

Ratu Sir Kamisese K.T. Mara

South Pacific Statesman (1920–2004)

Ratu Mara
Fiji
1980, PIDP

Born the son of a tribal chief, Ratu Sir Kamisese K.T. Mara is recognized as one of the great statesmen of the South Pacific.

Tall and aristocratic in bearing, Mara was tapped as a young man for a leadership role as a member of Fiji's ruling class. After graduating from Oxford University in 1949, he returned to enter politics and guide his island nation to independence.

In 1970 he was elected the nation's first prime minister, served more than 20 years in that position, and is remembered as the founding father of modern Fiji. During a tumultuous period, when Pacific Island nations had just attained independence from colonial powers, Mara steered his neighbors to form the South Pacific Forum. Upon his death in 2004, tributes cited this leadership as perhaps his greatest

“The East-West Center is a unique organization in which leaders can react directly with researchers. Nowhere else in the world will our leaders of government have a research facility to help them that way.”

achievement, noting the often contentious relationships of the emerging nations.

A visionary who sought to build cooperation among Pacific Island nations and between the Islands and the broader world, he was an active and strong supporter of the East-West Center. He was the longest tenured member of the Center's Board of Governors, serving from 1976 to 1986 and 1998 to 2001.

Mara founded the Center's Pacific Islands Development Program. “Thanks to his vision, intellectual stimulation and guidance,” affirms EWC President Charles E. Morrison, “the Pacific Islands Development Program is today a vital organization, providing practical analysis for action by Island leaders and linking the Pacific Island nations with the larger Asia Pacific region.”

From 1980 to 1987, Mara served as the first chair of the Conference of Leaders, a summit of 20 leaders of Pacific Island governments. In 2000–2001, he stepped in again as acting chair at a critical time when the conference was in need of leadership. Throughout his life, this South Pacific statesman was dedicated to advancing the interests of Fiji and the Pacific Islands on the world stage. ◆



Hawai'i Governor George Ariyoshi and Ratu Mara.



Ratu Mara giving remarks in 1980 during the founding meeting of the Pacific Islands Development Program. Seated behind him are Governor George R. Ariyoshi, EWC President Everett Kleinjans, and Ambassador Rozanne L. Ridgway of the U.S. Department of State.

Ricardo Trimillos

East-West Music Man

“It really was a network, the meeting of all these different people from either the Asia Pacific area, or people like myself, Americans who were going to get involved in the Asia Pacific area.”



Ricardo Trimillos
United States
1962, M.A.

Ricardo Trimillos is truly an international music man. He’s as comfortable performing solo on the

Japanese koto or with a gagaku ensemble as he is the rondalla and kulintang of the Philippines.

The turning point in his life was 1962, when he chose to study at the East-West Center rather than Juilliard, where he had intended to pursue a career as a concert pianist. At the Center, he discovered a world of music and encountered “all these different people from different places.” Born in California, Trimillos was raised in San Jose by parents who emigrated from the Philippines.

Through ethnomusicology Trimillos pursued an interest in the way the humanities cross over into performance. His studies took him to the University of Cologne in Germany and to UCLA, where he received his Ph.D. with a dissertation on Philippines music of the Muslim South. In 1968, he returned to the University of Hawai‘i, where, as an award-winning professor of Asian Studies and ethnomusicology, he’s expanded the breadth and depth of the discipline of music and music-making of the world’s people as expressive arts within a social environment.

That’s why governments — including the former Soviet Union, Malaysia, the Philippines and Hong Kong — have sought him out as a consultant on arts and public policy. He’s also served on the boards of the UNESCO International Council for Traditional Music, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife.



As a student at the East-West Center, Trimillos initiated an East-West Fest of music and dance performed by grantees from Asia, the Pacific Islands and the United States. Years later, in a more expansive format, he curated a Smithsonian Folklife Festival that brought folk artists from the Philippines to Washington, D.C.

Equally significant, Trimillos has mentored a remarkable number of today’s leaders in the field of ethnomusicology. Always, he encourages students to explore musical traditions beyond their own. In 2009, the University of Hawai‘i honored him for his achievement in guiding students to pursue a graduate degree not just as an end in itself, but as preparation for a meaningful life — a tribute to this East-West music man. ♦

Muse Opiang

'Saving the Wildlife' in Papua New Guinea

Muse Opiang
Papua New Guinea
2006, M.A.

Imagine looking for an animal that was so illusive, scientists had decided it was impossible to study. Then consider doing this in the most remote rainforests, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea — which means scaling terrain that's slippery from 275 inches of rain a year.

That's what Muse Opiang had been doing since 2001, when after months of searching he finally came upon a long-beaked echidna, a porcine-sized creature that looks a lot like a

spiny anteater. The long-beaked echidna lives only in New Guinea, belongs to a primitive group of mammals called monotremes, and is considered a living link between reptiles and birds to mammals. Over a five-year span, he was able to capture 22 echidna and attach transmitters so he could track them — his ultimate goal to manage and protect the species.

It was a dream come true for Opiang, a field research officer for the Research and Conservation Foundation after graduating from the University of PNG. Today he is a world authority on the

echidna, a biologist working on his doctorate through the University of Tasmania and co-founder of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Biological Research.

Through the U.S.-South Pacific Scholarship Program, administered by the East-West Center, Opiang completed an internship at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in 2007. He was called upon to give presentations on his research of one of the oldest, rarest, strangest-looking creatures on Earth that lives mostly underground to survive.

And the discoveries continue. In early 2009, Opiang and his mentor Kristofer Helgen, curator of mammals at the Smithsonian's Natural History museum, were trekking through a crater more than 8,800 feet above sea level in PNG rainforests as part of a BBC expedition. A local escort pointed out a large rodent on the forest floor — surprisingly tame and unafraid of the two scientists. The three-foot long Bosavi woolly rat is a newfound species. "As biologists, we spend plenty of cold, muddy nights in the rain," Opiang said at the time, "but rarely can we expect to be rewarded like this!"

His dreams go beyond his own research. "I would like to see more Papua New Guineans doing research in ecology and conservation," he says. "We can serve the very remote community through research where government services are lacking. Conservation is not only for 'saving the wildlife' but also 'serving the community.' " ♦

PHOTO: KRISTOFER HELGEN



Alapaki Luke

Awakening an Appreciation for the 'Āina



Alapaki Luke
United States
2001, M.A.

Three buses enter the grounds of Mauna'ala, the Royal Mausoleum in Nu'uaniu on the island of O'ahu, transporting students to day one of an unforgettable introduction to Hawaiian history and culture.

At the entrance to the mausoleum where Hawaiian royalty are buried, the students gather 'round Alapaki Luke as he performs an oli, or chant, in Hawaiian. Then they place fragrant maile lei on the tombs of the Kamehameha and Kalākaua royal families as he explains the significance of the lei as a tribute.

In this way, the EWC alumnus — whose two grandmothers were Native Hawaiian — begins a history lesson about Hawai'i from the time of the arrival of the first Hawaiians to the present, with visits to sites such as the lo'i (taro patches), where he grows taro in Kahana Valley, a Hawaiian language immersion school, Waimea Bay, the Arizona Memorial and the State Capitol.

From August 2002 to August 2009, Alapaki coordinated various activities for the two-week orientation of incoming EWC students, instilling an appreciation for Hawai'i's native people and the host culture. During their time with Alapaki, the students experience the true spirit of the 'āina (land) and how it influences cultural values.

At the University of Hawai'i School of Hawaiian Knowledge and Honolulu Community College, Alapaki teaches courses in Hawaiian Studies and Geography of Hawai'i and assists in the university's Ka Papa Lo'i o Kānewai, Cultural Garden Learning Center. He is a member of the

State of Hawai'i Taro Security and Purity Task Force, an entity established by law to gather information from taro communities in Hawai'i and address issues to perpetuate the industry and cultural lifestyle.

He still finds time to be one of the most active EWC alumni, leading orientation sessions and facilitating presentations and field trips for various seminars and programs. He has served on the EWCA scholarship committee and is the vice president for Participant Affairs on the EWCA International Board.

"It has really opened my eyes and helped me to have a broader perspective about the way I learn and experience things," he says of the Center, "understanding diversity in the world, having more respect for people and cultures."

He notes all this is compatible with one of the basic values in Hawaiian culture: "We don't stop learning. 'You observe and look to the source your whole life — *nānā i ke kumu.*'" ♦



Khunying Supatra Masdit

Championing Women's Issues in Thailand



Supatra Masdit
Thailand
1976, M.A.

In 1995, Supatra Masdit's prominence in Thai politics and international circles as a leader for women's rights led a foreign journalist to write: "Will she be Thailand's first female prime minister?" Masdit was about to convene the Non-Government Organizations Forum held in conjunction with the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Elected seven times to Thailand's Parliament between 1979 and 2000, Masdit is the first Thai woman parliamentarian appointed to a cabinet post. She then served twice as Minister to the Prime Minister's Office. During her first term in the cabinet, she successfully pushed for the establishment of Thailand's National Commission on Women's Affairs, which counseled the prime minister on policies concerning women's issues. And she currently is an adviser to the prime minister.

In a chapter she contributed to a book on *Women and Politics in Thailand*, Masdit wrote that she entered politics because "in my opinion it is the only path to alleviate social disparities effectively." Initially a volunteer in social development programs and university lecturer, she quickly determined, "I could only have minimal impact on social injustice no matter how hard I tried."

She was inspired by her father's transformation from journalist to successful political leader. Representing Nakhon Si Thammarat, a province in Southern Thailand, he was outspoken in his belief in an egalitarian society.

While at the East-West Center pursuing a master's degree, Masdit was shocked when a 1976 coup resulted in the deaths of student activists at Thammasat University. She returned to Thailand emboldened to enter the political arena and fight corruption, social disparity and unequal distribution of resources.

By 1989 her achievements in public and social service had earned her the title of "Khunying," bestowed by the King of Thailand. But Masdit hadn't completed her work. She served as a founder and president of the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, a Manila-based NGO organized to promote women in politics, and advance economic, social and political equity. She represented Thailand at numerous regional and international summits.

Recently she stepped back from politics to study Buddhism and pursue meditation. And she joined an EWC alumni effort to support educational opportunities for students who want to study in Hawai'i. Masdit is a

co-chair of the Royal Thai Scholarship Fund Committee, which in 2009 announced a \$188,000 endowment to assist Thai students at the East-West Center. ♦



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Carl Becker

Pioneering Work on Issues of Life and Death

Carl Becker
United States
1972, M.A.

At the start of each semester at Kyoto University, students in Carl Becker's classes are always startled when he first addresses them. Becker writes and speaks Japanese so fluently, that if you didn't see his face, you'd think you were listening to a senior Japanese scholar.

In a sense, you are. Becker is the first American to be fully tenured and promoted within the Japanese national university system. He's spent 30 of the last 37 years in Japan. In 1992 he was honored with a tenured professorship at Kyoto University, one of Japan's most prestigious institutions of higher learning. Becker's daily life — including lectures, research and publishing — is entirely in Japanese.

In English or Japanese, Becker engages the listener. His undergraduate ethics courses draw hundreds of students keenly interested in the spiritual and cultural issues that influence life-and-death decision-making in transplantation, euthanasia, suicide and elder care in 21st century Japan.

Even before his arrival at the Center in 1972, the Vietnam War had concerned Becker with issues of death and dying, while his Japanese and Indonesian roommates and EWC-trained professor, Tom Fennell at Principia College, had whetted his interest in Asia.

At the East-West Center, Becker focused his Ph.D. studies in Comparative Philosophy and Religion. Then assisted by a Prince Akihito Scholarship in Japan, he immersed himself in its language and culture. Soon he was doing pioneering work on end-of-life issues with which societies and governments wrestle today, especially in countries like Japan with rapidly aging populations.

"The Buddhist Four Noble Truths of Birth, Age, Sickness and Death inform my research in healing, ethics, value systems, logics and world views," Becker writes. "My work has moved from studies of religious experiences to concern with death and dying, and the kinds of education that can improve people's mental and spiritual health."

In Japan he's involved in projects addressing elder care, caregiver burnout, grief and bereavement. Asked to help design hospices, Becker conducted surveys to determine how the elderly in Japan want to spend the end of their lives. The surveys found that even modern Japanese hope to die on tatami mats, gazing out over the sky or seascape.

Over the decades Becker has delved into writings dating back to the 5th century in China and the 10th century in Japan, that record how these civilizations approached death and dying. Acquainting ourselves with cultures like China and Japan, which have flourished for thousands of years, he believes, will help us understand "what kind of world views can make life more peaceful and sustainable." ♦



"Studying at the Center — eating, sleeping, breathing Asia in my dorm rooms and classrooms — was a challenging and enlightening entry to this lifework."

Tin Myaing Thein

Helping Immigrants Get a Fresh Start

Tin Myaing Thein
Burma
1963, B.A.

At the Lemongrass Café bordering Honolulu’s Chinatown, you can enjoy Burmese chicken and pumpkin curry on Mondays, an Indonesian beef special on Thursdays, Singaporean food on Tuesdays and Laotian food on Wednesdays. Often you’ll find Tin Myaing Thein stirring the curry in the kitchen with recent immigrants who are learning to start their own food service business.

The café is a business incubator begun by the Pacific Gateway Center (PGC), a 35-year-old non-profit that offers health and social services to immigrants, refugees and low-income people. The energetic Dr. Myaing is executive director of PGC, formerly called the Immigrant Center, which has helped hundreds of Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees get a fresh start in Hawai’i.

In recent years, thousands of Micronesians have migrated to the state, primarily for health care, straining the community’s social safety net. At PGC, the Pacific Islanders are provided English classes, computer training and employment assistance as well as translation services.

Born and raised in Burma, Dr. Myaing knows what it’s like to be a newcomer in a foreign land. She came to the United States as an East-West Center grantee in 1963, and, like many EWC students at the time, it was her first venture outside her country. “The Center is the foundation upon which I built my life,” she told a Honolulu newspaper when she received an EWC Distinguished Alumni Award.

And what a trail she has blazed. Galvanized by an agenda-setting meeting in 1977 in Houston for the United Nations Women’s Conference, Dr. Myaing founded the National Network of Asia-Pacific Island Women. President Jimmy Carter appointed her the first Asian woman member of the President’s Advisory Committee for Women.

For her work on women’s issues, she was honored with the Human Civil Rights Award from the National Education Association in 1979. In the mid-’80s she directed the American Association of University Women Education Foundation, which had a \$27 million endowment.

Since her return to Hawai’i, her efforts have expanded to assist low-income and disadvantaged minorities realize their dreams in their new homeland. The Pacific Gateway Center offers services in more than 33 languages in areas of business and finance, housing, health, education and employment. Dr. Myaing radiates warmth and a can-do approach to challenges: Identify the need, then address it as “a solvable situation.” ♦

