

President's Corner



Deborah Seiler

President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

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

Key Dates

July 7 – Panel of Diverse
Students

July 14 – Multicultural Business
Leaders

July 8 – 15 – Homeless Soccer
World Cup

July 21 – Asian Experiences in
Sacramento

July 28 – Gospel Choir at St.
Andrews AME

Aug. 4 – At A Glance mailed

Aug. 7 – Catalog posted

Aug. 14 – Program Enrollment

Aug. 18 – Orientation & Open
House

Sept. 5 – Classes begin



Abundance

Lazy days of summer? I hope some of you are hanging out at the beach with a good book from Bob and Roberta's diversity list or traversing distant lands with family and friends. But for many of our wonderful Renaissance Society members, summer is still a great time to learn, connect, and share right here at home.

Just take a look at the Key Dates to see all that is in store for you in your own backyard. July is filled with the remaining Friday summer programs on "Celebrating Diversity" as well as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the Homeless World Cup Soccer games at Hornet Stadium July 8 – July 15.

On July 16, we eagerly welcome the new Sac State President, Dr. Luke Wood. Read about his amazing story and all his achievements in this issue. We sincerely hope to establish a warm relationship with Dr. Wood and his new cabinet as we continue our efforts to be good members of the Hornet Family.

August brings all the activities that lead up to the beginning of the fall semester when classes begin on September 5. Look for information coming in early August about the At-a-Glance Program Schedule and the beautiful Fall 2023 catalog.

Mark your calendars to attend the Orientation and Open House on August 18. Be sure to bring a friend to introduce them to our Renaissance Society and its abundance of offerings, both on Zoom and in person. For sure they will want to hear our illustrious Attorney General, Rob Bonta, on Friday, September 8 at the Forum and then Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg on Friday, September 15. Kudos to Tom Suchanek and Barbara Davis-Lyman for reaching out to them.

With Renaissance, there is always something around the next bend to be excited about. Additional programs, more parties, fresh opportunities to volunteer with Sac State students, and perhaps some fulfilling new community partnerships.

Help us boost our membership and bring meaning and joy into the lives of those around us by sharing the good word about our amazing organization.

Deborah



Sacramento State's incoming president, alumnus J. Luke Wood, is "Made at Sac State" and proud of it.

By Jennifer K. Morita



CSU trustees on Wednesday, May 24, announced the appointment of J. Luke Wood to lead the University as its ninth president. Wood is coming from San Diego State University, where

he is vice president for Student Affairs and Campus Diversity and chief diversity officer.

Wood, 41, will assume the presidency July 16, after the departure of retiring President Robert S. Nelsen, who has led the University since 2015.

Wood is clear about his motivation to be president.

"It's about investing back in the community that invested in me," Wood said. "I know what Sac State is capable of doing. I was a Black male, former foster child, first-generation college student who struggled with food insecurity and housing insecurity, and was able to graduate because of the incredible people and systems of support that were in place."

"If Sac State can do that for me, it can do that for anyone."

Wood, who earned his bachelor's degree in Black History and Politics as well as a master's degree in Higher Education Leadership at Sac State, has deep roots in Northern California.

"It's really about furthering the good work that's been done around student success, diversity and inclusion, and seeing how we can further continue those trajectories to continue to be even better every day." - J. Luke Wood, incoming Sac State president.

He grew up in the Siskiyou County town of McCloud and was raised along with his identical twin brother Joshua (also a Sac State alumnus) in a large foster home. While in high school, he attended the American Legion California Boys State summer program at Sac State.

"I just had a wonderful experience," Wood said. "I got to see the campus, and after that there was no other institution on my radar."

Wood was a highly engaged student leader during his time at Sac State, serving in Associated Students Inc. as a board member and in several vice president positions.



He met his future wife, San Diego State Child and Family Development Professor Idara Essien, while they were students at Sac State.

"We met at the Hornet's Nest. I saw her and walked up to her. I walked her to class, and we've been together ever since," Wood said. "Sac State gave me two degrees and a life partner."

They have three children, ages 7 to 14, and frequently visit family in Sacramento.

Wood attended guest lectures at Sac State, as well as Hornet football playoff games last season.

"Sac State is my home base," he said, emphasizing his enthusiasm for his new job as president.

"For me, it's coming home."

Wood credits Sac State's Educational Opportunity Program, which helps low-income and educationally disadvantaged students succeed in higher education.

"I would never have graduated if not for EOP," Wood said.

After leaving Sacramento, Wood attended Arizona State University, where he earned a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction in Early Childhood Education and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with an emphasis in higher education.

Wood started at SDSU as a professor in 2011. The following year, he became co-director with Frank Harris III of the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL), a research and practice center aimed at

reducing equity gaps between students of color and their peers.

In 2017, he became the first Black faculty member named a Distinguished Professor at San Diego State.

Wood has served as SDSU's chief diversity officer and member of the president's cabinet since 2018, and was named vice president for Student Affairs and Campus Diversity in 2020.

Earlier this year, the California state Senate appointed Wood to serve on the newly established California Racial Equity Commission to address structural racism across the state.

An author of 16 books and more than 180 publications, Wood's research focuses on racial inequality issues in education, particularly community colleges. He also studies the overexposure of suspensions of boys and students of color in K-12 schools.

"I'm a scholar, so I greatly value scholarship and high-quality teaching," Wood said.

Wood has co-authored with Carlos Nevarez, Sac State interim provost and vice president of Academic Affairs, four books on leadership of colleges and organizational change.

"I couldn't be more pleased to welcome Dr. J. Luke Wood to Sacramento State as our new president. I have worked with Dr. Wood as a scholar, colleague, and friend and I know his commitment to innovative, equity-based education will serve our students well," Nevarez said. "Moreover, his experience perfectly aligns with Sacramento State's strategic imperative as an Anchor University, and he will be a tireless fighter for inclusivity and belonging on our campus.

"I also want to thank President Nelsen for his service over the last eight years and for inspiring us all to put students' success and wellness front-and-center in the work we do every day. I look forward to finding opportunities to work with Dr. Wood to build on President's Nelsen's exceptional legacy."

Trustee Diego Arambula, chair of the Sacramento State Presidential Search Committee, called Wood a "champion for access, educational excellence, and student success."

"He is an equity-driven leader with a demonstrated history of innovation, who will continue to elevate Sacramento State's vision during its period of continued, transformational growth."

Sacramento State has bucked a nationwide trend of declining college enrollment. Last fall, 30,883 students were enrolled at Sac State, compared with 29,000 in 2015 when Nelsen became president, making it the sixth-largest campus in the CSU system. Sac State in 2022-23 met enrollment targets set by CSU.

Four-year graduation rates have risen dramatically, jumping from 9% in 2016 to higher than 28% in fall 2022. Those improvements reflect University efforts to meet and surpass goals set in CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025.

Further, a record 9,574 students graduated from Sac State in spring 2023.

"President Nelsen has done an incredible job in increasing graduation rates and creating a sense of community at Sac State," Wood said. "So, it's really about furthering the good work that's been done around student success, diversity and inclusion, and seeing how we can further continue those trajectories to continue to be even better every day."

On becoming Sac State's ninth permanent president (there were two interim leaders), Wood joins a list that began with Guy West, who served from the 1947 founding to 1965. Other presidents were Robert Johns (1966-69), Bernard L. Hyink (1970-1972), James G. Bond (1972-78), and W. Lloyd Johns (1978-83).

Donald R. Gerth (1984-2003) was the University's longest-serving president. Alexander Gonzalez (2003-15) followed and ultimately handed off to Nelsen.

About Jennifer K. Morita

Jennifer K. Morita joined Sacramento State in 2022. A former newspaper reporter for the Sacramento Bee, she spent several years juggling freelance writing with being a mom. jennifer.morita@csus.edu



Our 2023 Sac State Scholarship Winners!

Read their complete bios, excerpted below, at <https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/renaissance-society/scholars.html#your-2022-recipients>

Emily Bolas



I am a second-year Doctor of Physical Therapy student at Sac State. My interest in physical therapy first began when I was 13 and diagnosed with scoliosis. I had always had very positive interactions with my physical therapists, and this led me to pursue a career in this field...

Josiah Graham



I want to be a lawyer/defense attorney because when my grandmother went to court to fight to become my guardian, her attorney worked pro bono in a seemingly unbeatable case, and they won over the hearts of the courtroom and she was granted custody of me... I hope to be like her some day ...

Alyssa Lee



I am a junior and health science major, hoping to get into the nursing program in the Fall of 2023. I became interested in nursing since I always had family members that were sick and needed assistance. I was able to learn how to deal with diabetes, heart disease, and tuberculosis which was prevalent in my family medical history...

Kimberly Lopez



I am a proud first-generation Mexican-American student and third-year health science major at Sacramento State University. Currently, I am also in the process of adding both a child and adolescent development and psychology minor...

Cesar Medina



I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Sacramento State. The physical therapy program has given me the skills to empower my patients and help them restore the life they once had...

Amanda Oakes



I am now in my second year of physical therapy school and am so grateful for the opportunities I've experienced on this path. I've learned how important movement is for an individual's quality of life and I am passionate about being of service to others by helping them stay moving...

Michelle Silva



I have been working in the home health industry for the past 15 years, starting as a scheduler and working my way up to my current position as Regional Quality Manager. However, my passion is working directly with our clients, the majority being older adults. Thank You - to the Renaissance Society for the generous scholarship award. This will truly lessen my financial burden and help me to reach my goal of graduating in the spring of 2024 with my bachelor's degree in gerontology...



Help Sac State Students and Save on Your Taxes

Giving all or part of the annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA to a charitable organization like the Renaissance Society Scholarship Fund benefits students and reduces your tax liability at the same time.

"I have written a check to Renaissance Society Scholarship Fund for many years, but this year I decided that I could do a little more by directing a portion of my RMD to the Scholarship Fund," said member Nancy Findeisen. "I am so pleased that I could support Sacramento State students and reduce my tax bill at the same time. It was a win-win for all."

The RMD allocation can be directed to the University Foundation at Sacramento State (EIN # 94-3001359) with designation to the Renaissance Scholarship Fund. You should request the allocation by early December to assure that your financial institution has time to process the request.



Dimensions of American Diversity

By Darryl O. Freeman

During the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s, there was a consciousness raising among social activists of all so-called races and ethnicities as to the innate connection we have as human beings. As a result, people who had up until that time been inclined to avoid public condemnation and scorn due to their ethnic lifestyle choices that were counter to normative society, began to demand recognition as equal human beings.

With the prolific use of the Internet in the 21st century, individuals can now raise and advocate for issues in a manner that heretofore was the domain of institutions and organizations. Our network of mutuality has never been more obvious with the abounding communications that occur daily through social electronic media. A generation of young folks are “woke” to the notion that even though some social political issues are more directly impactful with certain race or ethnic groups, these issues indirectly impact us all.

The social political issues of the LGBTQ+ community intersects with those of race, ethnicity, and religion in this country. How members of this community navigate life in this country is profoundly affected by public policies and subsequent public attitudes about their personal lifestyle. While public policy has incrementally evolved, religious institutions are continuing to struggle with the status of gays and lesbians in different religious communities. There is reason for members of the LGBTQ+ communities to be hopeful however as recent Pew Research studies indicate that 6 in 10 of the general public, favors same-sex marriage. While institutions struggle, parishioners have moved ahead along with normative society

There are areas of the country where it is still uncomfortable for interracial couples to reside. While discriminatory government statutes are no longer in force, the social political stigma still impacts the lives of interracial couples in contemporary times. Of course, with interracial marriages often comes mixed race/ethnicity children. One of the most recent comprehensive studies of multiracial/multiethnic Americans, by

the Pew Research Center, identified that about 7% of the US population self identifies as biracial or multiethnic. Not only is the general public often perplexed as to how to approach a mixed race/ethnic person on a social basis, but within families of mixed individuals’ interactions with single race relatives can also be challenging.

In terms of identity formation and navigating life in the United States, people with disabilities have a challenge gaining an equal social political status as human beings able to contribute to the advancement of society. Whether the disability is due to military service, industrial accident, medical or genetic disposition, people with disabilities are often faced with the biased stereotype inclination of our society to consider them unable to fully participate in the goals of a work environment. When disabled individuals are a racial or ethnic minority, the challenge to be fully accepted in the mainstream of society is even more challenging.

The temperament of the public should not be one of accommodation but equalitarian inclusion of contributors to building the future of our country. A good example of this change in public attitude is the use of signers for the hearing impaired for government press conferences and other speaking engagements. Along with governmental actions, private sector collaboration and media support will increase the general public’s mindfulness of the benefits of inclusion to the advancement of our diverse society.

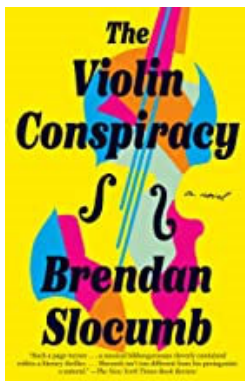


LITERARY READINGS ON DIVERSITY

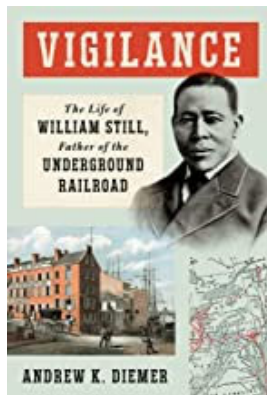
By Robert Benedetti and Roberta Gleason

In our on-going commitment to President Nelsen's campus-wide plan to end discrimination and prejudice, we present our latest:

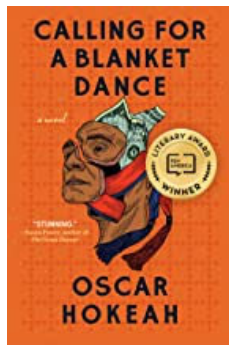
The Violin Conspiracy by Brendan Slocumb, A Black violinist who discovered that his great grandfather's violin is a Stradivarius. But one day it disappeared. Lots of family problems, an important competition and the mystery of the stolen violin. The author is Black.



Vigilance: The Life of William Still, the Father of the Underground Railroad by Andrew Diemer. The inspiring story of William Still, an unknown abolitionist who dedicated his life to managing a critical section of the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia, the free state directly north of the Mason-Dixon Line, helping hundreds of people escape from slavery.



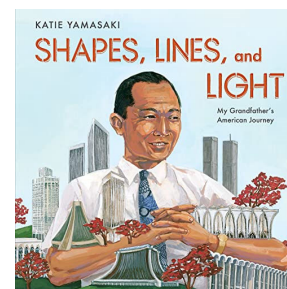
Calling for a Blanket Dance by Oscar Hokeah. At the intersection of Kiowa, Cherokee, and Mexican identity, a moving and deeply engaging novel about a young Native American man as he learns to find strength in his familial identity.



She Persisted, Patsy Mink by Tae Keller. Children's book. An illustrated biography of the first Asian American woman—and first woman of color—to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Recommended for ages 6-10.



Shapes, Lines, and Light: My Grandfather's American Journey by Katie Yamasaki. Children's book. Noted picture book author Katie Yamasaki turns for inspiration to the life of another artist: her grandfather, pioneering Japanese American architect Minoru "Yama" Yamasaki. Recommended for ages 6-8.



DINING TOGETHER

By Cheryl Nelson

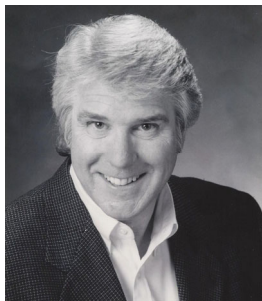
Dining Together will meet at Piatti, at 571 Pavilions Lane, (<https://sacramento.piatti.com>) at 5:30 PM on July 12, 2023.

Dining Together members who wish to attend should RSVP to Cheryl Nelson: slynnsearch@yahoo.com, or, (916) 421-0407 no later than July 7, 2023. Parking is available. Separate checks will be provided.



Member Profile Bob Lang

By Judy Lewis



Many Renaissance Society members refer to Bob Lang as “The Music Man.” A native of California, Bob was born in San Francisco, where his father was a salesman for Ingersoll Rand Power Tools Corp. At age two, he and his family relocated to Colfax, California, eventually ending up in the Hollywood Park area of Sacramento.

After graduating from McClatchy High School and Sacramento City College with an AA in Theater Arts, Bob was bitten by the bug to go into the broadcasting field. This inspired him to earn a B.A. from San Francisco State College, majoring in Radio-Television-Film. Because a first class license was required, Bob earned that at William B. Ogdon’s Radio Operational Engineering School in Huntington Beach, CA. This was the summer of 1969, and Bob reports looking up at a full moon and marveling that there was a man walking on it.

Following five years at radio station KTRB in Modesto as a disc jockey, Bob returned to Sacramento where he joined KGMS radio. He later wrote and produced commercials for both Channel 40 and Channel 10 television stations, then went back into radio at KCTC and finally as the first morning radio host at Mix96.

Sharing his experience, Bob taught mass media classes at American River and Sacramento City Colleges.

Next Pacific Bell Telephone Company hired him as an equipment trainer, where he taught staff how to operate their new equipment.

He ended his career with the California State Department of Corrections. Bob ran the TV facilities for inmates who were attending school at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, CA. An opportunity to transfer to the Department of Corrections headquarters in Sacramento shortened his Ione commute to just one or two miles. He served as a project manager, working with his counterparts throughout the state.

For the past 35 years, Bob has played guitar and sung in a band called On Air, primarily at summer concerts in various parks, as well as at private events. Bob has written three books, one of which is aimed at aspiring broadcasters, emphasizing such topics as

how to pronounce proper nouns and names of cities as well as correct grammar.

After retiring in 2011, he joined the Renaissance Society, enrolling in Mike Harkins’ music class. At one point, Mike, Bob and Graham Edmonson then team-taught a class. Bob was inspired to develop his own classes, “Real Rock ‘n Roll” and “All That Jazz.”

He plans to expand on the rock class for Fall 2023 semester. He has curtailed his traveling after breaking his leg with a fall on his brick backyard patio. But it won’t slow down his music.



In Memoriam

Kathy Spagnolo
1949—2023

Kathleen Beeler Spagnolo (1949 - 2023) passed away on May 2 after a long battle with cancer. She was the loving wife of the late Frank Spagnolo.

Kathy taught at St. Francis Elementary School in the 1970s, and later employed at Procter & Gamble Manufacturing. In her retirement years she joined The Renaissance Society where she was involved in their lifelong learning programs. There she met many dear friends, benefiting greatly from their relationships and support.

Michael Echenberg
1974 - 2022

Brilliant, kind, and humble, Michael took a keen interest in the details of his friends and families’ lives, and never forgot the things he learned, whether it was the names of their siblings or their college major.

Renaissance member Michael excelled in every way—school, career and games of any kind, but he loathed having any focus on his accomplishments, always shifting the conversation to his pride in the accomplishments of his friends and family.

Josephine D. Valdez
1941 - 2023

Josephine D. Valdez, passed away on February 13, 2023, in Sacramento. She was born in Gold Run, California, daughter of Bonifacia and Aniceto de la Cruz. A loving wife, mother, Grammy, sister, and aunt. She is survived by her husband of 52 years, Raymond, her daughter Christina (Tobias), two Grandsons Tristan and Raymond, and two sisters.

Bernard Cody
1942 - 2023

Sacramento, California - Educator, mentor, patron of the arts, music lover, raconteur, hiker, world traveler. Bernard Wilson Cody was all of these and much more. Born in Toledo, Ohio, he passed peacefully in his Sacramento home on June 5, 2023, at age 80.



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September Submissions Due: August 2

Enjoy your summer!

