

President's Message



Deborah Seiler

President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

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Renaissance Website:
<https://csus.edu/rensoc>

Key Dates

Monday, Jan. 22

Program Enrollment begins

Friday, Jan. 26

*Orientation and Open House
(Unitarian Church, 2425 Sierra Blvd.)*

Monday, Feb. 5

Renaissance classes begin

Monday, Feb. 5

Board of Directors meeting

Friday, Feb. 9

*Help Desk near Hinde Auditorium
9 am – 1 pm*

Friday, Feb. 9

*“First Friday” pizza and Food Pantry
envelopes*

Wednesday, Feb. 14

Valentine's Day

Friday, Feb. 16

*Help Desk near Hinde Auditorium
9 am – 1 pm*

Friday, Feb. 16

*Deadline for applications for Board of
Directors positions*

Monday, Feb. 19

Presidents Day

Tuesday, Feb. 27

Estate Planning webinar



Valentine's Message for President Wood

On January 2, I had the special privilege of meeting Sac State President Wood on a Zoom call which was a delightful encounter that far surpassed my expectations.

I confess to a few “butterflies” and began by thanking him for the meeting and for dropping by with his beautiful wife, Idara, to say hello to our group at the December 8 Holiday Party. I also expressed gratitude for all the benefits our Renaissance Society enjoys from our affiliation with the university. I specifically emphasized how grateful we are to be “housed” in the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies and to have Dean Dianne Hyson as our supportive and informative liaison, ably assisted by Dr. Marya Endriga and Dr. Boatamo “Ati” Mosupyo.

I was surprised a bit when he asked me if the liaison relationship is a “formal thing” as I recall he phrased it. I confirmed and told him about our Memorandum of Understanding which specifies Dean Hyson as our liaison and specifies our parking arrangement with Sac State. He asked what other services the university provides and of course I mentioned our enjoyment of classroom space which is almost totally free and our access to the beautiful campus. I mentioned that we pay a fee per member for services related to technology, including our membership database and program enrollment system.

I attended his listening session early the morning of December 15 and mentioned our need to expand and diversify our membership. I expanded on this during our Zoom call, and President Wood asked about our membership level. I shared that pre-pandemic we were at 2,300 members, down now to about 1,550. He was nevertheless impressed that we are an organization with 1,500+ members.

I explained that our revenues are based solely on membership dues which have not increased in several years and which we are reluctant to raise. I explained we cannot, per UEI and university rules, establish ourselves as a 501 (c) 3 organization. We rely on dues and any amount members can give above and beyond the dues.

I stressed that while our revenues are down due to the drop in membership, we are strong in our philanthropy. I mentioned the most recent Golden Plate Award and explained our efforts to endow more of the seven scholarships we award each year.

Our partners in the Sun City Lincoln Hills retirement community asked me to inquire about the timeline for the new Placer Center. President Wood indicated it would be at least two years before horizontal structures emerge. He shared with me that there are thoughts about a downtown center and an Elk

Continued next page

Grove center. I applauded this because we have so many members in these two areas, and we will look forward to details in the future.

A primary motivation for requesting this meeting was to ask President Wood what he would like to see from the Renaissance Society. He indicated he is too new at this point to know for sure but will keep it in mind. I invited him to speak at our Annual Meeting on May 10 and he agreed.

We ended on a very high note. President Wood was highly complimentary saying, "I absolutely love what you do." He went on to offer that he would do anything to help us grow and diversify. He specifically asked for talking points and groups we might identify that he could personally contact. He mentioned reaching out to all the students' parents (probably also grandparents!) and promised to include Renaissance in 28 virtual signposts planned for the Fall 2024 semester.

To top it off, he offered to teach a seminar or offer a presentation. Our Forum Committee is on high alert to recruit him as a Forum speaker for the Fall.

Finally, he endeared himself to me forever when he said, "Right after this meeting I'm going to call my mother and tell her to join Renaissance!"

What an extraordinary young man. So brilliant, yet humble, and so caring and thoughtful.

This is my special Valentine's message to him and to all of you who make this organization so outstanding.

Deborah



Be My Valentine

By Mike Pidd



Looking for a way to remember a special someone on Valentine's Day? Instead of the usual card, why not honor someone you love on Valentine's Day with a gift to the Renaissance Society Scholarship Fund. Your Valentine will feel honored and your gift will have a lasting impact.

Make your gift online: <https://tinyurl.com/RenaissanceFunds> or by check payable to University Foundation at Sacramento State with the notation Scholarship Fund and the name and address of the person being honored with your donation. Mail check to : Renaissance Society, 350 University Ave- Suite 108, Sacramento, CA 95819.



Haiku Poetry

By Theo Goodwin

Haiku poetry is a three-line form of poetry that evolved in seventeenth century Japan. The first great haiku writer was Matsuo Basho, who lived from 1644 to 1694. Recall that William Shakespeare lived from 1564 to 1616. They lived generations and worlds apart. Japan was a feudal, medieval society that was shut off from Western civilization, letters, science and trade. Yet haiku evolved to illuminate the natural world of the earth's seasons perceived by ordinary people in a manner consistent with the world of Buddhism. It required a writer and reader to focus on the seasonal aspects of nature and to appreciate its details and delicate components.

Haiku is good for us as seniors because it encourages us to examine the world with our senses and to note our relationships with nature. Under this traditional school of poetry that was introduced to Western audiences around 1900, the poet uses three lines with 5, 7 and 5 syllables respectively. The subject matter is a particular aspect of one of the four seasons. The writer puts two aspects into a juxtaposition so that some insight, understanding or emotion arises.

The following example was written by Basho:

*The winter sun—
on the horse's back
my frozen shadow.*

This haiku highlights the weak winter sun, cast on his horse's back, creating the man's shadow. This is one continuous visual scene only possible in winter. But what is a "frozen shadow?" It is a shadow seen by the author in the freezing air. Is it metaphorically "frozen?" It may also be literally unmoving or still. It evokes a feeling of isolation by the author who is riding or walking or standing by his horse. The ambiguity gives the reader several interpretations to ponder. (The 5, 7, 5 syllable line pattern does not apply to the Japanese original haiku, because the Japanese and English language syllables are counted differently.)

Here is a winter haiku which I wrote:

*Dark, damp winter days
tree branches bare except for
orange persimmons.*

This is a straightforward haiku which contrasts the dark winter days with the bright orange of the persimmon. This is not a psychological puzzle. It simply allows the reader to delight in the bright orange color on a cold, damp winter day. It is a strong, visual image which may recall the sweet flesh of this fruit. Try writing your own winter haiku. My next haiku column will celebrate a different aspect of appreciating seasonal nature.



Volunteer Highlights

Six Who Volunteer at the Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) Food Pantry

By Deborah Seiler

It is a special pleasure this month to feature six Renaissance members who quietly, without fanfare, volunteer faithfully to help out at the ASI Food Pantry. Their commitment is highly valued by Food Pantry staff and also by the students with whom they interact. These six Renaissance volunteers embody the very best of our organization.

ASI Food Pantry Coordinator, Ryan Choi, says, "Each of these volunteers have volunteered with us weekly for

at least two months. We're so grateful for the life that each of these team members bring to our humble Food Pantry. We can rely on them to cover every corner of the Food Pantry's scope of operations, from welcoming first-time student visitors to setting up tents for outdoor Free Groceries Pop Up to making busy morning delivery and donation shifts feel light and burden free. We have so much fun working with our Renaissance volunteers, and they have left a lasting impression on the students who rely on our program for their weekly groceries."

	Deliveries	Restocking	Greeting Students	Produce Inspection	Leading New Volunteers	Bin Washing
Bruce Gunn	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bob Diercks	X		X	X		
Will Vizzard		X		X		X
Diana Vizzard		X		X		X
Rob Taylor	X	X			X	
Pat Paul	X	X	X	X		X



ASI Food Pantry

Chinese Americans Navigate Life in the United States

By Darryl O. Freeman

February 10, 2024, marks the first day of the celebration of Chinese New Year, also known as Lunar New Year, which is a nomenclature more inclusive of the many other East Asian cultures that also celebrate it. The Lunar New Year begins on a slightly different day in January or February of each year, as it follows the Chinese lunisolar calendar, rather than the Gregorian calendar used in most parts of the world.

The origin of the celebration dates back thousands of years. The 15-day festival is rooted in ancient Chinese mythology and agricultural traditions. It marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring and a new agricultural cycle. The Chinese Zodiac calendar assigns each year to one of twelve animals identified in an ancient Chinese poem and one of the five elements of life, earth, wood, fire, metal and water. 2024 is designated the Year of the Dragon animal and the element of wood, which results in the symbolic year of the Wood Dragon.

For people of Asian heritage who celebrate the Lunar New Year it is a time not only of celebration, but also one of reflection, gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities and challenges of the coming year. In those cities and towns of significant Chinese populations, Lunar New Year celebrations include a grand parade in the Chinatown.

Chinatowns are designated communities in urban areas where a significant number of Chinese Americans and their descendants live and work. Other Asian ethnic groups have also developed similar urban enclaves.

The origins of Chinatowns can be attributed to a number of social and political influences of this country. The Gold Rush era of the 19th Century lured Chinese immigration to North America. Initially only Chinese men were allowed to immigrate to the United States. These men came to this country seeking economic gain and contributed to the development of mining, agriculture and railroad construction industries.

Early Chinese immigrants encountered widespread social discrimination and hostility from the local European heritage residents. Job discrimination and living accommodation discrimination compelled Chinese and later arriving Asian heritage immigrants to cluster together in residential communities for mutual support and protection.



Chinatown, San Francisco

As public policies and subsequent social attitudes became more accommodating for immigrants of Asian heritage, newly arriving Asian immigrants tended to settle in areas where there were already established communities, where there were families, friends and other people of similar ethnicity. This practice allowed them to maintain their cultural identity, language and traditions while navigating the new American culture.

These communities became centers for social, religious, and economic activities, helping newcomers adapt to their new surroundings.



Member Profile

Tom Holt – Renaissance Technologist

By Judy Lewis



Do you detect even a hint of a British accent when speaking to Tom Holt? That could be because he grew up in Coventry, England.

His field of study at Birmingham University England was mathematics. After university, Tom was hired as a computer

programmer in London. His entire career of over 35 years was in the information technology field.

After honing his skills in London, he moved to France and then on to Geneva, Switzerland, where he worked in IT for Motorola.

Following 10 years in Geneva, Motorola offered to move Tom and his family to the U.S. They landed in Phoenix, Arizona, and then Tom moved to California's Silicon Valley. He describes his diverse locations as "good party conversation."

When he was ready to retire, his wife discovered El Dorado Hills, and they've loved the area ever since. Tom joined a local hiking group, where he learned of the Renaissance Society, and has been a member for eleven years.

Tom headed the Renaissance technology team for a few years, and is still a member. As part of the team, he and Jeff Hendy led the development of the member and seminar registration systems. Recently Tom has been leading a team giving iPhone and iPad classes via ZOOM on Wednesdays.

He was delighted when classes were able to return to the Sac State campus. That brought Tom to Bob Lang's Rock and Roll music classes, where he served as tech host. He especially looks forward to the spring semester, when Bob will focus on Jazz, since Tom played Jazz saxophone in his younger days. "Renaissance has been a great experience for me," he enthuses.

He also heads a bocce ball team in El Dorado Hills.

His two daughters live in Portland, Oregon and Venice, California. Tom and his wife, Carole, still try to return to Europe regularly to see family and old friends.



DINING TOGETHER

By Cheryl Nelson

Dining Together will meet at
BURMA LIGHT Burmese Restaurant
(<http://burmalight.com>),
703 East Bidwell St., Suite 3, Folsom
at 5:30 PM on Wednesday, February 14, 2024.



Members who wish to attend should RSVP to Susan Wheeler at swheeler_1@yahoo.com by Feb. 7th, 2024.

Plan to bring cash (including small bills) as checks will be by table (although the restaurant will accept credit cards). Parking is readily available.



Accepting Board Member Applications

The start of a new year and the start of a new opportunity!

The Renaissance Society offers you a way to become involved in the decision-making process of our beloved organization. Our Board of Directors is made up of volunteers who give their time and expertise to make this an exciting place to learn, grow and socialize.

Positions on the Board are President, Vice-President, Secretary and Controller. These are one-year terms.

There are three open seats for Member-At -Large positions which have a two-year term.

Applications are being taken now until February 16 to run for one of the offices or to become a Member-At-Large. Interviews of the candidates will take place in early March and results will be announced in April. The nominating committee submits the slate of candidates to the Executive Committee and the Board for approval and the slate is submitted to the entire membership for ratification.

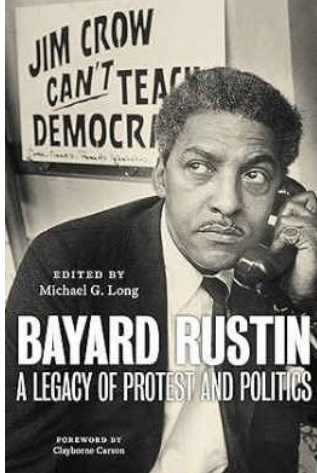
For more information or to request an application, contact Susan Brackenhoff at susan.brackenhoff@gmail.com or call 217-254-5037.



READINGS ON DIVERSITY

By Robert Benedetti and Roberta Gleeson

Bayard Rustin: A Legacy of Protest and Politics By Michael Long and Clahborne Carson

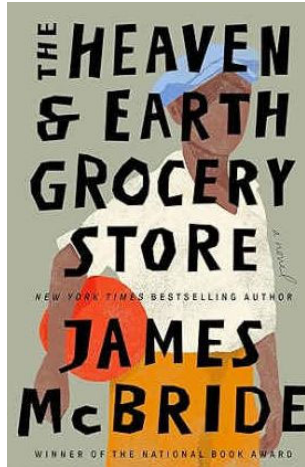


While we can all recall images of Martin Luther King Jr. giving his “I Have a Dream” speech in front of a massive crowd at Lincoln Memorial, few of us remember the man who organized this watershed nonviolent protest in eight short weeks: Bayard Rustin.

This was far from Rustin’s first foray into the fight for civil rights. As a world-traveling pacifist, he brought Gandhi’s protest techniques to the forefront of US civil rights demonstrations, helped build the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led the fight for economic justice, and played a deeply influential role in the life of Dr. King by helping to mold him into an international symbol of nonviolent resistance. Rustin’s legacy touches many areas of contemporary life—from civil resistance to violent uprisings, democracy to socialism, and criminal justice reform to war resistance.

Despite these achievements, Rustin was often relegated to the background. He was silenced, threatened, arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and fired from important leadership positions, largely because he was an openly gay man in a fiercely homophobic era. With expansive, searching, and sometimes critical essays from a range of esteemed writers—including Rustin’s own partner, Walter Naegle—this volume draws a full picture of Bayard Rustin: a gay, pacifist, socialist political radical who changed the course of US history and set a precedent for future civil rights activism, from LGBTQ+ Pride to Black Lives Matter.

The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store by James McBride



In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighborhood

where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side and shared ambitions and sorrows. Chicken Hill was where Moshe and Chona Ludlow lived when Moshe integrated his theater and where Chona ran the Heaven & Earth Grocery Store. When the state came looking for a deaf boy to institutionalize him, it was Chona and Nate Timblin, the Black janitor at Moshe’s theater and the unofficial leader of the Black community on Chicken Hill, who worked together to keep the boy safe.

As these characters’ stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins of white, Christian America struggle and what they must do to survive. When the truth is finally revealed about what happened on Chicken Hill and the part the town’s white establishment played in it, McBride shows us that even in dark times, it is love and community—heaven and earth—that sustain us.

Bringing his masterly storytelling skills and his deep faith in humanity to *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*, James McBride has written a novel as compassionate as *Deacon King Kong* and as inventive as *The Good Lord Bird*.



February Forums

Forums are a special category of highly acclaimed and high-profile speakers addressing current topics of special interest to a wide variety of our Renaissance members. These esteemed speakers are also seasoned experts in their fields. They bring a diversity, depth, and breadth of topics to inform us about critical issues facing us and our society on an ongoing basis.

All Forums occur on Friday afternoons from 3 to 4 pm when few other Renaissance seminars, Shared Interest Groups, or presentations are offered. Speakers encourage the audience to ask probing questions about their topics.

Forum speakers for Spring 2024 will give in-person presentations in Mendocino Hall 1005. In addition, the new hybrid technology will enable these presentations to be simulcast via Zoom and viewable in real-time from home. Note: To access any of the previous Forums that are on our YouTube Channel, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/@therenaissancesociety-foru8188/featured>

February 9

AMY KAUTZMAN, Dean and Director, Sac State University Library: Today's Academic Library: Balancing a Storied Past with the Exciting Future



Dean Kautzman has held leadership positions at UC Berkeley and UC Davis, as well as Harvard University. She has a BA in Literature from the University of Minnesota, a Master of Library and Information Science from Simmons University, and an MA in Literature from Northeastern University. Dean Kautzman received training and education by way of the US Navy. Her talk will celebrate all that is magnificent about library services now and in the future, bridging the past and the future: Scholarly Communications, StingerStudio Makerspace, data visualization, the problem with digital books, streaming media, and more.

February 16

BILL GEORGE, Author of *Victory in the Pool*, about the swimmers from Arden Hills and their coach, Sherm Chavoor



Bill George started his career as a TV reporter/photographer who wrote the story of Sacramento swimmers who won twenty Olympic gold medals when Olympic athletes were the targets of revolutionaries,

terrorists, and boycotts. The swimmers were carried through by a tough, sarcastic, wisecracking coach who grew up as the poor son of an Oakland dockworker. He called himself "Sherm Chavoor" who coached two US Women's Olympic swim teams to victory, becoming "swimming's first millionaire coach" despite the fact he could not swim.

February 23

AARON TANG: How Overconfidence is Destroying the Supreme Court and How We Can Fix it



Professor Tang, who graduated summa cum laude from Yale University, received his JD from Stanford Law School, was the former law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and teaches at UC Davis Law School. His articles on the Supreme Court have appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, The Atlantic, and elsewhere. The Supreme Court, once the most respected institution in American Government, renders decisions based on individual justices' partisanship. Professor Tang will explain why overconfidence - not partisanship - is the Court's root problem. He will discuss how we can regain a Court worthy of our trust.



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