

Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience – March 2017
Stories across Generations: Burmese Americans in King County

Biographical Information for select Community Advisory Committee Members

Simon Khin – President Northwest Communities of Burma (NWCB), Karen ethnic group, emigrated from Burma in 1977; has worked to assist the persecuted and voiceless – in Burmese camps at the Thai-Burma border and in the U.S., assisting refugees from Burma with language and job skills and organizing social and educational activities. Founded the “Coalition for Refugees from Burma” and the “Northwest Communities of Burma” to promote unity among the many ethnic and religious groups. He also works with refugee youth, and organized free summer camps in English, math, drama, P.E. and computers.

Stella Orechia – VP NWCB, Associate Professor, Health Promotion & Management, Bellevue College. Former Olympic athlete. Born in Burma. In 2013 she completed a 2,000 mile “Riding for Refugees” sabbatical to benefit local Burmese refugees. Volunteer health educator at the Mae Tao Health Clinic at the Thai-Burma border.

Su Myat Thu – Secretary NWCB, Sino-Burmese ethnic group; came to the U.S. from Yangon, Burma in 2009 as a student. After getting her B.A. in Psychology at Agnes Scott College, she worked as the coordinator of the Agnes Scott Center for Writing and Speaking. She is currently working on an MA-PhD in English language and composition at the University of Washington, Seattle and plans to teach writing at the college level after graduate school. She is an advocate of liberal arts education, language diversity, democratic language policy, second language writing, and working for immigrant students.

Gayhtoo Thaw - Director NWCB, Karen ethnic group; came to the United States in 2008, the oldest child of a widowed mother; Social Worker involved with Coalition for Refugees from Burma, Karenni Community of Washington, Karen American Communities Foundation, Riding for Burmese Refugees; worked while her siblings went to high school; and then worked to put herself through college.

James (Pyi Thain) Kyaw - Director NWCB, born in Myanmar, Yangon. After graduating from high school, he participated in the U.S. government’s student cultural exchange program to attend a year of high school in Springfield, Tennessee. Afterward, he continued his education at Arizona State University where he received a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. He has worked at Space Data Corporation in Arizona as a Mechanical Engineer, and Schlumberger Oilfield Services Company in North Dakota and Wyoming as a Field Engineer. Currently, he lives in Kirkland, WA and works as an Equipment Engineer at the Boeing.

Rozanna Fang – Director NWCB, has done research on pregnancy risk factors among Thai women, awarded 2015 WAFP (Washington Academy of Family Physicians) Diverse Constituencies Scholarship. Her interest in social change and health equity stem from experiences tutoring immigrant and refugee youth in Seattle and working abroad in Haiti and along the Thai-Burma border. Ms. Fang has organized with Seattle Solidarity Network against unfair landlords and raised money through Social Justice Fund to support local grassroots networks.

Clifford Chankim, Director NWCB, Chin ethnic group, refugee from Burma, currently working as Employment and Social Service Case manager with Refugee Women’s Alliance (ReWA) for over (7) years and serving refugee and immigrant population in South King County; President of Seattle Chin Youth

Organization; member of Seattle Chin Community; Seattle Lai Welfare Committee; Seattle Chin Baptist Church; and used to work as Interpreter at the United Nation High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Larry Dohrs – U.S. Campaign for Burma, visiting scholar in Southeast Asian Studies, consultant on Education and Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia.