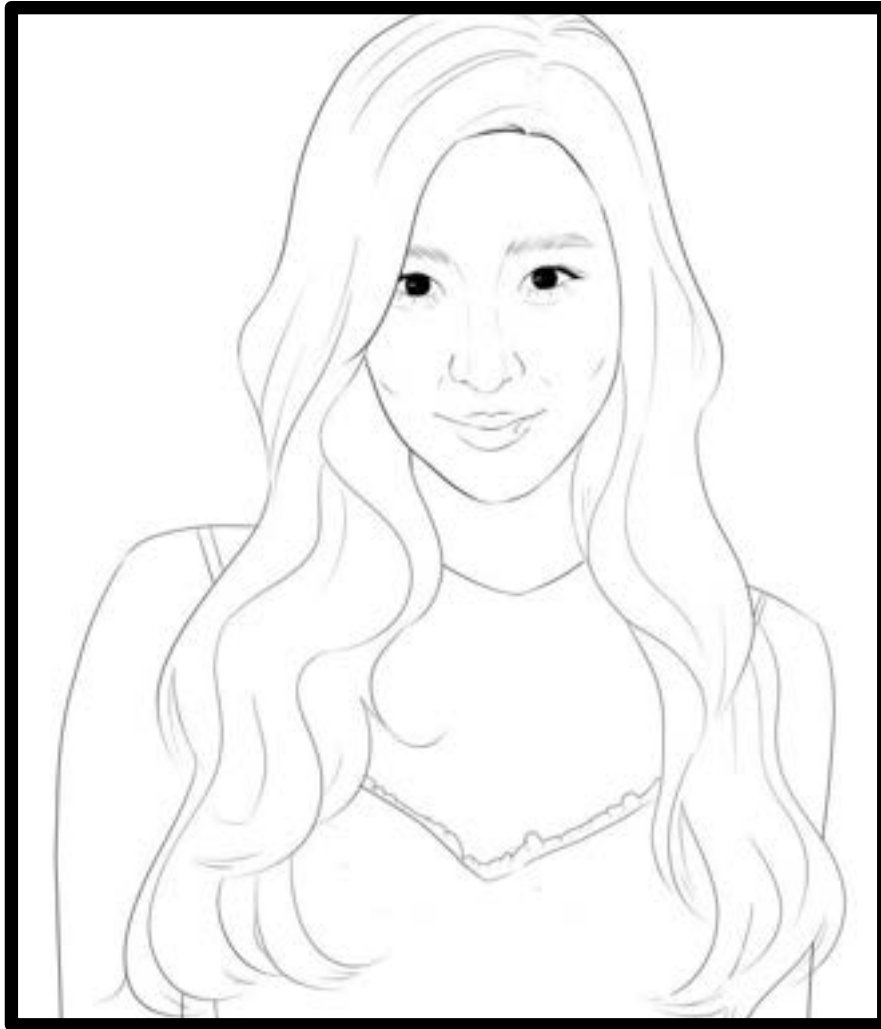
Taiwanese American

Born: May 17, 1976 (Rochester, New York)

MAJOR HONORS/AWARDS: Many best male vocalist and best song/album awards and nominations, especially from the Golden Melody Awards (the Grammys of Chinese music) and the Chinese Music Awards.

MORE THAN A SONG: Leehom is an environmental activist. His album, *Change Me* (2007), is dedicated to raising eco-awareness.

(see biography p. 49)



Kyle Gotauco (SFSU 2023)

Tiffany Young

(Stephanie Young Hwang)

Korean American

Born: August 1, 1989 (San Francisco, California)

MAJOR HONOR/AWARD: iHeartRadio Music Awards, Best Solo Breakout (2019)

MORE THAN A SONG: Tiffany is an open supporter of the LGBTQ community, saying: "I'm thankful and blessed to be able to work with and love so many amazing individuals in the LGBTQ community that have contributed so much love to my art and my life." (*Billboard*, 27 June 2018)

(see biography p. 50)

APIA Singers Who Made It Abroad Biographies

Note: Some songs have explicit content; listener discretion advised.



Coco Lee (p. 40)

Coco was born with an abnormality in her left leg and had to rely on her right leg. Her father died before she was born. At about nine years old, she moved to San Francisco with her surgeon mother and two older sisters, and eventually naturalized. Coco learned to speak English in two months, becoming the top student in school. She was crowned Miss Junior Chinatown when she was in Presidio Middle School (1991), and she was class president for three years at Raoul Wallenberg Traditional High School. While visiting Hong Kong with her mother, Coco entered a talent show singing an English song and ended second in the final round out of 10,000 applicants. Capital Artists immediately offered her a contract. She decided to leave her pre-medical studies at University of California, Irvine. Her singing career eventually expanded from Hong Kong to Taiwan and internationally. In 1998, Disney hired her to sing and voice Mulan in the Mandarin version of *Mulan*. Coco became the first Chinese American singer to break into the American market with her 1999 song entitled “Do You Want My Love” that reached #4 on the *US Billboard*. She was also the first Chinese American to sing at the Oscars (2001) and at an NBA game (2002). Then in 2008, she was chosen to sing one of the Summer Olympics songs. Coco died by suicide in 2023. Her ashes were laid to rest next to her father in Wuhan, China.



Amber Liu (p. 41)

Amber was born and raised in Los Angeles, California where she loved sports and Disney. Growing up, she was influenced by Chinese and Korean music. This led her to SM Entertainment’s global audition in 2008 where she was selected to be a trainee in South Korea. Her parents were initially against her music career but eventually became very supportive. Amber debuted with the South Korean girl group *f(x)* in 2009 and later as a soloist in 2015 with her style of music being K-pop, R&B, and electronic dance music. Music was a way for Amber to express her identities. Her solo album *Beautiful* (2015) highlighted her difficult journey of chasing her dreams as an entertainer in the United States and later Asia. This album debuted as #2 on Billboard’s World Albums Chart. In 2018, she joined Steel Wool Entertainment to manage her American activities, and Ryce Entertainment in 2021 for promotions in China. Amber has a history of supporting Black Lives Matter and #stopasianhate. She loves to skateboard and had once dreamed of becoming a scientist.



MC Jin (p. 42)

MC Jin grew up in Miami working in his parents' Chinese restaurant. He liked to make rhymes but noticed that there were no Asian American rappers. He wanted to change that. To his parents' disappointment and worry, he decided not to go to college and instead moved to New York to pursue a rap career. MC Jin's big break came in 2002 when he participated in a BET program, *106 & Park*, freestyle battle. He won after seven rounds. Unlike other competitors, he included Cantonese verses and was signed to Ruff Ryders Entertainment, becoming the first solo Asian American rapper signed to a major record label in the United States. "Learn Chinese" (2004) was MC Jin's first single talking about Asian American stereotypes. It became an early symbol of the AZN Pride Movement seeking to highlight various Asian American identities. Ruff Ryders did not know how to market an Asian American rapper and eventually MC Jin left for an independent label where he released his first all-Cantonese language album *ABC* (2007). Between 2008-11, he gained some success in Hong Kong in the Canto-pop scene and eventually returned to the United States. When MC Jin started in Hong Kong and China, he had to learn and practice Cantonese and Mandarin to improve his Chinese. Since 2017, he has gained success in mainland China when he participated in "The Rap of China."



Eric Nam (p. 43)

Eric grew up in Atlanta, always connected to music. He learned to play the piano at age four, and the cello at nine, and was part of his school's Atlanta Boy Choir. Eric was influenced by K-pop like Shinhwa. In high school he started uploading song covers to YouTube. After high school, Eric went to Boston College and graduated in International Studies with a minor in Asian Studies (2011). Eric's YouTube covers went viral and caught the attention of Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation who invited him to compete in "Birth of a Great Star 2" in Seoul. He placed in the top five contestants and was offered a music deal in South Korea and debuted in 2013. One of the reasons why he moved to South Korea to pursue his music career was that he did not think record labels in America were ready to invest in an Asian face. However even in South Korea, it was a challenge because he started with hosting TV shows and was pigeonholed as an emcee. Eric did not realize he could be a musician because growing up, he never saw a role model in music with an Asian face. While on tour he faced anxiety and depression, but his company cautioned him from getting help for fear of hurting his career. Asian representation and mental health support are important issues Eric fights for and brings attention to. He and his brothers started a podcast called DIVE Studios that gives K-pop stars and musicians opportunities to showcase their songs and speak about their experience. He also launched a wellness app with them called Mindset. This is where artists can talk about their mental health journeys and break that taboo within the Asian and Asian American community. In the wake of a gunman's spa rampage in Atlanta on March 16, 2021 that left eight people dead, including six Asian American women, the 32-year-old Eric used his platform as a celebrity to raise awareness of historic anti-Asian sentiment in the United States and became a part of #stopasianhate. This included penning a 2021 *Time* magazine article titled "If You're Surprised by the Anti-Asian Violence in Atlanta, You

Haven't Been Listening. It's Time to Hear Our Voices." Eric is bilingual and released all-Korean and all-English albums in both South Korea and the United States. He tours globally.



Jay Park (p. 44)

Jay grew up in the Seattle area in a South Korean American family. He loved hip-hop and breakdancing, and eventually joined a Seattle-based b-boy crew called Art of Movement. JYP entertainment, a South Korean company, held auditions in the United States in 2005 when Jay was invited to train in South Korea. Debuting in 2008 as part of the K-pop group 2PM with the song "10 out of 10," the group met fan popularity. However, Jay would leave the group in 2009 when his comments in MySpace expressed his unhappiness with South Korea. He apologized, stating those were his initial feelings about his early training in South Korea because he did not have family around him and had difficulty learning the Korean language and culture. Returning to the United States to regroup, Jay started his own YouTube channel, reconnected with the b-boy scene, and created music. His online popularity gave him a second chance and he returned to South Korea in June 2010 to debut as a solo artist as well as a Korean actor. In 2011, his *Take a Deeper Look* debuted #3 in the Billboard World Album Chart. Jay continues to advocate for Asian representation in entertainment and culture. He is an actor, singer, rapper, record producer, entrepreneur, dancer, and songwriter, and formed his own label More Vision in 2022. He helped run a food drive in Seattle amid the COVID-19 pandemic and created awareness about COVID-19. He also spoke about anti-Asian racism. Jay has a lot of tattoos, and his favorite Avenger is Iron Man.



Leehom Wang (p. 45)

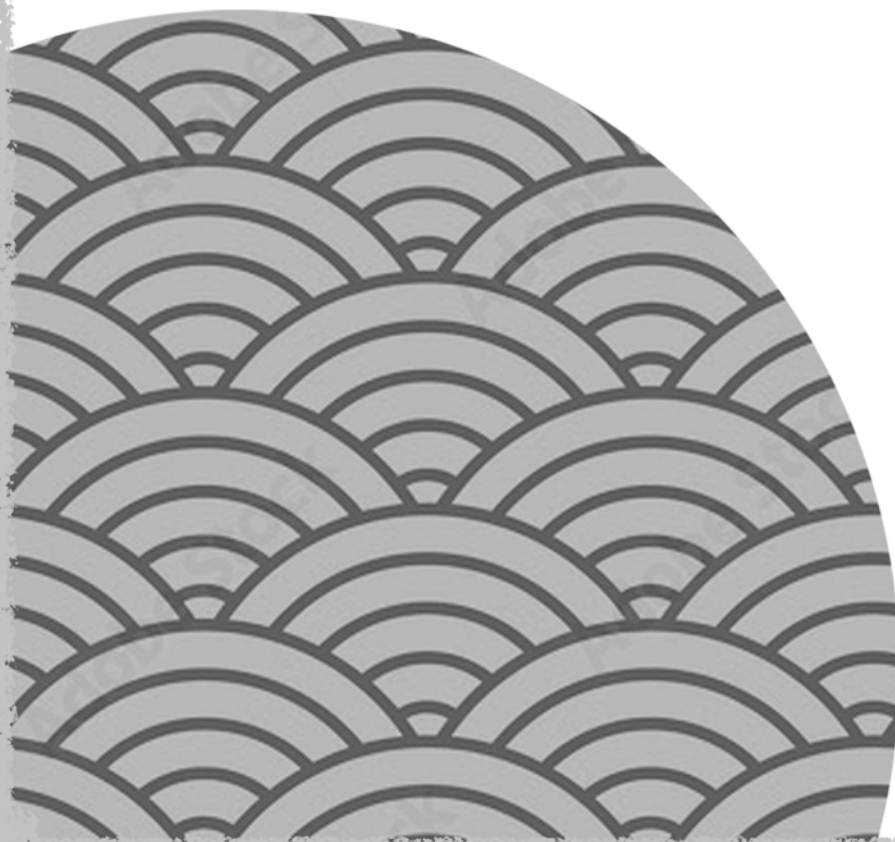
Leehom is a singer, songwriter, actor, producer, and film director. He is the second of three sons of parents from Taiwan who came to America in the 1960s to study. He began taking violin lessons at the age of six. He then learned piano and taught himself to play the guitar. At one time he worked several jobs to buy a secondhand drum kit. Rejecting Yale and Princeton, Leehom chose to attend Williams College (1998) and Berklee College of Music (2016) where he later received honorary doctoral degrees. When Leehom visited his grandparents in Taiwan in 1995, he participated in a talent contest and caught the attention of a music label. He soon became a rising star in the Chinese idol market. Many record-breaking songs and albums followed, with just as many awards. They are too many to name and list here. Leehom earned the title of "King of Chinese Pop" from CNN (2018). He fused pop, hip-hop, R&B, and traditional Chinese music to revolutionize the music world. Leehom is an environmental activist.



Tiffany Young (p. 46)

Tiffany was born in San Francisco and grew up in Diamond Bar, California. She lost her mother when she was twelve years old. Her family consists of her father, an older sister, and an older brother. Tiffany began singing when she was a high school sophomore. She was rejected in a Los Angeles singing contest because she did not meet the age requirement of sixteen (she was fifteen). But a South Korean entertainment agency discovered her, and she left for South Korea in 2004. Her biggest obstacle at the time was learning the Korean language. Tiffany eventually debuted in 2007 as a member of the popular Korean girl band, SNSD or Girls' Generation. In 2012, a subgroup named TTS was formed with Tiffany. Tiffany made her solo debut in 2016 with her album *I Just Wanna Dance*. It was chosen by *Billboard* as the seventh best K-pop album of 2016. Tiffany returned to Los Angeles to study acting. In 2018, she released singles like "Remember Me," the theme song for the film *Coco*. Tiffany is attributed as the first female K-pop artist to walk the red carpet of the American Music Awards in 2018.

Activities



APIA Singers Quiz

Read about the APIA singers and the preface in this Activity Book. Then answer the following questions.

1. Identify and name at least two APIA singers who can play more than one instrument.

2. Who is the oldest APIA singer alive as of the printing of this Activity Book?

3. How many APIA singing groups can you find? What are their names?

4. Why do each of our APIA singers have “more than a song”?

Musical Instruments

Name the musical instruments you see here.







Can you play any musical instruments? Please share below.

Is there an instrument you want to learn? What would be the first step towards that goal?

Elena Curnyn (SFSU 2023), adapted by Becky Mou (SFSU 2024)

What Rhymes?

Rhymes are important in songs. Look at the 6 pictures on the left column and circle the picture to the right that rhymes with each of the 6 pictures.

			
Car	Pear	Star	Map
			
Bee	Tree	Mouse	Tie
			
Pear	Glue	Fly	Bear
			
Mouse	Star	Heart	House
			
Fly	Chair	Glue	Tie
			
Bear	House	Apple	Chair

Peiyu Chen (SFSU 2023), adapted by Becky Mou (SFSU 2024)

Color Your Own Grammy

The Grammy is the highest award for achievement in music. It is shaped like a gramophone, an old-fashioned record player. Enjoy coloring and decorating your own Grammy award!



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Nicole Morales-Rivera (SFSU 2023)

Where Were Our APIA Singers Born?

Some APIA singers were born in Asia and naturalized to become US ci. zens.
Connect these singers to where they were born in Asia.



Miyoshi Umeki



Japan



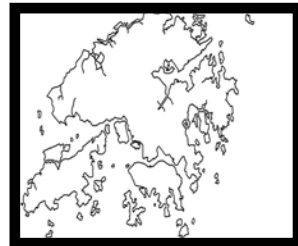
Ruby Anne Ibarra



South Korea



Michelle Zauner



Hong Kong



Coco Lee



Philippines

Becky Mou (SFSU 2024)

Where Were Our APIA Singers Born?

Connect APIA singers to the state where they were born.



Jay Park



MC Jin



Leehom Wang



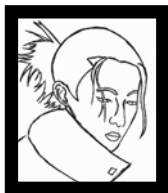
Raveena



H.E.R.



Don Ho



Keshi



Eric Nam

Becky Mou (SFSU 2024)

Freedom

Read pp. 23 and 24 about H.E.R. In her song “Fight for You,” H.E.R. sings about many different types of freedoms that are so needed in our world. Select two freedoms from the lyrics below, and think about what the artist is saying in her song. What do her words mean to you? Write at least two sentences for each of the two freedoms you choose.

Freedom for my brothers
Freedom 'cause they judge us
Freedom from the others
Freedom from the leaders, they're keeping us
Freedom gon' keep us strong
Freedom if you just hold on
Freedom ain't free at all, no

1. _____

2. _____

Elena Curnyn (SFSU 2023)

What Do You Want to Fight for?



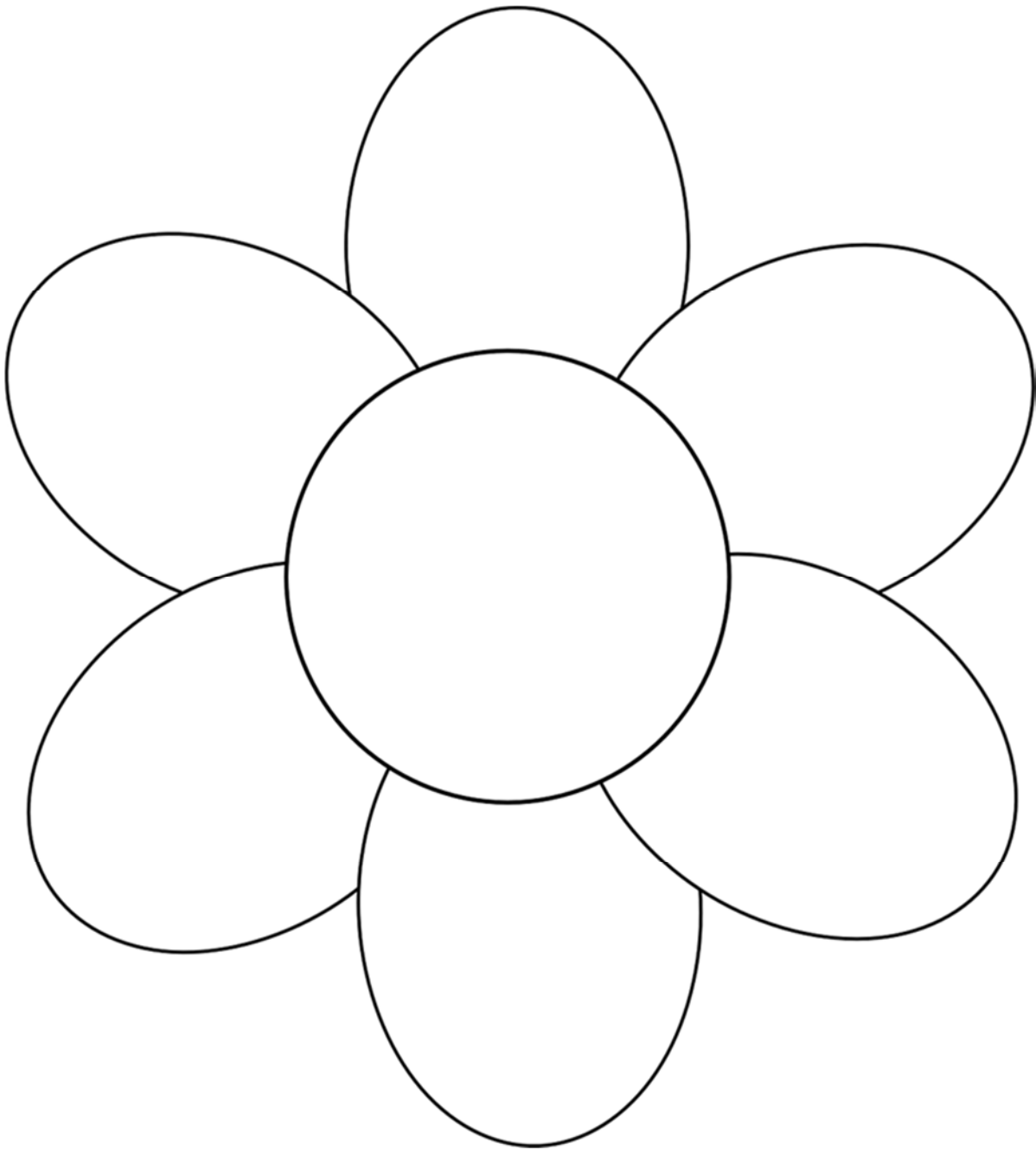
Write and design your own message.

A large, empty rectangular sign with a thick black border. It is designed for a student to write and draw their own message. The sign is mounted on a black post, which is visible as a dark gray trapezoidal shape at the bottom center. A smaller, solid dark gray trapezoidal shape is visible at the top center, representing the top of the sign or a mounting bracket.

Becky Mou (SFSU 2024)

APIA Singer Flower

Choose an APIA singer. Draw him/her in the center of the flower. On each of the petals, write any of his/her important events or accomplishments. Color and decorate the flower as you like.



Roxana Juarez (SFSU 2023)

Write to Your Favorite Singer/Rapper

1. Tell him/her why you like him/her.
2. Tell him/her your favorite song.
3. Share something about you to him/her.
4. Ask him/her some questions to know him/her better.

You can ask if he/she has a pet.

You can ask what is his/her favorite song.

You can ask who is his/her best friend.

You can ask where is his/her favorite travel spot.



Peiyu Chen (SFSU 2023)

ANSWER KEY

PAGE 52: APIA Singers Quiz

1. Identify and name at least two APIA singers who can play more than one instrument.

H.E.R., Bruno Mars, The Jets, Leehom Wang

2. Who is the oldest APIA singer alive as of the printing of this Activity Book?

Pat Suzuki

3. How many APIA singing groups can you find? What are their names?

The Jets, Yellow Pearl

PAGE 53: Musical Instruments



Guitar



Piano



Drum or Drum Set

PAGE 54: What Rhymes?

Car	Pear	Star	Map
Bee	Tree	Mouse	Tie
Pear	Glue	Fly	Bear
Mouse	Star	Heart	House
Fly	Chair	Glue	Tie
Bear	House	Apple	Chair

PAGE 56: Where Were Our APIA Singers Born?



Miyoshi Umeki



Japan



Ruby Anne Ibarra



South Korea



Michelle Zauner



Hong Kong



Coco Lee



Philippines

PAGE 57: Where Were Our APIA Singers Born?



Jay Park



MC Jin



Leehom Wang



Raveena



H.E.R.



Don Ho



Keshi



Eric Nam