

**Michi Nishiura  
and  
Walter Weglyn  
Endowed Chair for  
Multicultural Studies**



**California State  
Polytechnic University,  
Pomona**

## Michi Nishiura and Walter Weglyn Endowed Chair for Multicultural Studies



California State Polytechnic University Pomona is establishing an Endowed Chair for Multicultural Studies in honor of Michi Nishiura and Walter Weglyn. The purpose of the Endowed Chair is to bring prominent scholars to

the University to promote a deeper understanding of and better relations among ethnic groups in our society.

Born in California, Michi Nishiura Weglyn was incarcerated as a teenager during World War II with more than 112,000 people of Japanese ancestry. After attending Mount Holyoke College, she began her professional career as a theatrical costume designer and was the first Japanese American woman to achieve national prominence in this field. Later she wrote of her World War II experience in a seminal work entitled, Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps, the first major book on the subject written from the perspective of an internee.

Years of Infamy instantly received national acclaim, thus arousing the American conscience, and it was hailed by fellow ethnics as a major achievement in helping to redeem their honor and self-esteem. Her contribution to the rewriting of a history too long distorted gained praise

from the academic community as well. Historian Arthur Hansen credits the Weglyn work as "the first book to crack the governing interpretative perspective on the internment years and establish in the process, a supplanting one that the new wave of writers will be writing within." Historian William Peterson's endorsement proved prophetic: "Excellent if this book attains the success it deserves, perhaps one consequence will be that, at long last, a decent retribution will be made to the heirs of those made to suffer"

Michi Weglyn's revelatory documentation of facts, which clearly indicated that the incarceration was unjustified, sparked a groundswell of demands for redress. Individuals already calling for such a goal found in Years of Infamy a firm foundation by which the movement was energized. Leaders and numerous organizations, in addition, sprang up within the community, gaining in time the backing of thousands of supporters outside the community. Together their indefatigable efforts resulted in the eventual success of the redress movement in 1988.

Walter Weglyn came to the United States from Holland in 1947 after having survived the Holocaust, and in 1950 he married Michi Nishiura. Mr. Weglyn, a retired perfume chemist, has been a vital partner as a co-researcher and a source of unswerving encouragement, especially during periods of despair – when hopes for publication, for example, resulted in years of endless rejection. "Walter is my most exacting critic and mentor" says Ms. Weglyn. Together they are stalwart defenders of a wide variety of social causes, including those of the deprived and downtrodden.

## An Endowed Chair To Help Build Bridges of Understanding

We live in a time of vivid images. Throughout the nation and the world, and certainly within our own communities, we see the terrible consequences of hate and misunderstanding. The results which come from the inability of people to live in harmony with others of differing social, cultural, political, ethnic or religious persuasions are all too obvious. We see it in the war-torn areas of the Baltics, and in the streets of our own neighborhoods. We are witness to the clash of beliefs unchecked by the ability or willingness to compromise and appreciate diversity.

Through the Michi Nishiura and Walter Weglyn Endowed Chair for Multicultural Studies, bridges of understanding will be constructed through research and teaching. An appreciation for the varied and unique cultures of the world will develop through classroom and real world experiences. Education will form a tie that binds us together through a latticework of mutual respect based on knowledge instead of ignorance. The program will demonstrate that through the educational experience people can truly "get along."

The Endowed Chair is an opportunity for people who believe in diversity and multiculturalism to lend their support to a unique endeavor - a program of study in which students will learn the lessons and benefits of community. It is a broad-based effort that requires the involvement of the University, the community, business, government, and individual citizens. This partnership will help secure for future generations a place in which the study of multiculturalism is honored and respected. It will form a linkage with other areas of the academic experience to create a comprehensive program from which students and the public at large will benefit.

This united effort will demonstrate that together we can make a difference.

## Program Highlights

The Michi Nishiura and Walter Weglyn  
Endowed Chair for  
Multicultural Studies will:

- Enhance Cal Poly Pomona's efforts to promote multiculturalism;
- Fulfill Cal Poly Pomona's commitment to enrolling and educating a student population that reflects the rich diversity of the region it serves;
- Help students develop skills and abilities needed to make effective personal and public decisions about race, class, and gender issues;
- Serve as a focus point for Cal Poly Pomona's outreach efforts to the community;
- Work with the corporate and business community to develop programs that strengthen competitive and commercial goals while addressing the linkages between the various elements of our society.

### For more information, contact:

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
3801 West Temple Avenue  
Pomona, CA 91768  
(909) 869-2971

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