

# The Immigrant Story highlights “I Am an American” events and more during Asian Heritage Month

The Immigrant Story (TIS), in observance and celebration of Asian Heritage Month, is presenting events and highlighting its work during the month of May. Featured content includes an evening of music and live storytelling, an exhibit, storytelling podcasts, and more.

## “I Am an American Live”

“I Am an American Live” takes place Friday, May 6 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm at the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts. The in-person event features pan-Asian music that combines sounds from Asia with western harmonies performed by local musicians trained in a variety of traditions. The music, composed and arranged by Indian film music composer Balamurali Balu, aims to represent some of the many strands of Asian musical traditions and showcase what the Asian community brings to America.

Speakers with roots from across Asia follow the performance. The diverse storytellers will talk about their lived experiences exploring what it means to belong in America, even when being partially erased and, at times, excluded. The stories seek to inform attendees about important aspects of our past, both as a state and nation, and offer an opportunity for reflection on our collective history.

One of the featured storytellers is Liani Reeves, the first Asian-American president of the Oregon State Bar. “As international adoptees, our stories are often missing from the immigration narrative,” Reeves said. “I am honored to have the opportunity to tell my story as an involuntary immigrant who has faced complex issues of identity and belonging on the path to becoming an American.”

Admission to “I Am an American Live” is free. The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts is located at 12625 S.W. Crescent Street in Beaverton, Oregon. To reserve tickets, please visit <https://secure.thereser.org/67/112>.

## “I Am an American” exhibit

The “I Am an American: Stories of Exclusion and Belonging” exhibit, which focuses on six Asian-American women, is already open and available to view in northwest Portland. It focuses on different facets of the Asian-American experience, from the endurance of many layers



**DYNAMIC STORYTELLING.** *The Immigrant Story is presenting events and highlighting its work in observance of Asian Heritage Month. Pictured is Liani Reeves (left photo), the first Asian-American president of the Oregon State Bar, whose story is told as part of “I Am an American.” The photo to the right shows handwritten testimony by Reeves about the object next to it — little pink pajamas worn by Reeves when she was an orphan. (Photos courtesy of The Immigrant Story)*

of adversity to the strength revealed by a person who has decided precisely who to become.

To create the display, TIS teamed up with photographer Jim Lommasson and his “What We Carried” project in collaboration with conceptual artist Roberta Wong.

Wong, a veteran artist, grew up in Portland. Over several decades, she has created thought-provoking conceptual art focused on themes such as identity, ethnicity, ritual, and transformation.

Lommasson’s work focuses on objects immigrants were able to carry with them on their journeys. From the photographer’s images of the objects, participants provided handwritten testimonies — stories, memories, poems, drawings. The objects, portraits, and narratives connect viewers with their thoughts, joys, and fears and shine a light on different perspectives of the Asian experience.

The title of the exhibit was chosen to bring attention to the 80 years since the U.S. federal government confiscated



property and sent more than 100,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps in the early days of World War II. The same phrase, “I Am an American,” has become a rallying cry for all Asian Americans.

The “I Am an American” exhibit is on view Monday through Friday from 10:00am to 6:00pm at PLACE, located at 735 N.W. 18th Avenue in Portland. For more information, visit [www.theimmigrantstory.org/i-am-an-american-exhibition](http://www.theimmigrantstory.org/i-am-an-american-exhibition). To schedule a viewing appointment, e-mail [place@place.la](mailto:place@place.la).

## Website & podcast

The body of work created by TIS’s writers and content creators is available online. The organization has shared the stories of immigrants from six dozen countries, about 40 percent of whom were refugees, including 41 survivors who faced genocide, the atrocities of war, and the Holocaust. On October 29, 2021, the group published its 200th story.

Just a few of the many posts include “Exploring Heritage Through Music,” about Keiko Araki; “Em-  
*Continued on page 16*



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