

PRESIDENT'S



CORNER

Feb. 15—Deadline to submit applications for a Board of Directors officer or Member at Large position

March 1—Beginning of Women's History month

March 20—First day of Spring

March 31—Cesar Chavez Day (campus closed)

April 20—Green and Gold Gala

April 21-22—Give Sac State Day

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

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Spring is such a hopeful time of year when first buds appear, leaves begin to sprout on bare rose branches, and daffodils poke their sunny heads to the sky. It signals a new beginning of life and, for Renaissance members, another season of lifelong learning. Yes, classes are in full swing, and ain't it grand!

There is still time to share your enthusiasm for Renaissance with others, and thanks to our Tech Group and Sac State Vice President for Information Resources and Technology, Mike Hendricks, it's never been easier to access our website to join. Our new web address is simple: csus.edu/rensoc. So easy to remember and tell friends. And don't forget to share our Facebook and Twitter posts, too!

Spring also rekindles the desire for new gardening gloves and sharp tools. Our dear President Nelsen is a great admirer of the Sac State Arboretum, and he has asked Renaissance leaders to support this local gem. Let's consider honoring him by tending a portion of the Arboretum on an ongoing basis to fulfill his request. Renaissance member Donna Eash is once again conducting three one-hour lunchtime tours of the Arboretum on Fridays in April and May. She will be asking for volunteers to lead additional "pop up" tours and to volunteer to devote time to the area. If you have a "green thumb" and want to put your skills to work, please contact Donna at donnaeash@gmail.com (916) 549-3739.

Our Renaissance committees are also in full bloom. The Scholarship Committee is reviewing applications for the seven \$3,000 Sac State Student Scholarships that will be awarded at our Annual General Meeting on Friday, May 12 at 3:00 p.m., and Resource Development is working with the university on the April, Give Sac State Day. Did you know it's easier than ever to give? Just go to our home page and click on the big, yellow DONATE button.

Volunteer opportunities also abound. The Gerontology Committee is enlisting the help of 80 Renaissance mentors for two Gerontology 121 classes, and the University Services Committee will seek ushers for Sac State performances *Everybody* which runs March 9-18 and *Untitled Devise Production* which runs April 20-23. As always, look for details in your Weekly Update.

Let's get going and growing!



Forums

March 3--Aaron Tang: **The Future of the Supreme Court**

Aaron Tang is a law professor at UC Davis and former law clerk to Justice Sonia Sotomayor. He writes about constitutional law, education law, and the Supreme Court. His scholarly work has appeared in the Stanford Law Review, Columbia Law Review, California Law Review and elsewhere, and he has written for popular audiences in The New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Slate, and The Atlantic. His new book, *Maybe In Error But Never In Doubt: How Overconfidence Broke the Supreme Court—And How We Can Fix It* is forthcoming this Spring.

March 10--Amani Sawires Rapaski: **Solving the Sacramento Homeless Crisis**

Amani Sawires-Rapaski is the Executive VP and COO of Volunteers of America (VOZ) for Northern California & Northern Nevada (VOA NCNN). This organization operates 40 programs including housing, employment services substance abuse and recovery services for families, individuals, veterans, seniors, and youth. VOA NCNN provides shelter or housing to over 3, 500 men, women, and children every night and nationally, and serves more than 2.5 million people annually. Amani earned a BS from UC Davis, an MPPA at CSUS-Sacramento and an Executive Leadership Certification at Case Western Reserve University. She and guest panelists will discuss Sacramento's homeless problem and potential solutions as well as provide ways that each of us can become involved in helping to solve this crisis.

March 17--Robert Lapsley: **The Business Climate in California** **Following the November 8, 2022 Election**

Robert Lapsley was named President of the California Business Roundtable in 2011. As President, Rob leads an organization comprised of senior executive leadership of major California employers representing all sectors of California's economy and with a combined workforce of more than a million employees. The Roundtable's mission is to strengthen California's



economy and grow jobs while ensuring an educated workforce prepared for the next generation of jobs. Major policy priorities include efforts to address California's economic recovery, the housing crisis, rising energy costs, education reform and the regulatory environment's impact on the ability of California businesses to compete both nationally and internationally. He will also address the business community's strategies regarding climate change policies and what the impacts of these policies will be on the state's economy.

Dining Together

By Cheryl Nelson



Dining Together will meet at **CANTINA AZTECA**, 6400 Fair Oaks Blvd., (cantinaazteca.com) at **5:30 PM on March 8, 2023**. Dining Together members who wish to attend should **RSVP** to Cheryl Nelson: slynnsearch@yahoo.com, or, (916) 421-0407 no later than March 2, 2023. Plan to bring cash (including small bills as separate checks may not be possible, depending upon the size of our group). Parking is available. The dinners will conform to County COVID health requirements.

In Memoriam



Susanne Coleman, who led Cracker Barrel for over 20 years, passed away on January 7th at the age of 96. For many years her highlight of the week was being with the other active-minded elders discussing current events and attending other events and programs with her Renaissance buddies.



Is There a Special Woman in Your Life?

.By Judy A. Lewis

March 8 is **International Women's Day**. It celebrates the achievements of women and how far they have come in the fight for rights within the political, cultural and social areas since its inception in 1911. If you would like to honor a special woman in your life, a great way to do that would be to donate to the Renaissance scholarship fund.

This testimonial from a 2022 winner provides an example of how your donations make a difference. "I want to express my gratitude to you all. The Renaissance Scholarship has helped me drastically this semester. This scholarship allowed me to pay for my ebooks, school supplies, transportation & so much more. It has lifted a huge burden off of my shoulders, allowing me to really focus on school to maintain a 4.0 this semester. My life has been hard these past couple years from me moving from house to house and when dealing school full time and work,

people may begin to lose hope in doing what means the most to them. You guys gave me hope, and allowed me to focus on what means the most to me, school. I could not thank you all enough for your support and I hope when I graduate in the future I can definitely give back to those who need it as well. I have never applied for a scholarship, and was a bit discouraged to do so. I am so glad that I did, you guys are amazing people with a great vision to help others. I graduate this December with my Bachelors of Health Science and I am so excited for the many more years of education to come as I am working towards my Bachelors in nursing as well."—Jasmine Vargas

You can make your donation online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/RenaissanceFunds>

or via a 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 gift. Mail the check to: Renaissance Society, 350 University Avenue, Suite 108, Sacramento, CA. 95819



Do you Tweet?

By Lorraine Murphy

How can I find the Renaissance Society's Twitter handle (or address)?

Search for: <https://twitter.com/RenaissanceSoc1/>

While only the Administrator, Lorraine Murphy, can post to our Renaissance account, members can personally connect with other members (Followers of the account) by Clicking on the "half box & up arrow;" to send a friend a direct message via email or text. However, to help us spread RS Tweets throughout the globe, members can Click on the "**Heart**" and show that you like the post! Or you can Click on the "**Comment bubble**" and express your thoughts regarding a post. Moreover, Members can share a post with their own personal group of followers by Clicking the "**Retweet**" (double arrows) button.

We look forward to **Tweeting** with all of you!



Volunteer Highlights

By Deborah Seiler

Sometimes it's the **little** things that make a **huge** difference to an organization. This month I'd like to celebrate the contributions of two members who offered to help proofread our Spring Catalog. With all our many program offerings and the combination of seminars, even more single presentations, SIGS, and Forums –not to mention an array of formats from in person to hybrid –the detail is daunting. Taking on a task that some might consider tedious is a real labor of love.

Laura Middleton is a long-standing Renaissance member, having joined in 2013. She has several friends who've served on the Board of Directors and/or have taught classes and she thought working on the catalog would be a good way for her to **give back**. When she saw a request for volunteers in a newsletter last year, she knew she could put her copy-editing experience to good use. And she loves working on the catalog to get a sneak peek at all the upcoming classes!

Deborah Ondricka is brand new to Renaissance having just joined last fall. She heard about us through friend and neighbor, Pam O' Brien, and she was excited about what the Renaissance Society had to offer. Because Deborah has prior experience with proofreading/editing and enjoyed working with Lorene, she just **wanted to contribute**. A retired academic librarian from American River College, she took classes at Sac State before transferring to a private distance-learning college in New York State.

"Not only did their work ensure that the catalog was better than ever, but it also made my work so much more efficient and effective. For example, they found little things that I would have missed because of working with the material for so long. In addition, they met the sometimes tight deadlines that I asked them to meet, helping to make the catalog development process so much easier."

— Lorene Sarne, Renaissance Senior Clerk

Thank you, Laura and Deborah!

Reflections of a New Member

By Richard Atkinson

So there I was gradually reducing my medical practice obligations ((I'm in my 70s) and doing some administrative work with the hospital. I planned a couple of more years of limited work. But then the universe knocked on my door in the form of the COVID Pandemic, and I was sent home packing with an abrupt end to my career. There went much of my time, social contacts and brain stimulation. Oops. All of us, whether we were working or not, went through some degree of this experience in 2020.

I continued with my fitness program and stayed with my two favorite hobbies—hiking and reading. But you can only hike so much (unfortunately less as you get older) and you can only read so many books before you start looking for Netflix. There were still a lot of hours in the day, and worst of all my brain was getting bored and lazy. Well, it took me awhile but I finally stumbled across the Renaissance Society at Sac State as the answer. I had been aware of it by way of my book club friend Deborah Seiler (AKA the president), but I hadn't really investigated it.

I signed up for the spring 2023 semester, checked out the syllabus, and went to the open house and orientation. Wow! I had no idea the size and quality of this resource was available in our community. We are quite fortunate for the hard work the founders and subsequent supporters have made.

As a neurologist I am aware of many of the steps to take to lessen the inevitable (sad to say) decline in our once bright cognitive function as we get older. Three of the most important are significant exercise, maintaining social contacts, and using our brain in an active fashion. Well, thank you Renaissance!

No, the Renaissance Society will not get you significant exercise (wandering around campus looking for an obscure classroom does not count, nor walking from the parking lot). But for establishing and maintaining social contacts, getting involved with volunteer work, and challenging your brain with new ideas it is a gift to all of us.

So the Renaissance Society is good for your health. In fact, I'm thinking about submitting the tuition fee to my health insurance carrier to pay....I'll let you know how that turns out.

Celebrating 30 years of Scholarships and Funding for the Future

By Laurye Brownfield and Michael Pidd



The Renaissance Society (RS) Scholarship Program will celebrate 30 years of providing scholarships to deserving students in 2023. This year, the RS will surpass one quarter of a million dollars in total scholarships! The Renaissance Society Scholarship program began 30 years ago, in 1993, by members Doug Fulton and Lou Weintraub with two \$500 awards. Since then, it has grown to seven scholarships of \$3,000 each. Our scholarship totals from 1993 through 2022 amount to \$248,000 in awards to 114 students.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, we are not only funding current scholarships, we are also able to create one \$75,000 endowment that will perpetually generate one \$3,000 scholarship starting in 2024. We are hopefully on pace to announcing a second endowment scholarship this year! One of these scholarships was the result of donations surpassing \$21,000 over the last few years. Major donors (over \$500) were contacted to gain concurrence about using their donations to fund the endowment. These donors will be listed as part of this endowment. In addition, the RS board voted to create their initial endowment in the name of Robert and Jody Nelsen, the current Sac

State President who is retiring in June.

The Renaissance Society envisions setting up endowments to fund perpetually the other five scholarships. We recognize this is a long term ambitious goal; however, we are energized with the development of the first two endowments. As we move forward this year, any donations collected over \$21,000 to fund current scholarships, will be set aside for this purpose. If you have any questions regarding donations and the endowments, please contact Laurye Brownfield (Scholarships) at 916-599-2677 (Laurye.brownfield@gmail.com) or Mike Pidd (Resource Development) at 916-541-5104 (mikepidd@sbcglobal.net).

As the Chairs of the Scholarship and Resource Development Committees, we see the impact that the \$3000 scholarships mean to these deserving students. The Renaissance Society has made a significant impact at Sac State through our support of scholarships and other endeavors (Food Bank, Turkey Baskets, etc). Thank you Renaissance Society Members for making these amazing scholarship opportunities possible.



Member Profile

By Judy A. Lewis

Debbie Martinez — Volunteerism is in her blood!

Debbie Martinez was never one to shy away from the call to help. Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, from the middle '50's to the 70's, Debbie was her parent's first born. Both parents were first generation Americans, her mother's family immigrating from the Azores Islands (Portugal), and her father's family from Mexico. Debbie became aware of the issues of the day at an early age. In addition, being the oldest of 5 children, she quickly learned to take on responsibilities for her siblings. She saw first-hand the limited opportunities for a working mom, and the career struggles of a minority father. The civil rights issues of the sixties were a prominent part of daily life, including participating in protest marches against the Vietnam War and social justice rallies supporting farm workers and other causes. Later, in high school, Debbie became an activist in her own right as contributor to and editor of the school newspaper, where she had a weekly column on feminism.

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With the encouragement of the emerging Women's Movement, Debbie aspired to a college degree and decided to attend Mills College, a women's college in the Oakland Hills. There she would hone her leadership and professional skills out of the shadow of a male dominant environment.

Upon graduation, Debbie had her own struggles with the recession of the late 70's. She landed her first job in computer operations, with the region's arguably most traditional employer, Pacific Bell. However, she soon learned that this company would be on the forefront of investing in an untapped talent pool- women. In a short time, she was identified as a resource for recruiting more talent like herself and promoted into the Human Resources department. There, she traveled to college campuses up and down the state and recruited new graduates for professional positions at Pacific Bell. She also mentored and counseled other students, particularly women and student of color, to focus their studies on the growing field of technology and communications. A few promotions later, she became a manager in marketing, at a time when cellular technology was just getting started and court rulings opened phone service to countless competitors. It was a time of great change and opportunity. Debbie's social activism was growing too. The diversity of the workforce gave rise to employee affinity groups- the Black Employees Association, the Latino Professional Employees Association (LPA), another group in the South Bay called Los Padrinos (Godparents) all seeking to provide mutual support for career development and community service outside the workplace. Soon Debbie was elected President of LPA for California, where she led the group in mentoring young at-risk Latinos in the East San Jose area.

In the late 80's, she met her husband and she and Frank married in 1990. But the industry evolution accelerated, and her career continued. When Frank's job with PG&E took him to the Central Valley, Debbie joined a carpool to commute 80 miles each way to work. When Christina was born, Debbie took time off but became involved with other new moms in town, sharing resources and support. Soon, Frank's job took him to San Francisco and the new family moved to San Ramon, where Debbie resumed her career at Pacific Bell until 1996. Her husband's job took him to Grass Valley, so they moved to Auburn, California.

Debbie took a break from her career to get the family settled in their new home. When Christina went to preschool and kindergarten, it wasn't long before Debbie was volunteering at the school and soon became the President of the Auburn Montessori Parents and Teachers Group. She pioneered several initiatives to improve the school's offerings and fundraising.

As Christina went on to elementary school, the call of a

career re-emerged, and Debbie joined a headhunting consulting firm. But her HR network of associates soon recruited her to join the California Independent System Operator, the operator of the electric utility grid, in the newly deregulated electric utility industry.

The California ISO was in a startup mode and Debbie had the opportunity to help build the HR department from the ground up. During this time, she developed their corporate recruiting practices, drafted the company immigration policy, and created a premier college internship program and diversity hiring strategy. She was once again doing what she loved, recruiting college students for paid summer internships, hiring newly graduated engineers, and conducting national talent searches for senior leadership positions. Her years of experience provided finely honed skills to identify, recruit and negotiate with the best professional talent and move them to Northern California. And she was also on the move, as the family moved to Folsom during this time.

Not content to just do her job, Debbie continued her volunteerism as Girl Scout leader, including annual cookie sales. Imagine your entire family room, filled with cases of Girl Scout cookies from floor to ceiling!

During these years, she also volunteered with the Folsom High School Marching Band Boosters, organizing the annual regional marching band competition and jazz band festival. This included supporting a band trip to perform at Disneyland's Main Street.

The call of politics also got Debbie involved in two political clubs in the area, where she held various leadership roles including President. Volunteering to do new things like canvassing and phone banking kept Debbie growing and energized.

An early retirement incentive helped Debbie to decide it was time to retire from the California ISO in 2018. Frank already had retired from SMUD and it was now time to travel, and explore new interests.

Discovering the Renaissance Society created the perfect opportunity for Debbie to work with college students again. She soon found her way to the Dreamer Center on campus, where undocumented students were waiting to be mentored.

After experiencing some of the seminars and social activities at Renaissance, Debbie discovered how many interesting and wonderful people are in Renaissance, and she was excited about the idea of volunteering with Renaissance. Debbie is now in her second year as the Chairperson for the Membership, Diversity and Community Engagement committee (MDCE), where she leads an outreach effort to not only grow the Renaissance membership but to expand its diversity.

Ethnic Reflections

“The Georges:” Heroes of the American Railroad

By Darryl Omar Freeman

The United States Civil War was the bloodiest war ever fought by this developing nation. The number of soldiers who died between 1861 and 1865, generally estimated at 620,000, is approximately equal to the total of American fatalities in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. As devastating as this insurrection was in human loss, the nation economically continued to grow in part due to the supply requirements of the war, and in part to the commerce demands of the middle class and upper-class population not directly involved in the War.



The Pullman Company, founded by George Pullman, was a manufacturer of railroad cars in the mid-to-late 19th century through the first half of the 20th century, during the boom of railroads in the United States. His company in 1862 built luxury sleeping cars which featured carpeting, draperies, upholstered chairs, libraries, card tables and an unparalleled level of customer service.

Key to the success of the railroad service in the United States was the attending service of the Pullman Porters. Until the 1960s, the job of Pullman Porters was held exclusively by African American men and is widely credited with contributing to the development of an African American middle class after the Civil War. “It didn't pay a livable wage, but the porters made a living with the tips that they got, because the salary was nothing,” says Lyn Hughes, founder of the A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum. The porters were expected to pay for their own

meals and uniforms. The company required them to pay for the shoe polish used to shine passengers' shoes daily. Working in the dining car and keeping the cars tidy, the porters needed to be available night and day to wait on the passengers. My paternal grandfather, substantiated in many historical accounts, told us how, due to the white traveling public's general prejudice toward them, travelers rarely referred to them by their birth names. Referring to all of the porters as “George” became a nickname for the African Americans working as pullman porters.

In the late 19th century, Pullman porters were among the only people in their communities to travel extensively. Consequently, they became a conduit of new information and ideas from the wider world to their communities. Many Pullman porters supported community projects, including schools, and saved rigorously to ensure that their children were able to obtain an education and thus better employment. Both my father and his sister were able to secure college degrees. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown were descendants of Pullman porters. Marshall was also a porter himself, as were Malcolm X and the photojournalist Gordon Parks. The Order of Sleeping Car Conductors was organized on February 20, 1918, in Kansas City, Missouri. Members had to be white males. Because the order did not admit Black people, A. Philip Randolph began organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Using the motto “Fight or Be Slaves”, on August 25, 1925, 500 porters met in Harlem and decided to make an effort to organize.

Under Randolph's leadership the first black union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was formed. Slowly working conditions and salaries improved. The position of Pullman porter ceased to be a “black” only job in the railroads. By the 1960s, between the decline of the passenger rail system and the cultural shifts in American society, the Pullman porters' contribution became obscured, becoming for some in the African-American community a symbol of subservience to white cultural and economic domination.

For more information:

Pullman Porters – ordinary Men Extraordinary History
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yoYSkoCp5M>

The Pullman Railroad <https://www.pullman-museum.org/theCompany/>

Pullman Porters, From Servitude to Civil Rights
<https://interactive.wttw.com/a/chicago-stories-pullman-porters>

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