



HERSTORY COLLECTION

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH 2021

#HerStory Campaign in conjunction with the
Asian Pacific Islander Month (API)

#AHM #419WOMEN #419HERSTORY

Program Partner

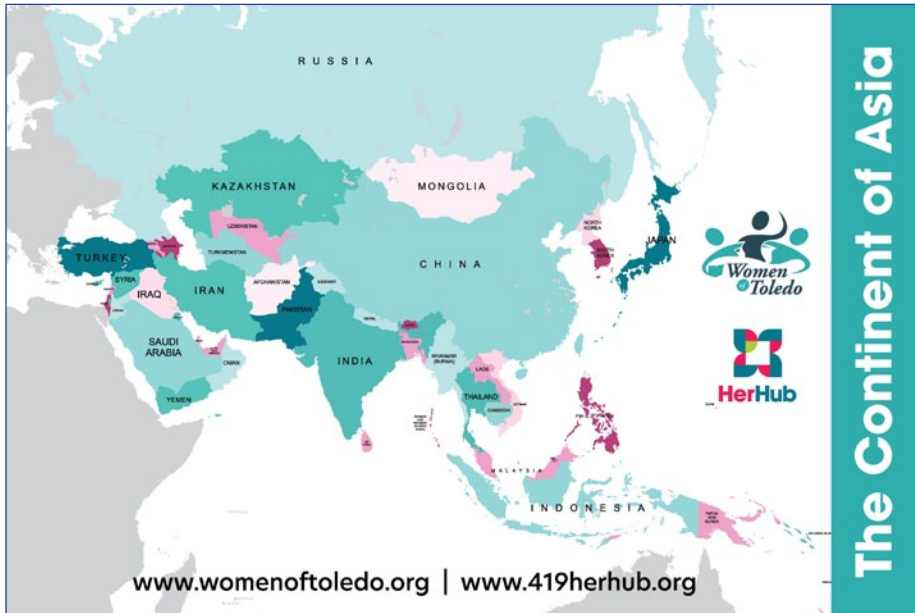


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Mely Arribas-Douglas



Mely is the Welcome Toledo-Lucas County (TLC) Librarian for the Welcome TLC initiative. Welcome TLC is housed at the Toledo Lucas County Public Library, and in partnership with Lucas County and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Toledo advances an inclusive and global Toledo-Lucas County. An immigrant from the Philippines, Mely was born in Jakarta, Indonesia, and has lived in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; New Delhi, India; Manila, Philippines; Tamuning, Guam; Ankara, Turkey; and has spent a few Summers in Habana, Cuba. After living and studying abroad for the first two decades of her life, she has since called Toledo, home.

Mely added, "I've been fortunate to have many role models, including my Mother, Irina, but also my Aunt, Neva". Mely enjoys learning from and finds inspiration from everyone around her, most especially her two children because children have this innate ability to pare things down and see things for what they are. "I am empowered by the hope of leaving the world a better place for them". -Mely

The need to bridge divisions, exacerbated even further by the pandemic, is crucial now more than ever. Celebrating women, heritage, and each myriad part that makes our vibrant and beautiful world whole, is an important step toward bridging those divisions.

"My advice to our young women if you're contemplating a leadership role, congratulations, that's half the battle! The second half is overcoming the fear of dreaming big. In the book, The Third Plate, Wes Jackson is quoted as saying "If you're thinking about solving a problem in your lifetime, you're thinking too small." We unfortunately and too often, feel the effects of decisions made without much consideration for future generations. So please by all means, let's think and dream big for our future generations" - Mely

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Dr. Maleigha Watts-Mortimore

"I was adopted from South Korea at 17 months old and have lived in the US since. I grew up in Bellevue, Ohio. After graduating from high school I went to the University of Toledo for my Bachelor's Degree. Then moved to Phoenix, Arizona where I attended Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, graduated in 2010, and completed a year internship thereafter. In 2011, I moved back to Toledo and started my private practice, Toledo Naturopathic. I have been in practice ever since; helping patients to achieve better health while practicing a more holistic model of medicine" - as Maleigha shares her story.



"My experience as a Korean American Adoptee is perhaps through a different lens than others; what is seen on the outside might lead to assumptions about my background. It's surprising to some that I don't have an accent, I don't speak Korean, that my parents are not Korean. My experience is different, but it's taken me time to learn that this doesn't make me less Korean or less American, it makes me perfectly me"

Culture Heritage is important because having these discussions also helps us to find commonalities with others; and when we can imagine being in (or have been in) someone else's shoes it allows us to extend compassion for others, too. "Also, I think women are quick to celebrate others, to rally behind them, but it's important to take a pause and celebrate your accomplishments, too. We're living in a time where women can and are breaking the glass ceiling; shatter that thing!"

I credit much of this to the people I'm surrounded by; my parents that always encouraged me, my husband who is my biggest fan, my close friends who "get" me. Currently, Dr. Maleigha Watts-Mortimore is a resident of Holland with her hubby, Kirk, and dog, Turk. They enjoy being outdoors, traveling, and both are foodies.

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Dr. Kasumi Yamazaki

"I came to the United States alone with a suitcase filled with dreams, excitement, and a little bit of rice my family harvested in our rice fields back home. I'm sure I am not the only person who remembers the exact date of our first immigration because we remember it with all kinds of emotions; sometimes we have a sense of relief trying to escape from the harm and violence we experience at home, or sometimes we have feelings of trauma from being separated from parents or losing loved ones trying to cross borders", as Kasumi shares during our Women's Empowerment Luncheon #BreakTheGlass, a storytelling campaign that focuses on inspiring immigrant women to break the glass ceiling.



Dr. Kasumi Yamazaki is an Associate Professor of Japanese in the Department of World Languages & Cultures, where she teaches advanced level courses of Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) and culture. Dr. Yamazaki's research focuses on a wide range of contemporary Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) pedagogy and integration, namely, the use of 3D simulation games and virtual realities (VRs), the development of intelligent CALL (ICALL) systems, and the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning curricula. She currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of Technology in Language Teaching & Learning by Castledown Publishers; Dr. Yamazaki's research also garnered attention through her series of publications at international and regional conferences.

Dr. Yamazaki enjoys traveling both domestically and internationally; she is also an avid brunch enthusiast and will always travel for good food and coffee.

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Dhawi Pienta

"Though I had lived in Toledo during my college years at UT, adjusting to the culture differences and settling into the new life here in Toledo as a permanent immigrant from Indonesia was completely something new to me.



"The more I practiced and taught yoga, the more I couldn't resist the urge to walk in this path even deeper and answer the calls to follow my passion and keep pursuing my purpose in life. Everyday, when I'm on my mat, I could not help to witness the changes that this yoga practice has brought me a glimpse of happiness, acceptance, and gratitude of being who I truly am, and it only continues to grow from the inside. The practice has helped me navigate the life that I am no longer defined by the person I was almost 20 years ago. It is a long journey within where I finally feel like I belong, a home no matter where I am. As I have gained self-awareness and trust that my heart will always lead me to the right direction, my purpose in life will only continue to grow to be of service to others through this yoga practice." - Dhawi

Dhawi was born in Jakarta, Indonesia. She graduated from the University of Toledo in 1998 with a BA degree in Communication. She permanently moved back to Toledo in 2000. Beside practicing and teaching Ashtanga Yoga, she is currently studying Ayurveda and recently completed her Plant-Based Nutrition Certificate from T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies. Since the pandemic, Dhawi is still leading the Ashtanga Yoga Toledo and teaching her classes in a private setting.

Headshots photos by Mary Wyar for Yogaja Yoga

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HeforShe - Dr. David Kim

"I am one of the millions that take every opportunity to continue to empower women". - Dr. David Kim, Physician & General Surgeon for Mercy Health.



Dr. Kim is a General Surgeon with the Bon Secour, Mercy Health system working primarily out of the Perrysburg area. He has been in Toledo for more than 8 years now and earned his doctorate in osteopathic medicine from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed a rotating internship and general surgery residency at Mercy Health – St. Vincent Medical Center in Toledo.



Dr. Kim is happy to be providing excellent General Surgery services to NW Ohio with a special interest in surgical care for breast issues such as infections, lumps, and cancer. Whether it is medically, personally, or professionally, Dr. Kim is always looking forward to helping the women of Toledo in whatever way he can!

"In this country, we are seeing a growing trend of openly embracing cultures from all over the world in our country and this continues to gain momentum day by day. Regardless of the role that you play in our society, there is no more important time than now to embrace your cultural roots and proudly represent who you are. Taking ownership of your unique upbringing is essential in order to enrich the growth of a continually diversifying country. In this regard, if I could offer any advice to the younger generations, it would be this: you should take however much energy you spend on working towards a better future and spend the same amount of energy looking back on your cultural past. Take pride in your individuality and honor those that may have worked to provide the opportunities you have today. Understanding the importance of your cultural heritage increases its value when it is shared and paves the path of success for future generations that follow" - Dr. David Kim

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Jennifer Bak

Jennifer Bak is a portrait and creative art photographer, a bellydance teacher and performer with the Aegela Centers for Middle Eastern Dance, a fire eater and dancer, the featured bellydancer for world music band Calico Cabaret, and the Office Administrator at Hull & Associates, LLC.



In her free time, she enjoys fixing up her historical home in the Old West End, practicing difficult recipes, doing yoga, reading, and geeking out on various nerdy fandoms.

Asian & Pacific Islander heritage month is more than just learning about a limited list of historical figures and events. For some of us, it's about connecting with our families and our personal history. And for people who aren't Asian or Pacific Islander, it's an opportunity to open their world view to cultures and practices that they're not familiar with.

Advice to young women: "Don't let other people determine who you are. People often try to slot everyone into limited, pre-set categories based on what they're familiar with, but you are so much more than that. Just keep going and you be the one to define yourself. If there's not a category for you, make one. It took me a long time to carve out my place as a half-Korean, bisexual, geeky, goth/punk-hearted, vintage-loving, belly dancing, brainy, sparkly, flamboyant, outspoken creative. Whatever you are -- Be. All. Of. It. It's awesome. Don't let others try to cut bits off because you don't fit into the box they've created for you". -Jennifer

Find your power in being true to yourself. Own all the quirks and idiosyncrasies that make you the wonderful unicorn of a human you are. One of my favorite phrases is "It's not a flaw, it's a feature." I also highly recommend finding an activity you love and diving into it. We live such sedentary lives, which is terrible for us physically and mentally. Whether you choose bellydance, spin, lifting weights, circus arts, yoga, walking, whatever -- do something physical if you can. It's wonderful for the body, mind, and spirit.

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Dr. Junqi "Sophie" Tang

Meet the University of Toledo Violin professor, Dr. Junqi "Sophie" Tang. Originally from China, serving as the Artistic director of the HanTong International Music Festival and music director of the Cincinnati Music and Arts Society, Tang has performed with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony and the Toledo Symphony. She has been a First Prize winner in the 2019 Hong Kong International Music Festival Competition, and received an excellent performance award at the 2016 Schoenfeld International String Competition. She has conducted virtual string music festivals and masterclass series internationally and has taught throughout the United States and China.



The University of Toledo Violin Professor, Junqi Tang was invited to the Montecito International Music Festival this summer as a violin faculty. This February, she joined a distinguished panel of judges for the 11th Hong Kong International Violin Competition and the Eighth Hong Kong International Chamber Music Competition.

Her first batch of UToledo graduate students excelled. Zeyu Chen has been accepted by top-10 music institutions (Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and Arizona State University) for the Doctoral Degree and received a TA position from ASU. Her UToledo students won top three prizes in Hong Kong International Music Festival Competition, received scholarship and fellowship from top music festival including Texas Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Montecito Music Festival, HanTong International Music Festival and Sounding Point Academy.

According to Sophie, "through my participation in the competitions, I am representing the United States, and the University of Toledo in particular, and am thrilled to be serving on the jury and helping to discover the next generation of talented artists from all over the world who perform at the highest level. It is my goal to build on the wonderful culture and tradition in the city of Toledo, and to inspire and enrich the lives of young people through knowledge and experience."

She has conducted virtual string music festivals and masterclass series internationally and has taught throughout the United States and China.

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Kaiko Zureich

Kaiko Zureich, President and Owner of Office Furniture Warehouse, located in Sylvania, OH, has actively supported local business, non-profits and charitable causes for many years. A farm girl from Hillsdale County, Michigan, she has lived in the Toledo area nearly all her adult life.



Kaiko received her Bachelor of Arts in Business from Siena Heights University with a minor in Theological Peace Studies (Social Justice). She served for several years on the Promedica Flower Hospital Foundation Board, the Flower Hospital Board, a Cabinet Member of the Hickman Cancer Center Campaign, and other annual fundraising events for charitable causes.

A few of her past activities have been on the board of Mom's House, and board President, on the board of the American Advertising Federation, and board President, a Lourdes Luminations committee member, advocate and Ambassador, a Lourdes Art Advisory Council member, and a Chicks for Charity member. Kaiko has been a UT (University of Toledo) Women and Philanthropy member for many years, and sat on the Grants Committee, which she is now Chair of. That group has granted almost \$600,000 to various applicants of programs and projects from inclusive playgrounds to biomedical research. Her most recent experience was to be on a 2 person community/business panel by invitation of the Sylvania Police Department to interview 21 applicants for 3-4 positions. The goal was to have non-biased input from 2 community business citizens with diverse backgrounds.

Being adopted, both her biological and adoptive Mother are both 100% Japanese, and she feels enriched to have experienced Japanese culture and history from her mother. She attributes her attitude of "I can" from mentors who believed in her, helped her believe in herself, and surrounding herself with folks who uplift each other. "10% is what happens to you and 90% how you react to it". Attitude from Charles Swindell.

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Dr. Ting Li

With an academic background in educational psychology and cross-cultural education, Dr. Li began to serve as a program coordinator for the American Language Institute, the Intensive English Program at the University of Toledo in 2014.



Her research interests focus on educational equality for marginalized social groups such as women and first-generation immigrants, validating living and learning experiences of international community members, and characteristics of worldwide educational exchanges.

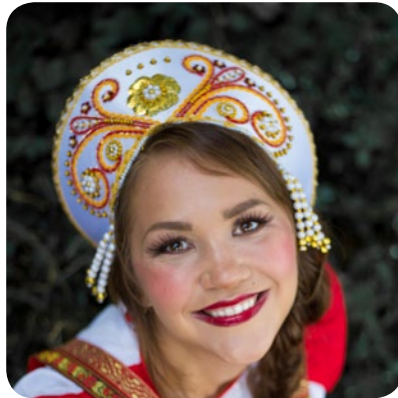
Dr. Li was born and raised in a beautiful coastal city in China. She came to the U.S. to pursue her advanced degree in 2009. She has earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership, a master's degree in Educational Psychology, and a master's degree in TESOL. Her unique experience as a woman with international background provides her insights and enthusiasm in actively working with marginalized local communities.

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Nailya Weber

"My name is Nailya (read Ny-la). I live in a beautiful neighborhood in Perrysburg, Ohio. I am an immigrant. I am mom of two amazing girls. I am a Tatar wife to my American husband. I love yoga. I love cooking/baking. I love throwing giant parties, because I love to see all different kind of people getting together and enjoying food I make and loose leaf tea that I brew! I love plants and gardening! I enjoy holistic life style. I am a super extrovert! I love this country because of its diversity! And I love capturing beautiful memories!



"I am Tatar. I came to this country from Kazan, Russia on May 23, 2011. I came for a summer job to Middle Bass Island, OH. My goal was to improve my English (my third language) and go back home to finish my last year of college. A month later I meet my husband, Chris, at a swimming pool. After 3 weeks, he told me that he was in love, and he would like to marry me. On September 2, 2011 we went to Toledo Court House and got married, without telling anyone. So I had to finish my last year of my Bachelor's degree distantly.

"We have two beautiful girls: Evah (almost 8) and Meera (almost 4). I choose to become a mom before building my career. But being a mom and taking pictures of my own kids helped me to choose my business, that I am slowly but surely building right now. Even before having kids, I loved taking pictures. I remember my excitement, when my oldest brother sent me a camera for my 7th birthday while he was serving in military. It was the gift that had all my attention. I lost my dad when I was 6 years old, al looking through all my childhood pictures, I can only find 3 pictures with my dad, only one of them is in color. Capturing pictures for me is a special gift, that I love sharing with others, creating everlasting memories!"

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Fei Yang Adams

Fei Yang Adams is Director of Corporate Development & Strategy at Owens Corning. A resident of Perrysburg, Ohio, she was born in China and has lived in Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh.



We ask Fei why do you think Heritage Month and celebrating women is important? "It helps to educate our community of women's contributions to our society and the important role women play outside of the traditional lens of daughter, wife, and mother." -Fei

With Owens Corning, Fei leads global M&A strategy formulation and transaction execution for all Business Units and regions of a \$7.2B global building materials enterprise. She is also a founding member of Owens Corning's Inclusion & Diversity Council. Before joining Owens Corning, Fei was the Director of Corporate Development at Alcoa Corporation and also worked as Corporate FP&A manager at Alcoa Inc. Fei holds a Bachelor's in International Politics and a Master's in Diplomacy from Peking University, as well as a Master of Business Administration from the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University.

Outside of the office, Fei serves as a board member for the Toledo Zoo Foundation. Fei and her husband Bill enjoy spending time with their two daughters Eleanor and Addison, cooking, traveling, making music, swimming, ice-skating, skiing, and learning foreign languages.

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Nina Corder

Originally from Malaysia, Toledo has been her home for more than half of her adult life. In her lifetime, Nina has worked and lived in five countries and traveled to more than 20 countries on four different continents around the world. As a global citizen, Nina easily adapts to her environment and elements to match her 'bubbly' energy. But something you might not know about Nina, in her early years, Nina struggled to call Toledo home. Because of the frustration, she dives deeper at serving and working to understand how to overcome the struggle and her sense of belonging. Because of courage and curiosity, Nina discovers more than she bargained for.



Coming from the academic world with various fellowships under her belt, Nina is an avid researcher and loves data, facts, figures, and numbers. She even has a t-shirt that says, "If I say "First of all".. run away because I have prepared charts, data, research and it will destroy you." That's Nina - "knows more than she says, and notices more than you realize" ... yes, inspired from another t-shirt. Nina is not afraid to challenge the status quo for transformational change and be bold when it comes to women's issues. Her favorite hashtag- #liftasyouclimb.

Nina is well recognized and accomplished at many levels- Global with the UN Women, National with the White House Council on Women and Girls under Obama Administration, and recently a Toledo 2021 Jefferson Award recipient. We asked Nina what her proudest accomplishment and future endeavor is- without hesitation, "My only proudest accomplishment, will always be the opportunity to be a mother to an extraordinarily strong Asian American daughter, Isabella Ashira Corder. Because of her I am who I am, yesterday, today, and tomorrow." with hopes that Nina's legacy as a catalyst for DEI and women's advocacy will continue with her daughter. Isabella is currently pursuing double major degrees in Anthropology and Psychology at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. #loveandhonor Isabella has received recognition on the Miami University President's List two years in the row for the Fall semester during her academic journey. "I am very proud to be her Mommy" - Nina.

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Uma Savanoor

"My name is Uma Savanoor. I am a doctor by profession, Medical Director in the field of my expertise which is Occupational Medicine. I am a proud Immigrant from India and have been in Toledo for 26 years now! I am passionate about change and inclusiveness. It is a work in progress for me. I enjoy outdoor activities such as biking, hiking, nature walks, etc. It is nirvana for me!



I am inspired by my daughter Shakti and many other strong women like her in my life.

I aspire to learn, work, give back to women's causes and racial equity. Every day is a day to celebrate women's achievement in many areas and to remind ourselves that ongoing dialogue and more extensive work needs to be done to overcome various barriers to women's progress. We must learn and understand the challenges to women, and it will help to be better prepared to address them. When there are setbacks know it is from a system that is set up against you, do not beat yourself up, and be forgiving to yourself. Do not feel guilty or shy to use opportunities or seek people's skills to help move forward. Remember you will pay this back to the person who helped you or someone else around you. We need each other. I think of a quote that is not mine that says "Strongback and Softfront" which means to me - be strong but don't forget it's okay to have a soft and caring heart. Always remember you are stronger than what people want you to believe!

I understand my privilege and whatever power I hold is to advocate for women. Even when I feel I may not be liked for what I say and do. This is a challenge and not easy by any means but consciously practicing and working on it, over time it gets a little bit easier. It is important, be a mentor/ leader and be a support for women around me, be it a family member, friend or at the workplace. Creating a strong and safe support system that we can count on is key. And most importantly for me ensure in the day-to-day interactions I am constantly aware and practicing promoting women's issues and working on my own conditioned biases."



ENGAGE EMPOWER
EDUCATE

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Attend

Create meaningful connections with women of diverse backgrounds and discover opportunities to grow. We've got so much to offer from educational initiatives, networking, and much more!

Volunteer

Raise awareness about the Women of Toledo and contribute to your community. We provide opportunities to develop lifelong friendships and peer-networking with a diverse group of women.

Support

Give a financial gift. Each time you make a sustained monthly gift of \$25 or more, you are supporting women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and helping to build a stronger community with HER in it.

Partner



Promote your company's commitment to compassion and generosity while working to push for equality and empowerment. Companies can reach over 1,200 people who are a part of our circle.

WWW.WOMENOFTOLEDO.ORG