

# College of Humanities Newsletter

## Message from Humanities Dean Elizabeth A. Say



Elizabeth A. Say, Ph.D.  
CSUN Alum 1981

In this issue of the newsletter, we welcome some new colleagues, celebrate a new name, and say goodbye to an old friend. As always, we introduce the new faculty who joined the College in the past year. Each one contributes to our ability to fulfill the College Mission as we “explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity,” and we are delighted to have them join us here at CSUN. Also joining us is our new Associate Dean, Dr. Karin Stanford, who has been part of the CSUN community for 11 years. I’m very happy to have her as a member of the College leadership team and hope you have the opportunity to meet her at one of our yearly events. And Suren Seropian has come aboard as the new Director of Development. Like me, Suren is an alum of the College, and he shares my enthusiasm for the work we do and the students we serve. He promises me that he will stay in this position for a long time and I know you will enjoy getting to know him! In May, we renamed the Asian House in honor of Professor Glenn Omatsu and had a wonderful dedication ceremony to celebrate this event. Lastly, we say good-bye to Mary Eve Finestone. Eve was one of the first community friends I met after I became dean. Over the years we had some wonderful conversations about the past and future of the College of Humanities. She was always enthusiastic about what we were doing and generous with her time and resources. She will be missed.

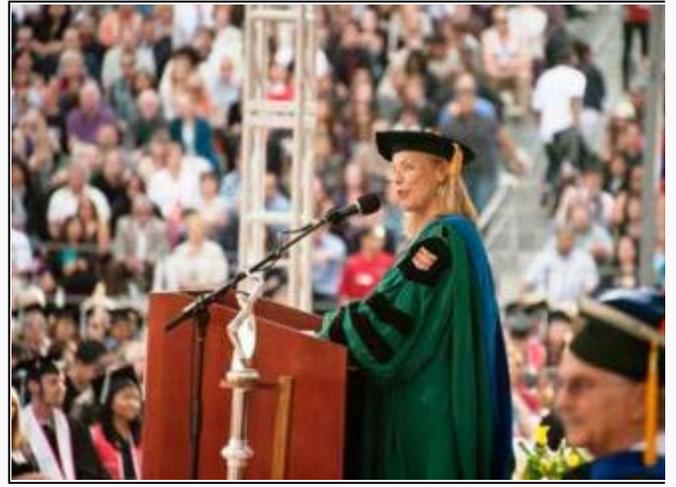
## Congratulations, Class of 2014!

On Thursday, May 22, we held joint commencement ceremonies for the College of Humanities and the Michael D. Eisner College of Education. President Dianne Harrison conferred baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degrees to the Class of 2014 on the Oviatt Library lawn. This year’s College of Humanities Dean’s Scholar, Kathleen Lucitt, graduated with a double major in Languages and Cultures (with a concentration in Japanese) and Religious Studies. Ms. Lucitt has been accepted to the competitive master’s degree program in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies at the prestigious Monterey Institute of International Studies. The College is proud of her academic achievement and wishes her continued success. Well done, Kathleen!

The university Alumni Association greeting and welcome was delivered by Mark Cooley, an alum of both colleges. He received his bachelor's degree in Spanish in 1968 and a master's degree in Education in 1971. Mark played basketball and ran track for CSUN and is a member of the Matador Hall of Fame. Mark's wife, Diana, and his son Mark Cooley III are also CSUN alum. Theirs is a family full of CSUN tradition!

Congratulations to all of our graduates on earning their degrees— way to make CSUN SHINE!

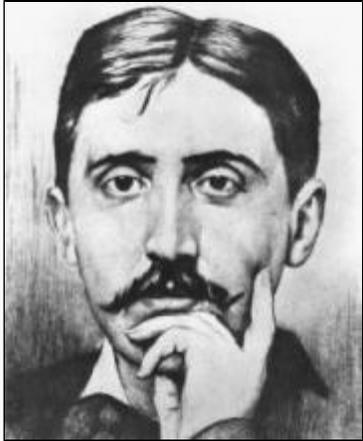
- Submitted by Noreen Galvin



President Dianne Harrison addressing crowd at commencement. Photo courtesy of Lee Choo.

## Not Quite the Proust Questionnaire ...

### ... with Apologies to Vanity Fair and Marcel Proust



This past fall the College of Humanities welcomed three new faculty members, who bring their talents to Asian American Studies, English, Gender and Women's Studies, and the American Indian Studies Program. As they settled into their second semester at CSUN, we asked them to respond to a brief, modified Proust questionnaire, so named for the writer Marcel Proust, who answered the somewhat probing set of personal questions twice during his lifetime.

Many thanks to our faculty members, who so willingly shared with us their time, thought, wit, and honesty. Each answered the questions to which they most wanted to respond.

Iswari Pandey, Assistant Professor, English

Dr. Pandey earned his Ph.D. in English rhetoric and composition at the University of Louisville. Among other interests, he has published on how caste and class affect access to the study of English in South Asia.

What is your idea of perfect happiness? Unlimited time to read and travel.

What is your greatest fear? That I may be misunderstood by the people who matter to me.

Which living person do you most admire? Paul Farmer.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself? Procrastination.

What is the trait you most deplore in others? Hypocrisy.

What is your greatest extravagance? A day spent on sampling all my favorite foods and watching movies nonstop.

When and where were you happiest? Every time I have a favorite book in my hand or when I realize that someone found my actions helpful.

What do you consider your greatest achievement? To keep waiting for it to happen.



If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be? A story!

What is your most treasured possession? A book that my grandmother gave me before her death.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery? That one has to identify one!

Which talent would you most like to have? Singing.

What is your motto? Love and work.

Article continues..

## Not Quite the Proust Questionnaire ... page 2

Khanum Shaikh, Assistant Professor, Gender and Women's Studies/Asian American Studies

Dr. Shaikh earned her Ph.D. at UCLA in women's studies, specializing in gender and social movements; transnational feminist studies; and Muslim communities and the war on terror.

What is your idea of perfect happiness? Some ghazals, some spices, and some silent time cooking.

What is your greatest fear? Being resigned to life.

Which living person do you most admire? My mom and aunt.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself? Hmm...that I'm always rushing....

What is the trait you most deplore in others? Miserliness

What is your greatest extravagance? Long, deep conversations with girlfriends about everything. Delicious food. Dance.

What do you consider your greatest achievement? Being able to balance a million things.

What is your most treasured possession? My friends and family.

What is it that you most dislike? Not questioning the way "things are supposed to be."

Which talent would you most like to have? I'd like to be a singer.

[Article continues...](#)



## Not Quite the Proust Questionnaire ... page 3



Kimberly Robertson, Assistant Professor, Gender and Women's Studies/ American Indian Studies

Dr. Robertson earned her Ph.D. in women's studies at UCLA. She has written about issues affecting Native American women, particularly domestic violence within tribal territories.

What is your idea of perfect happiness? Cinnamon and banana shaved ice, a good book, and summertime.

Which living person do you most admire? Cherokee poet MariJo Moore writes, "I come from a long line of madwomen and of this, I am proud." I identify with these words completely and admire all of the "madwomen" who have come before me, who walk alongside me, and those who are yet to be born.

What is your greatest extravagance? Just one? Jewelry, shoes, books...

What is your most treasured possession? Although they aren't possessions, my daughters are the most treasured part of my life.

What is it that you most dislike? Injustice in any form.

Which talent would you most like to have? To keep my mouth shut when appropriate! It's a talent I am working hard to cultivate!

What is your motto? "Our voices rock the boat and perhaps the world. They are dangerous." — Dian Million

## Meet Our New Director of Development

Suren Seropian is a Matador from way back, and his position as the College of Humanities' Director of Development is a homecoming for him. Suren is not just returning to campus but also to his college — he received his BA in English in 1988.

"CSUN left an indelible mark on my life, and set me on a course that has been filled with many successes," says Seropian. "I had the most amazing professors who opened my mind to the many possibilities in life, and to always keep going towards the horizon."

Since his graduation at the now infamous 1989 Hollywood Bowl commencement— during which an hours-long traffic jam delayed the arrival of graduates, guests, and participants, including then-president James Cleary— Suren has taught the 6th grade and worked in the HIV/AIDS community as a publications assistant, manager of volunteer resources, and special events director. After almost a decade in the social service community he moved to higher education, working in the University of Michigan's west coast Major Gifts office, where he interacted with alumni who taught him how important it is to give back to your alma mater. This experience rekindled Suren's love for CSUN and he became a lifetime member of the alumni association here.



As the Director of Development for the College of Humanities, Suren is a bridge between donors and prospective donors and the departments, programs, students, and faculty of the College. "We have so many amazing professors providing cutting-edge education and changing lives forever, and students who are eager to learn and work towards leaving their marks on our future through their studies here today," Seropian says.

His message to our friends and donors is simple: "I am here to help you make the greatest impact on the lives of our students, and to work with you to ensure that the contribution you make is first and foremost a meaningful one for you and it leaves a lasting mark on CSUN. Whether you are thinking of creating a scholarship or an endowment fund, or perhaps making arrangements for a planned gift, I look forward to meeting you and exploring ways in which you, your family, friends, and co-workers can partner with CSUN and the College of Humanities."

You may reach Suren at (818) 677-7135, or [suren.seropian@csun.edu](mailto:suren.seropian@csun.edu).

Below is an abbreviated list of giving opportunities within the College. Please contact Suren Seropian at (818) 677-7135 for more information or to discuss other opportunities.

- Documentary for the Women's Research and Resource Center
- WRRRC Scholar-in-Residence Program
- Restoration of Chicano Murals
- Peer Mentoring Program

## Meet Our New Associate Dean

### From Soul Train to Sierra Hall

When first asked to participate in a brief interview for this newsletter profile, the new College of Humanities associate dean, Karin Stanford, said, "Sure. Which side do you want to know about, the academic one, or the one where I grew up wanting to be a Soul Train dancer?" While she was delighted to share tales of childhood longing from the latter category, her lived career trajectory is just as singular and engaging, from education to political life to scholarship and community service.

After earning her Ph.D. in political science at Howard University, she received a two-year post-doctoral fellowship from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and later served as a Congressional Black Caucus Fellow under Congressman Sanford Bishop of Georgia. Since joining CSUN's Pan African studies faculty in 2003—following a stretch at the University of Georgia—Dr. Stanford has taught courses in African American politics; social movements; the politics of hip hop; and gender, race, and class in public policy. In 2010 she was elected to chair her department, a position she held until she came to serve as associate dean of Humanities in fall 2013.



Humanities dean Elizabeth Say values Stanford's prior experience on a number of fronts. "Her previous service as department chairperson for Pan African studies means that we have added an experienced administrator, who was able to immediately manage the duties of associate dean," said Dean Say. "Karin is also opening new opportunities for collaboration between CoH departments and Pan African studies, to the benefit of our students." As the PAS department is housed in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford's transition to Humanities has her interacting with an entirely new slate of departments and programs. "The learning curve is higher since I am also becoming familiar with a different college at the same time," Stanford said. "It's challenging, but also rewarding."

Though Stanford said she misses her daily interactions with her Pan African studies colleagues, she values this opportunity to learn more about the intricacies of how curriculum works at the college and university levels. Plus, there are all those new Humanities departments and programs she's getting to know. "Interacting with the faculty and recognizing the importance of their work and how much they value the students and departments, that's been very gratifying," Stanford said. "It is a very collegial atmosphere. I feel lucky."

As a scholar, Dr. Stanford has received several awards and recognition for her publications. *If We Must Die: African American Voices on War and Peace* won the 2009 Outstanding Reference/Academic Book Award from Choice magazine. Her article "Keepin' It Real in Hip Hop Politics: A Political Perspective of Tupac Shakur," published in the *Journal of Black Studies*, has remained one of the journal's most read articles since its publication in 2011. Her book *Beyond the Boundaries: Reverend Jesse Jackson in International Affairs* won the National Conference of Black Political Scientists' Outstanding Book Award in 1998. And in 2005 she published

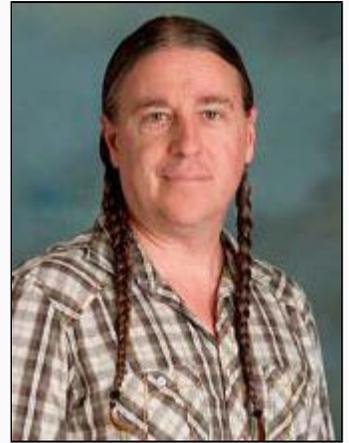
Breaking the Silence: Inspirational Stories of Black Cancer Survivors , which highlights disease prevention and treatment options as well as inequality in health care. Stanford serves on the advisory board of the California Black Women's Health Project and provides consumer reviews of scientific proposals and federal initiatives on breast cancer research.

"The College of Humanities is extremely fortunate to have Karin Stanford as associate dean," said Dean Say. "She's a nationally recognized scholar, and I look forward to working with her as we plan for the future of the college."

Submitted by Teresa Morrison

## College of Humanities 2014-15 University Research Fellow Dr. Brian Burkhart

American Indian Studies professor Brian Burkhart advocates for indigenizing environmental philosophy as “an action, an activity, or a way of being,” just as native languages are centered on verbs, movement, and action. He delineates indigenous philosophizing about the environment from Western thought, the latter of which he says has a tendency to create confusion and intractability by creating false distinctions between “humans and the environment,” “material and spiritual reality,” “fact and value,” and “attitudes and behaviors.” Indigenous philosophizing, he argues, embraces far more fluid and unified sensibilities about environmental ethics and science, and the human relationship to the environment in academic discourse.



His ongoing scholarship in this area has received a boost as Burkhart has been named a 2013/14 University Research Fellow. This prestigious fellowship program is a campus-wide initiative of the provost’s office to give selected faculty the time and resources needed to conduct ongoing scholarship. Just one honoree is chosen per college, by a committee of their peers.

Burkhart will use his fellowship semester in fall 2014 to complete revisions to his manuscript “The Logic of Kinship: Indigenizing Environmental Philosophy.” “The committee agreed that Professor Burkhart’s research project is paradigm shifting, interdisciplinary, and contributes to the important dialogue on sustainability and environmental activism,” Humanities dean Elizabeth Say wrote in announcing the decision. “The committee also asserted that his project will impact discussions of global philosophy, ethics, and diversity in theorizing environmental science.”

Burkhart is an enrolled member of Oklahoma’s Cherokee Nation and lived for many of his formative years on Navajo Nation territory in Arizona. Burkhart earned his Ph.D. in philosophy, informed by Native American literature and religious studies, at Indiana University. On arriving at CSUN in 2010 he immediately set about applying his interdisciplinary perspectives to courses in American Indian Studies, philosophy, and sustainability. Burkhart said that his mentor, Vine Deloria, Jr., once told him that “[Native American scholars] needed to create a new conversation about their lives and tell a better, more complicated philosophical story.”

“Professor Burkhart’s scholarship challenges his colleagues in Philosophy to open up new spaces in the discipline,” said Dean Say. “His work brings an important and heretofore ignored perspective to the field of study, particularly as he engages environmental philosophy, itself a relatively new area of philosophical inquiry. In this sense, we might say that he is bringing one of the oldest perspectives, indigenous thought, to an ancient area of concern, the relationship of humans to the natural world, and creating a new and exciting way to engage both of these.”

Burkhart is under contract with State University of New York Press, which has expressed interest in publishing his

manuscript as early as fall 2014 as part of its Indigenous Philosophers series. The College of Humanities congratulates him on his success.

Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison

## Glenn Omatsu House Dedication



Glenn Omatsu

On April 29, 2014, over one hundred CSUN faculty, administrators, students, and community members gathered at 18356 Halsted Avenue—at the northwest periphery of campus—to rename the Asian House in honor of Professor Glenn Omatsu. The weather was hot and windy for the Glenn Omatsu House Dedication— which attracted too many attendees to accommodate indoors— and guests stood at the ready to hold down canopy poles to make sure the sunshade didn't fly away! People variously know Professor Omatsu as a teacher, a long-time activist, an ally, a mentor, a benefactor, and even a surrogate father. He is an example of a great human being, who symbolizes unity, harmony, and militant humility working for social justice.



Purifying ceremony at Glenn Omatsu House

A new plaque was set in the house and “recognizes Professor Omatsu’s lifetime of mentorship, of building community, and of struggle, and in the hope that each generation listens, teaches, and commits to building a new world.” The plaque further provides a brief history of the house, which was assigned to the Asian American Studies Department in 1992 as an activities center for Asian American students and community members. In fall 2008, AAS volunteered to share the house with the Women’s Research and Resource Center, which had just burned down. “In the interests of solidarity we continue to share the Glenn Omatsu House today,” the plaque continues, “may we remember and honor Professor Omatsu’s commitment.” Most importantly, the plaque displays Professor Omatsu’s message: “Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies belong to students and our communities.”



Glenn Omatsu with students

There is a Vietnamese saying that when you eat a fruit, you need to remember the gardener and the conditions that gave rise to the fruit. The sun, the rain, the soil, the bees are all elements that made the fruit possible. The dedication included ceremonial recognition of those who previously occupied the land. These included Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Mexican farmers whose lands were taken from them by eminent domain. Also included were the Fernandino Tataviam indigenous people of the San Fernando Valley, who lost most of their land in this Valley through deception and violence.

Omatsu in Japanese means great/big pine. May the Glenn Omatsu House facilitate deep roots in our community and thrive to shade all peoples.

Personal messages of appreciation may be sent to Professor Omatsu at: [glenn.omatsu@csun.edu](mailto:glenn.omatsu@csun.edu).

# CSUN

## College of Humanities

### Volume 8, Issue 2 Spring/Summer 2014

## The College Mourns the Passing of Mary Eve Finestone

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Mary Eve Finestone, former member of the Department of Foreign Languages, member of the CSUN Arts Council, and wife of the late Dr. Harry Finestone, who served as chair of the Department of English from 1966 to 1970 and as dean of academic planning from 1970 to 1983. Eve was a great friend and contributor to the College of Humanities. Her leadership was instrumental in founding the Dr. Harry Finestone Memorial Award in the Department of English. The endowment was established to honor her husband's memory, and as a lasting tribute to his contributions to CSUN and the English department. Since December 2004, the award has been given annually to the graduate student with the most distinguished essay in the study of literature.



Due to their parents' longtime affiliation with CSUN and their mother's support of the English department, the Finestone family has changed the memorial fund's name to the Harry & Eve Finestone Memorial Award. The family requests that anyone wishing to honor the Finestones may make donations to this fund. For more information about making a gift, please contact Suren Seropian, Director of Development, at (818) 677- 7135, or at [suren.seropian@csun.edu](mailto:suren.seropian@csun.edu). You may send a check via mail. Please make your check payable to CSUN Foundation and send to College of Humanities, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330 – 8252.

Submitted by Noreen Galvin

# CSUN

## College of Humanities

### Volume 8, Issue 2 Spring/Summer 2014

## Mission Statement

The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a community of learners who...

**E**xplore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;

**C**ritically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;

**C**ontribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and

**A**ct as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy

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