Liz Igra was born in 1935 in Krakow, Poland. During World War II, she walked with her mother from Poland to Czechoslovakia and then to Hungary, where they went into hiding until the war ended. Many members of her family were killed during the Holocaust.

After the war, Liz eventually resettled in the United States. In 1977, she earned a bachelor’s degree in education with honors from Sacramento State, and in 1987 she earned a master’s of science in educational administration. She dedicated her career to education, teaching in the Elk Grove Unified School District for decades, and sharing her expertise in the education of future teachers.

Liz works tirelessly to teach others about the causes of genocide and the fragility of democracy and to fighting antisemitism. In 2009, she founded the Central Valley Holocaust Educators’ Network (CVHEN), whose mission is to support teachers “in effectively implementing a Holocaust curriculum that meets California Social Studies and Language Arts Standards” (cvhen.com). CVHEN serves the Sacramento Region by connecting Holocaust experts to area schools and community organizations to speak about their experiences.

In her work at CVHEN, Liz also created the first Holocaust library in the Sacramento Region, which contains articles, films, literature, and other archival materials about the Holocaust. As a part of CVHEN, Liz created the 2nd Gen Speakers Bureau, which aims to help adult children of Holocaust survivors learn about and share their parent’s personal experiences, as there are few living survivors of these atrocities. These stories ensure that we do not forget the horrible events of the Holocaust, and help to illuminate its effect on subsequent generations.

Liz has dedicated her life to ensuring that individuals and groups are not targeted for abuse and cruelty based on their identities. She continues to inspire others by sharing her story with people of all ages, including elementary school to college aged students, religious congregations, and professional and community organizations. Liz’ late husband, Dr. Jacob Igra, was also a Holocaust survivor. Together they had six children and several grandchildren.

Elizabeth “Liz” Igra
President, Central Valley Holocaust Educators’ Network
2023 Recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.)

Mathilde Mukantabana
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda
2023 Recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.)

Professor Mathilde Mukantabana serves as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Rwanda to the United States of America, and non-resident Ambassador to Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.

Ambassador Mukantabana has dedicated her life educating students and communities about the scourge of genocide while promoting peace, restorative justice, and collective healing. After being forced from her home in Rwanda as a teenager, Mathilde lived as a refugee in Barundi to escape the then-Hutu controlled government of Rwanda. Fluent in multiple languages, she did not speak English when she immigrated to Sacramento in 1980 at the age of 22. In 1986 she earned a master’s degree in History with an emphasis in African History from Sacramento State. She returned to Sac State in 1990 to study social work with the goal of better understanding how she could help Rwanda during its reconstruction. She earned her second master’s degree, this time in Social Work, from Sacramento State in 1990 while raising three children.

Prior to her diplomatic career, Ambassador Mukantabana was a professor of history at Cosumnes River College. She co-founded Friends of Rwanda Association (F.O.R.A.), a nonprofit American relief organization launched in the wake of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda. Under the aegis of the United Nations for Development Programs (UNDP), Ambassador Mukantabana started the social work program at the National University of Rwanda in 1999, where she was a lecturer. She is a board member of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program at Sonoma State University and belongs to many local and international organizations including the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and the Organization of African Leaders in Diaspora (OALD), which she co-founded and is currently acting as Chair.

Ambassador Mukantabana has won many awards including the Peace and Justice Award from the Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution (CAPCR); Peace and Global Peace Award (on behalf of F.O.R.A.) by Global Majority, and the Crystal Apple Award for Best Instructor at Cosumnes River College.
Mary A. Daniels-Tarango
Miwok Tribal Elder, Emeritus Tribal Chairwoman, Wilton Rancheria
2023 Recipient of the President’s Medal for Distinguished Service

Mary A. Daniels-Tarango was the driving force behind the historic federal restoration of the Wilton Rancheria in 2009. For over two decades she led the fight to secure federal recognition for her fellow Miwok tribal members.

The journey to restore federal recognition to the Wilton Rancheria began in the early 1990s when Mary was selected by members of her tribal community to be the face and spokesperson of the Tribe. For the next 22 years, she dedicated herself to overturning Wilton’s tribal termination by securing funding, finding legal assistance and support, and remaining constantly engaged with the tribal community, all while raising her family. In 2009, their status as a recognized Tribe became a reality. Subsequently, Mary was elected as the first Chairperson of the Wilton Rancheria of Miwok Indians.

After graduating from high school, Mary received a college scholarship and attended Delta College before transferring to Sacramento State. She was just shy of completing her bachelor’s degree in criminal justice when she left school to begin work in civil service. Mary had a long career with the State of California as a civil rights and equal opportunity investigator.

Mary serves on several professional boards, including serving as Chairperson for the Sacramento Native American Health Center, Inc. (SNAHC). She serves as a “Peacemaker” on the tribe’s Traditional Court, and is sought after to provide blessings and prayers for community programs, schools, and professional events. Mary has always and will continue to serve her tribal community and community at large, and is tireless in her commitment to mentoring the next generation of tribal leaders and to the tribal community.

Mary is a proud Miwok/Nisenan woman, a wife of over 50 years, mother of four beautiful and accomplished children, a grandmother, sister and cherished auntie and an elder to many. Mary is the matriarch and advisor to her family of over 100 members, and is a respected and honored leader, traditional dancer and singer. She is the eldest of eleven siblings, five of whom she helped to raise. Mary A. Daniels-Tarango is an agent of change who embodies what it means to be a Hornet.

Francisco Javier “Xico” González
The Met Sacramento High School
2023 Recipient of the President’s Medal for Distinguished Service

Francisco Javier “Xico” González is an award-winning educator, curator, interdisciplinary artist, poet, and a political and cultural activista/organizer. He teaches Spanish and Art Studio at the Met Sacramento High School, where he promotes social justice, cultural awareness, and community engagement in and out of the classroom. He has also taught at UC Davis and Sacramento State.

Xico is a transformational and exceptional educator with an unwavering commitment to student success. He has taught, inspired, and mentored countless students, working to build confidence, skills, and passion so that students are able to go on to higher education and become leaders who advocate for a more just world. He bridges the gap between the university and the community by providing service-learning opportunities for his students. In his work with the Barrio Art Program, he worked with students and local K-12 schools to organize community art days and paint murals on school campuses.

Xico works closely with community organizations such as Sol Collective, Academia del Barrio, NorCal Resist, Wellspring Women’s Center, Knights Landing Family Resource Center, and Yolo Family Resource Center.

Xico is an accomplished artist, well known for his politically charged posters and his revoltoso poetry. His art has been displayed at numerous venues locally and nationally including the Mexican Heritage Center in Stockton and Golden 1 Center. His work is archived at Sacramento State, San José State, the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and other public and private collections. He has also taken part in exhibitions in Argentina and China. Xico’s written work has been included in publications such as the award-winning poetry anthology “The Border Crossed Us,” from Vagabond Press.

Xico received his bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in Spanish from Sacramento State. He also holds a Master of Fine Art in Art Studio from UC Davis. Through his art, Xico González inspires, motivates, and galvanizes social justice activists in our local communities and nationwide, and through his mentorship he uplifts and empowers countless students, work that clearly reflects and advances the objectives and ideals of Sacramento State.