

# Alameda Native History Project

2201 Shoreline Drive #6334

Alameda, California 94501

(510) 747-8423

May 18, 2022

## OFFICIAL COPY

Reverend Michael Yoshii

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Alameda, California \*\*\*\*\*

Dear Reverend Yoshii,

Hello. My name is Gabriel Duncan. I am a researcher in the city of Alameda. And, my primary focus is on the Native American History of Alameda. However, it was impossible for me to research this topic and not notice the lack of representation of any non-white historical Alamedans at the Alameda Museum.

This bothers me, because my interest in history is not bound to my own ethnic group; and I believe that history's lessons are infinitely more important, and more valuable than hiding the misdeeds of a city. And that, the truth of what happened to us, Alameda's nonwhite citizens, is better aired out, discussed, and reconciled. I think that hiding these chapters of our history only creates more animus, and sets us up for future conflicts we don't even know why we fight.

Recently, I noticed an announcement by the Alameda Museum that you would be lecturing on May 23, 2022, as part of the Alameda Museum's Asian-American Pacific Islander History Month lecture series. So, I decided to write this letter to you, out of the deepest respect for your time, and privacy.

The reason I am writing to you, Reverend, is because I believe that your experience as a “man of the cloth” can help me understand this issue. That your wisdom, and experience, can help inform the tone and timbre of a request that the Alameda Museum curate *all* Alamedans' history.

I would greatly appreciate, and value, any thoughts you have on this subject. Because I am so intensely curious about the history of Alameda, and wish it was more reflective of the lived experiences of all Alamedans.

I have prepared some admittedly long “essay questions” about this subject. Please do not feel obligated to answer all, or even any, of them. Just know that any response to this letter would make me happy.

1. How does it make you feel that Alameda Museum does not have any permanent exhibits about the Japanese-American experience in Alameda?
2. Does it bother you that the businesses, homes, wealth, and anything valuable (like family photos, heirlooms, and other precious things), that you, your family, and your compatriots had to abandon, or have taken away, aren't even mentioned at all in Alameda's official history?
3. How do you feel about the parallels between the dispossession of Japanese-American and African-American wealth and property? Did you know that the Redlining of the San Francisco Bay Area also included language identifying an “Asian threat”, and that AAPI people were also the victims of exclusionary housing policies?
4. How did Japanese-Americans, and Japanese People, in general, view the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882? How did it affect your interpretation of America? Was it a surprise, what the American government did, only 60 years later?
5. How do you interpret the lessons of your Prophets, Apostles, and the Bible, in regard to the process of “truth and reconciliation”? Are there any stories in the Bible about situations like this? Where the real history of something that happened was just hidden, omitted, and essentially banned from being presented or spoken of?
6. In the quest to forgive those who have wronged or harmed us, what advice can you give about forgiving?

And, lastly:

7. If the Alameda Museum were to create a permanent exhibit featuring Japanese-American History and Experiences in Alameda, what would you like to see reflected about your own history, heritage, culture, and contributions to the City of Alameda?

Thank you, Reverend, for taking the time to read this letter; I hope it finds you and your loved ones healthy, and prosperous.

Peace be with you, Reverend.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
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Gabriel Duncan  
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## OFFICIAL COPY

Serena Chen

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Alameda, California \*\*\*\*\*

Dear Serena Chen,

Hello. My name is Gabriel Duncan. I am a researcher in the City of Alameda. And, my primary focus is on the Native American History of Alameda. However, it was impossible for me to research this topic and not notice the lack of representation of any non-white historical Alamedans at the Alameda Museum.

This bothers me, because my interest in history is not bound to my own ethnic group; and I believe that history's lessons are infinitely more important, and more valuable than hiding the misdeeds of a city. And that, the truth of what happened to us, Alameda's nonwhite citizens, is better aired out, discussed, and reconciled. I think that hiding these chapters of our history only creates more animus, and sets us up for future conflicts we don't even know why we fight.

During my research, I found several pictures, stories, and biographies about Chinese-Americans, and Chinese People, in Alameda. Much of the material I found regarded Chinese farms, gardens, and the regulation of the sale of vegetables from these gardens.

I'd like to note that, as Native American girls, growing up in Lubbock, Texas, my mother and aunt would sell the vegetables they grew to the white families around their area, and that, the stories about their experiences are very similar to those I found in historic Alameda accounts of Chinese Vegetable Farmers, in Alameda. I am sharing this in the hopes that you will see the similarities between our stories, and recognize the importance of representing the history of all historical Alamedans, because we are more similar, and our stories and struggles are more connected, than the current narrative suggests.

[And Victorian Era Heritage and Culture does not accurately present the experiences of the nonwhite residents who lived—and still live—in the City of Alameda....

...In fact, most of the people Alameda Museum chooses to exalt have been racist, and/or responsible for creating, enforcing, or supporting the prejudiced, discriminatory policies and practices that so greatly affected us; and for which Alameda is known by anyone who isn't white.]

And also, I want to point out, the materials I found regarding the Chinese-American History of Alameda were really cool. And shared a lot of information that I wish was presented, and expounded on by our local historians. Did you know there a Chinese Vegetable Farm on top of the Alameda Shellmound? That Chinese vegetable farms were actually really large operations, which provided food for the *entire* island?

Personally, I would like to see a model of one of Alameda's Historic "Chinese Vegetable Farms" on permanent display at the Alameda Museum; and actual effort put into introducing us to the vegetables and food the pioneering, and first, Chinese-Americans grew and ate here, in Alameda. (Like the model of the "Victory Garden" at the Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park, in Richmond, California.)

I know that vegetables are just one part of a larger story about the Chinese-American experience in Alameda, and I want to know more. I think it would be fair if the Alameda Museum included permanent exhibits addressing the real history of all Alamedans, including Chinese-Americans, and Chinese Pioneers.

I would like to get your opinion on this topic. But I would like more for you to consider addressing the lack of representation in your lecture.

Because, once the echo of your voice fades, so will the representation of your heritage, history, and culture from the City of Alameda's Alameda Museum.

Thank you, Miss Chen, for taking the time to read this letter; I hope it finds you and your loved ones healthy, safe, and prosperous.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
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Gabriel Duncan  
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