

# Current



## INTRODUCING MICHAEL LEE, CAMERON HOUSE'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Cameron House Board of Directors is excited to name Michael Lee as Cameron House's next Executive Director. Michael brings 18 years of chief executive experience building impactful nonprofit organizations; developing high-performing teams of staff, board, and volunteers; leading change; and facilitating pivotal transitions.



Incoming Executive Director Michael Lee

His leadership resulted in strategic private-public and marketing partnerships, philanthropic investment and government service contracts, and community engagement initiatives for social service, community, conservation, and educational organizations in Hawai'i, California, and Washington.

Most recently, he served as President and CEO at

Responsive Caregivers of Hawai'i. He led a four-year renewal process that bolstered the organization's financial position, invested in staff development to improve person-centered service design and implementation, and raised their profile as a respected leader among community service providers.

Michael formed a consulting business serving the governance, leadership transition, fundraising, and executive search needs for the Hawai'i Conservation Alliance and Foundation, Waikiki Community Center, and Hawai'i Nature Center. He was the first Asian executive director of each of Yosemite National Institutes' campuses in Olympic, Golden Gate, and Yosemite National Parks.

The son of Chinatown natives Michael has deep roots in the community. "As a man of faith, a native San Franciscan and the eldest grandson of immigrant Chinatown merchants whose family histories are rooted in Chinatown, I'm thrilled for the opportunity of serving the mission and aspirations of Cameron House," Michael said during his interview.

## CELEBRATING THE WOMEN WHO FOUGHT SEX SLAVERY

By Julia Flynn Siler

I found the idea for my new book, *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown*, six years ago when I read a first-person account written by Donaldina (Dolly) Cameron, who ran 920 Sacramento Street as a rescue home for survivors of sex trafficking from the late 1890s to the 1930s.



Julia Flynn Siler with her latest book, *White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown*.

Dolly described her experience of leading a group of around sixty girls and young women across the burning city in the hours and day after the 1906

*Daughters, continued on page 2*



## Yo's Two CENTS

By Outgoing Interim Executive Director  
Yulanda Kwong

**H**istory. His story. Her story. Their story. Our story. Whosever story is being told, our history shapes our community today. On the opening night of the 37th CAAMFEST, a new documentary called Chinatown Rising was premiered at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco. It was a film directed by Rev. Harry Chuck and Josh Chuck, a father and son team. It is a film that captures footage and photographs of the life of Chinese Americans in San Francisco Chinatown and the activism that took place in the 1960s–1980s. It also shared with us the struggles, accomplishments, and milestones of the community at that time.

As I was waiting in line to get into the theatre, I saw so many people who are affiliated with Cameron House attend this event. I almost knew every eighth person in line. At that time, I really felt a sense of community, closeness, and connection. I was also very proud to be a part of this historical moment.

Some people who attended and supported this film lived through the times that were captured in the film. They were part of the struggles and the movement of change. Sadly, many decades later, we continue to struggle with inadequate housing, racism, gentrification, and violence.

History continues to shape our communities today.

At the question and answer session after the film, Chinatown Rising director and former Cameron House executive director Rev. Harry Chuck said, “With history, we are able to learn about ourselves.” I would agree. History shaped how we are today, and we should learn from the past and our own history so that we can move forward into the future. That evening, history brought the community together.

Don't forget. We are creating history today. May we learn and grow together as individuals and as a community.

---

*Daughters, from page 1*

earthquake and fires. Her account, which she wrote as a report to her church supporters, was utterly harrowing. I could smell the smoke in the air from Dolly's vivid descriptions and taste the fear and chaos of the city. That's something I'm always searching for as a historian – strong, distinct voices and primary materials.

But it was the wider story of 920 Sacramento Street, where thousands of girls and women found their freedom, that truly captured my imagination. I saw it as a story of female empowerment: of women

helping other women. While Dolly's story had been told by biographers over the years, I



Photos and documents from the Tye Leung Schulze family collection at the UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library.

focused on the residents' stories, including the story of Tien Fuh Wu, Dolly's longtime colleague in the home and her closest friend.

Dolly and Tien's friendship is the heart of the story. And Tien, who was sold into slavery when she was a child by her father to pay his gambling debts, left a long record of her life behind in church records and other places, including her experience playing in the basement of 920 with other girls.

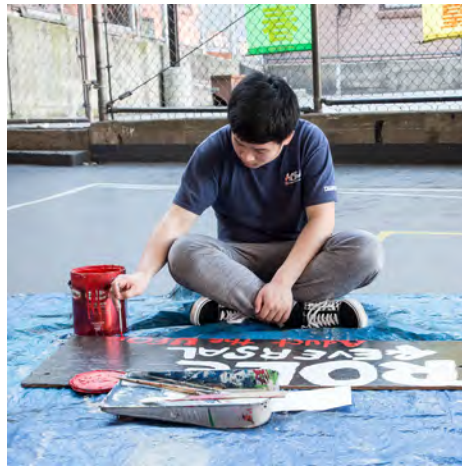
To explore Cameron House's private records, which date back to the 1870s, I worked closely with former Cameron House executive director Doreen Der-

*Continued on page 6*



# 71ST ANNUAL CAMERON CARNIVAL: OUT OF THIS WORLD

A big thank you to everyone who showed up to made this year's Cameron Carnival special! Thank you to our fantastic youth, volunteers, sponsors, and staff who made this event happen! And if we missed you, we hope to see you next year (on the first Saturday in May)!



Top row: Did you know that Cameron Carnival requires peak physical condition and flawless form? Here are a few examples. A carnival attendee demonstrates the proper wind-up for throwing bean bags at the dunko tank (left), while a girl at the gold fish stand exhibits the proper release and follow-through when throwing ping pong balls (right). Joshua Hee expertly executes a dunko tank technique known as the “falling mantis” (middle).

Center row: This year's Carnival included plenty of opportunities for youth to unlock their inner artist, whether at the jewelry-making station in the parlor (left), or during setup in the main yard (middle). For those less interested in crafts, some opted to practice their driving skills on the remote-control rovers made of Lego bricks (right).

Bottom row: Fashion at Carnival never goes out of style! What's the perfect pairing for a pink balloon animal (left)? A unicorn headband of course! If nothing else, always be sure to at least wear a smile at Carnival! (middle). This year's must-have accessory was the rocket jetpack (right) that could only be earned by winning at all the game booths!

# FILM HIGHLIGHTS CHINATOWN'S CIVIL RIGHTS LEGACY

An interview with Rev. Harry Chuck and Josh Chuck on the making of *Chinatown Rising*

Look inside Rev. Harry Chuck's garage and you'll find a treasure trove of 16mm film reels documenting life in Chinatown during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights movement. From the fight to save the International Hotel to the Third World Liberation Front strikes at San Francisco State University, Rev. Chuck captured the action on his handheld camera. From this source material came the recent documentary film *Chinatown Rising*, a collaboration between Rev. Chuck and his son Josh Chuck. The movie premiered to a sold-out audience at the Castro Theatre on May 9, and subsequent showings have had no trouble filling every seat. We had the privilege of catching up with Harry and Josh in the afterglow of their opening night. The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

---

**“We would keep seeing parallels between the source materials and current events in San Francisco.”**

---

**CH: What conditions made this project possible?**

HC: The material was there for over 40 years in a storage chest and cardboard boxes. Finding myself at a certain age and not wanting to burden anyone, I had to think about paring things down. I wanted to toss them and get my affairs in order, but Josh felt that would be a huge loss, and so began the process of

digitizing the film.

JC: Once we got going, dad saw it as a way to serve the community, and I eventually decided to take a leap of faith and go full-time on the project. We were fortunate that many talented people with technical expertise joined early on. While we were working, we would keep seeing parallels between the source material and current events in San Francisco.

HC: Activists from that time are concerned that their fights will be forgotten or overlooked by the present generation. This is our call to action for a younger generation and a preservation of that legacy. I enjoyed reconnecting with people from that period, hearing their stories, and reliving those moments. Josh and I got the feedback after the screening that people were moved because they had forgotten these things that happened and how important it was to them.

**CH: What struck you as you went through the photographs and film reels?**

JC: I was struck by how much material he recorded, so many photos, so much film. And thinking about the amount of labor it would take to create all that stuff. He did all that, went out there, and captured those images. I can imagine how busy he was on top of that. It's amazing how much he documented.

HC: Living at Cameron House

meant I could be at the right place at the right time, since Chinatown is so small. You can always hear if something exciting is happening in the street: sometimes I heard gunshots, or people protesting, and I would feel a rush. I knew I had to capture and preserve those moments. So instinctively I would grab my camera and record. Had I tried to make this film 40 years ago, we would have lost so much material; it would have been literally swept away on the cutting room floor. I am so glad that we have been able to digitize and preserve all of it.

---

**“We would have lost so much material; it would have been literally swept away on the cutting room floor.”**

---

**CH: Was it challenging to get interviewees to talk about tough topics?**

HC: After all these years, there's still fear. You had these clans and family associations, tongs, and black societies, all in twenty-four square blocks. If you live in Chinatown, you're very careful about who you talk to and what you say. It's a carry-over from village life in China. One person backed out of their interview at the last moment because they were afraid of repercussions.





Father-son filmmaking duo Harry (left) and Josh (right) Chuck in Chinatown.

JC: It's easy for us as outsiders to put labels on people and put them in a box: gangs, Six Companies, SFSU protestors, and so forth. We wanted to get away from those labels and let our interviewees show the complexity and human element of their situation. So it's important for people to tell their own story. We always reminded ourselves how easy it is for an outsider to tell our story for us.

---

**“If you connect the dots in history, eventually it becomes autobiographical.”**

---

HC: In the course of our research, we read articles and books written by outsiders looking in, which ended up being unusable, overly sensational, and lacking credibility. People in my generation have struggled with our portrayal in the media. Imagine Charlie Chan movies. It makes a big difference to us who

tells the story.

**CH: How has this project changed how you see Chinatown's past, present, or future?**

HC: If you connect the dots in history, eventually it becomes autobiographical. The story out there is also a part of you. Each day we make history for someone else. When I was 16 or 17 I was working as a janitor here at Cameron House. One day I was on the social services floor. The women who worked here were a carry-over from Ms. Cameron's days. One of the women saw me and said you are Jeun Ho's grandson. I didn't know who Jeun Ho was. The literal translation is “to be converted, changed, or transformed.” The ladies who rescued my grandmother in the late 1890s gave her that name. I didn't know that. I went home and asked my mother about that and she told me the story of our family history. There are some things you can't explain, but they

become increasingly significant as you grow older, see more, and develop some perspective of history.

JC: Because of this project, I feel more proud to be from this community, and at the same time a responsibility to give back. Because of that activist generation, I grew up feeling like I had every opportunity. People in that generation, they did it for people like me. They made sacrifices for the good of the larger community. We saw how people had different passions: education, youth on the street, housing. They pursued it with this laser focus, and when you get a lot of people with that focus you get those results. It makes me feel inspired to find my passion to do what I can to help our community. Right now I'm thinking that telling these stories to a wider, younger audience is my way of contributing.

HC: We're hearing more about Chinatowns across the United States and Canada that are diminishing. The history of being underserved and neglected is disappearing. Each day we lose more people, and each day we lose more stories that won't get told. Something has to be done before too much time passes. We have the technology to capture these stories. Older folks are opening up and the young folks are becoming more inquisitive. We know what we need to do.

JC: It goes on. The work has not stopped.

*For more information about future screenings of Chinatown Rising near you, visit [www.chinatownrising.com](http://www.chinatownrising.com).*

# SOCIAL SERVICES MINISTRY HOLDS ANNUAL JUNE OUTING

## Immigrant families visit bucolic Filoli Gardens

As we transition from spring into summer, the Bay Area is blooming with colors! With the rainfall and a rush of cool weather back in mid-May, many roses are eager to show off their layers and pigments. They are not shy at all!

Excited to admire nature's beauty, the Social Services Ministry brought our Women's Support Group and Cancer Support Group to visit Filoli, located at Woodside, California. Filoli is a stunning estate that's dreamlike. The history behind Filoli is also inspiring and meaningful to our clients.

Filoli was built between 1917 and 1929 by the Bourns, and was purchased in 1937 by Mr. and Mrs. William P. Roth for private use. In 1975, the Roths named the property "Filoli" and donated it to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, for future generations to enjoy

and find inspiration in. "Filoli," a name that combines the first two letters of fight, love, and live, represents the former owners' belief in nature's power and their philosophy of life. It encourages future generations to fight, love, and live! This is the perfect message for our cancer and domestic violence survivors.

The entire property is now open to the public. The grounds consist of two parts: the family house, which served as the main living space, and the garden, where all recreational activities took place. Many antiques and the original furniture are still preserved in good condition. Acres of the garden are covered with fruit trees and bushes. A variety of flowers, including roses, daffodils, tulips, and wisteria bloom in different seasons.

The clients enjoyed the scenic garden and were amazed by the

layout and decorations of the house. They constantly stopped to take pictures, capturing the home's stylish decor. They took their time walking and relaxing in the garden as well. Surrounded by the warmth of the sun and a cool breeze, the clients chit-chatted with friends and simply cherished the precious time together. They focused on "here and now," without worrying about the physical pain of cancer treatments and family violence. In that moment, there was peace and joy.

Every year, the June Outing is a special retreat for our Women's Support Group and Cancer Support Group. It's such an essential trip that gathers everyone together! We look forward to next year and sing "O to be in nature, the pigments and livelihood; O to share the most jubilant time ever!"

---

Daughters, from page 2

McLeod. Over the years, we met many times for tea and Chinese food. I especially enjoyed going to the yum cha lunches hosted by the Cameron House Women's Guild.

Doreen brought a deep knowledge of Cameron House's history to her reading of many drafts of the manuscript. But I also discovered a few things she hadn't known at the National Archives, the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, the library at

the Yale Divinity School, and the State of California Archives in Sacramento.

And we both had a happy surprise when Dolly's great grand-niece, Ann Cameron, shared a boxload of family material with me, including nineteenth century photos, letters, and Cameron's Bibles, in which she tucked treasures between its pages. Cameron's family donated those materials to the Bancroft library.

My hope is that *The White Devil's Daughters*, will resonate with

readers today. What a small group of women did at 920 Sacramento Street more than a century ago was an example of women standing together in radical empathy. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to tell this story of female empowerment and the fight for justice.

*The White Devil's Daughters* is available in stores now. Cameron House and the Chinese Historical Society of America will co-host an event on Saturday, September 21st, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at Cameron House. For more information about the book and the events being planned for it, please visit [www.juliaflynnstiler.com](http://www.juliaflynnstiler.com)



# INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL EXCHANGE EXPANDS HORIZONS

## San Francisco teens shoot hoops and learn local culture in Germany

In June, San Francisco Neighborhood Centers Together sent a group of basketball players to Heidelberg, Germany for a 10-day cultural exchange. The six girls who made the trip came from Donaldina Cameron House and Booker T. Washington Community Service Center.

During the trip, players stayed with host families in Heidelberg and built connection with one another during activities like basketball and sightseeing. The participants even made a visit to France on a road trip with their host families during their day off. This trip to Germany is the fourth of its kind since Karl Kaussen founded the program in 2010 with the goal of promoting cultural exchange between young people in Heidelberg and San Francisco through basketball. The exchange alternates each year, and in 2020 the youth from Germany will visit San Francisco to reconnect with their American counterparts through basketball and other activities.



The group visits the Friedrichsbau, built 1601-1607 and part of the iconic Heidelberg Castle.



A court-side group photo of the trip participants from Booker T. Washington Community Service Center, Cameron House, and a local Heidelberg team.

The primary component of the trip was basketball. Despite having cultural and linguistic barriers, all the participants shared a common passion for the sport and could communicate seamlessly during practices, games, and an informal tournament at the end of the trip. In addition to basketball, the program included sightseeing in one of the oldest and most well-preserved cities in Germany. Heidelberg is home to Germany's oldest university and much of the city's historic buildings were left untouched during World War II.

This year's exchange also included activities such as bouldering, hiking at a "felseneer," literally a "sea of rocks," and a visit with the deputy mayor of Heidelberg. "One of my highlights was bouldering," said Samantha Hum (RISE Commission, 2019), "I know you can do it in America, but I think it was fun being in the company of the girls and doing something we don't normally do. I had a lot of fun experiencing something new with new people."

In our increasingly global world, learning to understand other cultures and build personal relationships across personal differences is more important than ever. Moreover, the trip was an opportunity for personal growth.



Felsenmeer rock formation in the Odenwald mountain range.

"It opened our eyes a bit," said Samantha, "Especially living in San Francisco and the Bay Area, we live in kind of a bubble. Traveling overseas, or traveling anywhere, especially when there's a different language or a different culture, really humbles you and shows you that there are other people in the world. They might not share the same values or culture, but they have the same interests as us and we're still able to make relationships with them if we keep an open mind."



**DONALDINA CAMERON HOUSE**  
920 Sacramento Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
[www.cameronhouse.org](http://www.cameronhouse.org)  
415-781-0401

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SEATTLE WA  
PERMIT #699

# upcoming events

Date	Time	Event
July 14	2:00pm-5:00pm	<b>Alumni Reunion: We're the Kids From Cameron House!</b> - Calling all alumni! Join us for camp-themed fun, including marshmallow roasting and songs around the campfire! Info and registration at <a href="http://www.cameronhouse.org/reunion">www.cameronhouse.org/reunion</a> .
Aug. 4	10:45am-12:00pm	<b>End of Summer Service Worship at Presbyterian Church in Chinatown</b> - Please join us in recognizing our amazing summer volunteers!
Aug. 11 & 16	12:00pm & 2:00pm	<b>Westminster Woods Drop Off &amp; Pick Up</b>
Aug. 28-29		<b>Big Give</b> - Help us sustain the future of Cameron House during our biggest fundraiser of the year!
Sept. 21	1:00pm	<b>White Devil's Daughters</b> - Meet author Julia Flynn Siler, author of the new book, <i>White Devil's Daughters</i> .
Oct. 6	1:00pm	<b>Three Coins Book Event</b> - Meet Dr. Russell Low, author of the new book, <i>Three Coins</i> .
Oct. 19	10:00am-1:00pm	<b>Planning for the Future Workshop</b> - Are you prepared for the unexpected? Enjoy a free lunch and prepare a binder of key information in the event of an emergency.