

“Gamanfest” takes place May 11-12 at PCC Cascade

“Gamanfest: Reclaiming Identity through Art & Activism,” an event featuring two days of free activities, is scheduled to take place on the Cascade Campus of Portland Community College on May 11 and 12. Through music, spoken word, performances, and visual art, visitors and guests together are able to explore the intergenerational impact of racism, the power of heritage history, and how to ignite social change during Asian Heritage Month.

Gaman is the Japanese word for “perseverance” or “endurance.” Inspired by the spirit of *gaman* and Japanese Americans who were unjustly held in internment camps during World War II, “Gamanfest” is serving as a venue for the next generation of artists and activists within the Asian-American community who use heritage and culture as motivation for their creative work. They will lead discussions on community-fueled social change, the cultural impacts to their identities, and what it means to be “othered” in today’s society.

The festival kicks off Friday night with “Hidden Histories,” a series of film shorts about Japanese-American incarceration during World War II by Chicago’s Full Spectrum Features, as well as a reception, a talkback event, and an ’80s anime/J-pop-themed session by DJ Cay Horiuchi. The Saturday lineup begins at 10:00am and features Nobuko Miyamoto of Great Leap, Portland Taiko, The Slants pan-Asian rock band, an *obon* dance, a multimedia concert by No-No Boy, and more.

The festival includes discussions about the impact of racism and discrimination on one’s heritage, art as activism, and the legacy of persisting through adversity. Scheduled participants include Joe Kye, Anna Vo, Ryan Nakano, Simon Tam, Chisao Hata, and others. It also includes a resource lounge, youth activities, and food trucks (Saturday only) offering tasty local cuisine. All events are open to the public.

Several “Gamanfest” featured artists, activists, performances, and events include:

Nobuko Miyamoto

May 12, 10:15 to 10:45am

Nobuko Miyamoto was originally a dancer on Broadway and in films such as the *Flower Drum Song* and *West Side Story*. Her involvement in social-change movements in the ’60s galvanized her as an activist and inspired a re-conceptualization of her role as an artist, which led to her co-creating *A Grain of Sand* with Chris Iijima and Charlie Chin, as well as her founding of the Great Leap multicultural arts organization in 1978.

Community conversations

May 12, noon & 1:30pm

“Gamanfest” also features community conversations. Two starting at noon — “Activism for Social Change” and “Evolution of Culture and Identity” — include opening pieces by Anna Vo and Joe Kye.

Anna Vo has been an educator in inclusion, refugee support, trauma-informed care, and racial justice for eight years in more than 20 countries. A speaker, artist, and musician, Vo also serves as the editor of *People of Color*.

Born in Korea and raised in Seattle, violinist, looper, and vocalist Joe Kye has drawn rave reviews since launching his music career in 2013. Drawing upon his migrant upbringing, Kye blends indie-rock, jazz, classical, pop, and world folk to create a unique sound that weaves together diverse textures, catchy melodies, and vocals to create uplifting and empowering songs.

An additional conversation, “Intergenerational Trauma,” starts at 1:30pm and begins with a poetry reading by Ryan Nakano, a Japanese-American journalist, poet, and community organizer who was born in Sacramento, California.

The Slants

May 12, 1:15 to 2:00pm

The Slants, Portland’s Asian-American dance-rock band, features new-wave, synth-pop, and dance-oriented rock with an Asian flare. Founded in 2006, the group refers to its energetic and danceable music as “Chinatown Dance Rock.”

No-No Boy

May 12, 2:30 to 3:15pm

No-No Boy is performing a multimedia concert at the festival. The group — Julian Saporiti and Erin Aoyama — aims to shine a light on experiences that have remained largely hidden in the American consciousness. By illuminating an understudied past, they hope to generate conversations about the present with diverse audiences.

Portland Taiko

May 12, 3:15 to 3:30pm

Portland Taiko blends the tradition of Japanese taiko drumming with a sense of Asian-American identity, creativity, and empowerment. Founded in 1994, the ensemble started with one homemade taiko and practice drums made from car tires. With community support, the



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group built and purchased new drums, presented its first full-length concert in 1997, and was granted nonprofit status in 2000.

FandangObon

May 12, 3:30 to 4:00pm

The final event on Saturday is FandangObon, which is led by Nobuko Miyamoto of Great Leap. FandangObon is a combination of Fandango and obon. The piece featured at “Gamanfest” is called *Bambutsu no Tsunagari*.

“Gamanfest: Reclaiming Identity through Art & Activism” takes place on Friday, May 11 from 6:00pm to 9:00pm and Saturday, May 12 from 10:00am to 4:00pm on the Portland Community College Cascade Campus, located at 705 N. Killingsworth Street in Portland, in the Student Union and the Moriarty Arts and Humanities Building. To learn more, or to obtain a complete schedule of free activities, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.oregonnikkei.org>.



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