

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Evanston Groups Launch Project to Collect and Share Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander (ASPA) History

The [Evanston History Center](#) is partnering with the [Kitchen Table Stories Project](#) to establish a local Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander (ASPA) archive and to shine a brighter light on ASPA history in Evanston. The project, called “Placemaking,” will be an ongoing endeavor.

Despite the longtime presence of ASPA individuals and families in Evanston, the city’s ASPA history has not been granted the attention or focus of our local histories and archives. Today, over 10% of Evanston’s population identifies as Asian, South Asian and/or Pacific Islander, but the ASPA community has not been represented in the mainstream historical record as widely as it deserves. This absence can reinforce the perpetual “foreigner” myth which has often and historically been associated with ASPA identities, and it also acts as a means by which a community’s history – its stories, contributions, biographies – are muted or even erased.

“This project is about increasing the visibility and representation of Asian, South Asian and Pacific Islanders in our community in an effort to shift society’s collective consciousness towards a more empathetic and antiracist view of people working towards equity and justice,” said Melissa Raman Molitor, founder of the Kitchen Table Stories Project. “Most importantly it is about creating a community where ASPA people see themselves reflected in history and stories, and experience Evanston as a place where they belong.”

In an effort to document, share, and preserve Evanston’s ASPA history, the Evanston History Center and the Kitchen Table Stories Project will engage in an ongoing project to research that history, to gather stories from the local ASPA community, and to preserve and share this history today and into the future. From artifacts, biographies, and stories to accounts of immigration and refugee journeys and personal testimonies, this collected history will be housed in the Evanston History Center and shared as part of the Kitchen Table Stories Project.

“We are excited to partner with the Kitchen Table Stories Project,” said Jenny Thompson, Director of Education at the Evanston History Center. “The history of Evanston’s ASPA communities is central to the city’s history; by uncovering and sharing these stories from our shared past, we hope to educate and inspire and to create a lasting archive for future generations.”

The goal of this project is not only to ensure that ASPA history in Evanston is uncovered, preserved, and shared, but also to create a living archive, with resources for families, students, and educators. This is particularly important in the wake of the 2021 passage of the TEAACH Act (Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History) in Illinois. The law requires that

Asian American history be taught in public schools starting in the 2022-2023 school year. Illinois is the first state in the nation to hold such a requirement.

Anyone wishing to learn more or to contribute to the archive, please contact Melissa Raman Molitor at: kitchentablestoriesproject@gmail.com or Jenny Thompson at: jthompson@evanstonhistorycenter.org

About the participants: Founded by artist and educator Melissa Raman Molitor, the Kitchen Table Stories Project is a multimedia healing justice project centering the voices and narratives of the local Asian, South Asian and Pacific Islander diaspora. The Evanston History Center is a non-profit museum and education center which features an extensive local history archive.

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Placemaking

A Project to Uncover, Collect,
and Share Asian, South Asian,
Pacific Islander (ASPA)
Histories in Evanston

Co-sponsored by
The Kitchen Table Stories Project
& The Evanston History Center

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