



ACAS

25  
CELEBRATING

COMMEMORATIVE  
PORTRAIT BOOK



## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

My name is Justin Anantawan (Instagram: [justin\\_anantawan](#)) and I created the portraits for this book. The idea for this project came to me during my social work internship at Asian Community AIDS Services in 2019. My supervisor at the time, Christian Hui, proposed that I create a portrait book to celebrate the 25th anniversary of ACAS and tell its history. Over the course of three months, I invited volunteers and staff, both past and present, to tell their stories about working at ACAS and have their portraits taken. I was touched by what folks had to say, telling me how ACAS had had a invaluable impact on their lives and on the community and given them a place to call home. As a person living with HIV myself, ACAS has helped me to overcome many personal challenges such as stigma and has helped me gain the confidence, skills and knowledge needed for me to be an HIV outreach worker and advocate. This portrait book is a way for me to show my gratitude. I hope that ACAS will have many more years to continue its amazing work in the community.

**JUSTIN  
ANANTAWAN**

Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) is a charitable, non-profit, community-based organization located in Toronto, Canada. We provide safer sex education and services to the East and Southeast Asian communities and support services to persons living with HIV/AIDS and members of the LGBTQ communities.

Visit us at [ACAS.ORG!](#)

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN ANATAWAN  
INSTAGRAM: [JUSTIN\\_ANATAWAN](#)  
BOOKLET DESIGN BY THE JAMES MICHAEL LEE  
INSTAGRAM: [SPECTACLEGUY](#)  
RELEASED FEBRUARY 2020



# ACAS



## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

ACAS is celebrating 25 years of service to our community  
—We made it!  
25 years of volunteers!  
25 years of coming together!  
25 years of supporting the Asian Community!  
25 years of supporting those affected by HIV/AIDS!  
25 years of caring and sharing!



### CONNECT WITH US!

[Acas.org](http://Acas.org)  
[Facebook.com/AsianCommunityAIDSServices/](https://Facebook.com/AsianCommunityAIDSServices/)  
[Twitter.com/ACASToronto](https://Twitter.com/ACASToronto)

After HIV and AIDS hit hard in the 80's and many beloved lives were lost, ACAS formed out of the need of having a voice in the movement that advocated for our specific needs. Toronto, Ontario and Canada, as a multicultural space, was and is made up of so many diverse peoples. It was vital that the East and South-east Asian communities, as well as other ethnic and language-specific communities were recognized and involved in directing how support, funds and care were offered during this crisis. One size fits all would not work, and as such ACAS has been providing cultural and language specific care and support to our communities affected by HIV and AIDS to ensure our community would be taken care of— here we are 25 years later! ACAS has grown to become a hub of people, volunteers, resources, community projects, LGBTQ+ gender and sexual diversity education and support, sexual and mental health, arts and culture, youth support and an advocate against racism, homophobia, transphobia and HIV stigma in that time.

HIV still remains a relevant and important issue. Advances in treatment has made living with HIV more manageable, especially with developments like U=U (Undetectable = Untransmissible) —that People living with HIV who have an undetectable viral load and take their medications as prescribed, cannot pass on HIV to sexual partners. Combined with prevention tools like PrEP, regular testing, and sexual health education, we have reduced HIV transmission significantly, yet there is still no cure. Stigma, discrimination, unjust laws, misinformation, medication barriers and new infections still occur. The work is not over, so we hope you will continue to support ACAS in doing its important work—reducing new infections and supporting those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and making a difference in our community.

Acas continues to grow and evolve to meet our community needs. We hope you'll join us!



## ALAN LI

While we commemorate the 25th anniversary of ACAS, we would like to honor our legacy starting with the Gay Asian AIDS Project (GAAP) 30 years ago. At the height of the AIDS crisis in the late 80's, GAAP was formed as a grassroots response of our community members caring for and supporting each other, and to give voice and presence to a group that has been erased from both the mainstream Gay and HIV communities and the mainstream Asian Canadian communities. It was a unique and distinguishing legacy as we were the only HIV service in Canada's history that had "gay" in its name. It is great that GAAP expanded to become ACAS and has taken on leadership in the HIV and related social justice issues and built inclusive communities with other marginalized and affected groups: migrant workers, women, queer youth, sex workers, trans communities and more diverse ethno-racial groups just to name a few. In the current climate of xenophobia, conservatism, and divisiveness, our work in building inclusive alliances to advocate for social justices are all the more important. Let's go forward together ACAS!





# ANPRE GOH

In 1993-1994, we were a small community and we had to build from the ground up. With so many of our Asian friends dying, the urgency to have language and cultural specific services and support was pressing.

As a gay Asian immigrant man and founding member of ACAS, I felt the importance of having a place that supported and gave choices to us. As a Board member of Gay Asians Toronto, we worked with two other community organizations to amalgamate AIDS services to the East and South East Asian LGBTQI communities. As the first board members of ACAS, we had much to do to establish a new organization -from logistics to hiring to services to promotion and even community development. It was hectic yet empowering.

Over the last 25 years, I have been a Board Chair for over 14 years. I wanted to make a difference, I wanted to grow the organization as our communities grew outside the borders of Toronto. I introduced strategic plans, bigger visions of an organization, more partnerships with other community groups, and developed a presence where none existed. These initiatives, through the work of staff and volunteers, began to establish ACAS as a lead in AIDS services and education for East and South East Asian communities. I believe there is a place for ACAS 25 years from now, I will see multiple generations of East and South East Asian LGBTQI members still active and still growing ACAS.

It is difficult to imagine not having a cultural, language and community appropriate services for our communities. In the early years of AIDS, there was only ACT, and PWA was in its infancy. As gay Asian men, many who were immigrants, the limited support and services and the issues of shame and exclusion made life for very challenging us. Many of us volunteered to look after each other, to be there and to take turns with dying friends. Before December 1995, if someone was positive it was a just a matter of time before one or many illnesses consumed the person.

ACAS served a vital purpose in centralizing and creating a safe space for men and women like us. And over the years, ACAS has been in the forefront in developing innovative educational and support work related to HIV and sexuality. Apart from the Men's, Women's, Trans' and Youth programs, ACAS reach out to migrant worker communities, inmates, immigrant parents to talk about sex, and niche communities within our communities. ACAS partnered with communities from specific South East Asian nations, other HIV organizations in East and South East Asian, and developed strong bonds with our sister organizations, ASAAP and BlackCAP.



***To sustain and grow ACAS, new ideas and talents need to led. As a wise woman once said "The only constant is change."***



## CHUCK LI

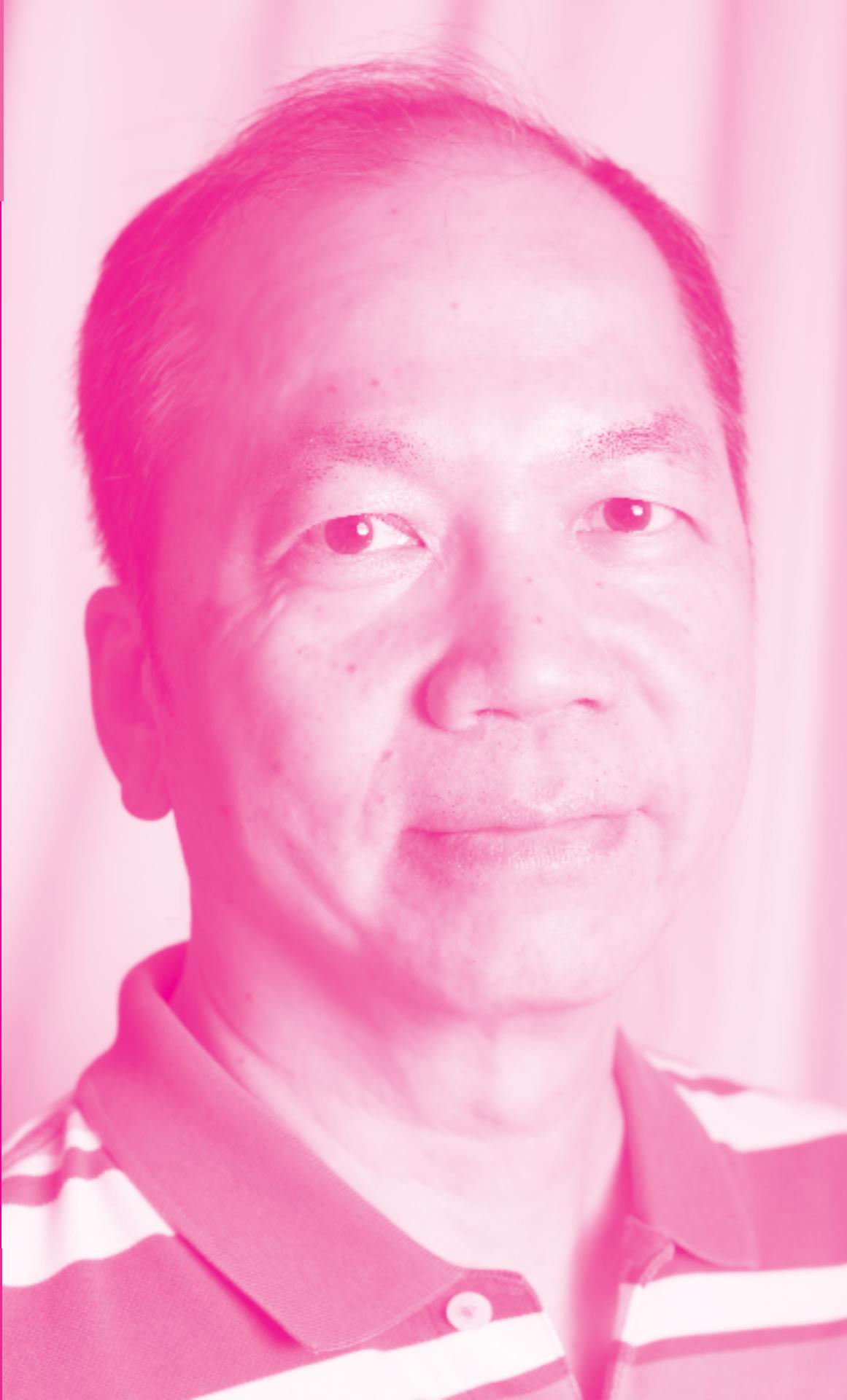
I have been volunteering with ACAS since 2013, for both women's program and youth program, including assisting with workshop facilitating, interpretation and translation as well as outreach events. In 2014 I led a resources development project at ACAS to develop coming out resources for Asian and Southeast Asian youth and their family members.

The impact ACAS has in my life, is making me feel easy and free to be who I am, and sending a lot of awesome and supportive people in to my life. It also helped me integrate into a different culture and life when I came to Canada 8 years ago. ACAS is a irreplaceably-significant organization supporting East and Southeast HIV/AIDS as well as queer community. It has provided educational, informative and supportive resources to the people in the community. They can also discover their potential through self-development and other interesting workshops at ACAS.



# KEITH WONG

I was the executive director of ACAS from 1998-2002 and a training and coaching consultant for the SIP of CARE project. Having struggled with the death and dying in the AIDS epidemic since my twenties, my secret wish in those early days was that either there would be a total cure or I would die three decades later. Indeed, for better or worse, none of those wishes were granted. In this long and arduous journey that occupied much of my adulthood, ACAS has been with me through different involvements. One comment from a community ally that I heard at an early annual meeting that stayed with me all these years was "I love coming to ACAS events, I feel the love in the air, the caring of a family!" ACAS is indeed my chosen family, and I believe it is one for many others. It is a safe space for the marginalized: the PHAs, the queer youths, the transgendered, people who are traumatized by racism and violence... We care, support, explore, and grow together. My dear comrades, revolution is not over yet, we still have to work hard!





## CONNIE CHUNG

My name is Connie Ai Chun Chung. I have been providing acupuncture services to the members of ACAS since October 2014. In 2018, I arranged for the delivery of seven courses of meditation by my teacher, Kenpo Tsulnam Rinpoche.

This voluntary activity has given me a greater connection with and understanding of others at ACAS. Now I feel much more content and positive about my role in life and what I am able to give back to society. This has enabled me to appreciate my friends and family more and have greater compassion towards others.





# JAMES LEE

I volunteered with ACAS and sat on some advisory committees when I first got connected with ACAS. In 2016 I ran the Photovoice Project and Exhibition- where we taught a group of PHAs about photography and how to tell stories, in collaboration with The Lourdes Association in Taiwan. In 2018 I got to show our exhibition again at the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam!

Later in 2016 I also shot, art directed and produced WET 2017: An Asian Guys Charity Calendar promoting body love in all shapes and sizes, where we engaged over 30+ people to be part of our project. I took over as social media coordinator shortly there after and have been involved ever since. I'm also super proud to have helped assemble our pride march concept: Asian Cliques United! for the You Can Sit With Us Toronto Pride in 2016.

ACAS has been a great space that supports and grows our Asian community of LGBTQ+ members and those affected by HIV. It has provided me many opportunities to connect, grow and learn more, so I am very thankful! It has been a safe space that has given a voice and presence to our community that is often overlooked and underrepresented. I'm proud to have contributed to ACAS and the community!





## #FENTY #FENTY

I have been an active volunteer of ACAS since 25. As an outreach volunteer, I help raise awareness on HIV/STI prevention, safer substance use, harm reduction and Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U) at Asian Bathhouse Nights to Asian gay/bi men and Asian Migrant Farmworkers. I also regularly volunteer my time at various ACAS and Ontario Positive Asians (OPA+) events.

As an Asian Migrant Farmworker, who fell ill and learned that I had HIV, ACAS has helped me regain my health and has been a home to me since. Through ACAS, I have gained skills and capacity through taking part in various trainings such as the MSM and Asian PHA Resiliency Dialogues and the Sip of C.A.R.E. Peer Coaching Training. These trainings have equipped me with skills so I can assist other peers.





# VHIL CASTILLEJOS

I first got involved with ACAS as a volunteer in summer of 2016. I then worked for the agency as an intern for the volunteer program during the same summer. Shortly after, I took on a role within the QAY Program as the Sports and Recreation Project Coordinator, where I worked with young community leaders in delivering monthly programs across the City of Toronto for a span of 8 months.

As an agency and, more importantly, as a community, ACAS has been absolutely influential to the lives of many queer Asian youth. Through the services delivered by the agency, young people in the community get access to culturally-safe spaces that acknowledge the unique needs of LGBTQ+ East and Southeast Asian youth. In the past few years, I have seen how these spaces provide young queer Asians the opportunity to celebrate their identities and make lifelong connections. Beyond that, I am a witness to the youth programs' instrumental role in building the capacity of the community and its members. Through programs like When You're Ready and Rice-in-Motion, young queer Asians get access to guidance, support, and resources, which, in turn, empower them to become passionate leaders in the community. With its programs centred around the wellbeing of the community and its members, ACAS is undeniably crucial in producing a resilient and an engaged community of East and Southeast Asians in the City of Toronto.





# EMILY ONIZUKA

ACAS has been nothing short of a home for me. When I was wandering lost through the bustling hallways of life, the youth program appeared in a magic puff of smoke before me and offered a place to finally explore my culture and identity in a safe environment. The next thing I knew, I was leading workshops with newfound peers and newfound confidence. I'm even leading the Health Promo project! Even though I still find myself confused sometimes, ACAS has helped me come a long way from a lost wandering student unsure if a community I fit into even existed. Now I know I have a chosen family that will be there with comfy couches, warm tea, and a helpful hand when I stare in bewilderment at the papers I've sent flying out of the photocopier.

I think that chosen family aspect is what makes ACAS an appealing safer space to come to. It seems like no matter what event or workshop is happening, people are happy to come even just to be in a comfortable space among peers who can share and relate to their experiences. It's amazing how quickly people seem to just click even if they've just met. Even after our events, I always see participants leave in groups together to get bubble tea so they can hang out longer. It warms my heart every time I see this.

ACAS has been a warm welcoming home for me, and all I can hope is to help keep that going for others who need a safer space to come to.





## ALEX MA

I have been doing outreach work at bathhouses, ethno-specific events and international student events for ACAS.

I am kind of new to ACAS, but I really appreciate the space we create to our community to talk about important issues such as sexual health, internalized oppression and HIV awareness. I think community members find connection and empowerment at ACAS.





# SZE-YANG APE-LAM

I accessed ACAS as a youth through QAY, it was extremely important to me to have a affirming and safer space to go to on a regular basis, where I could connect to people that looked like and experienced similar things to me. At the time I was in a post secondary dance program that was racist, homophobic, and told me my body was wrong for dance. Though I did not do much work directly with ACAS other then helping out at QAY events & performing, my experience at QAY definitely has informed me growing into who I am today and my work. I owe all of this to Florence

Heung who was working there at the time. Florence had such a special way of creating space that was encompassing of everybody in the space, while engaging us in dialogues about our identities, race, anti-oppression and its intersectionalities, accountability, allyship that caused us to be introspective about how we are with ourselves, within our communities, and beyond. At dance school, I was taught to be an artist who was suppose to pursue a my career with no mention of community. I am proud to say that I am a dancer, martial artist, storyteller, community

developer, and advocate for change in the arts. As part of ILL NANA/DiverseCity Dance Company, a queer & trans multiracial dance company and as a independent artist, I have put QTBIPOC stories on stages and media since 2007. Since 2011, I have created affirming more accessible dance training and performance opportunities for QTBIPOCs and our adjacent communities, led the shift for the Dora Awards to become gender neutral, and continue to create art and dialogue.



## IMOGEN TAM

Right now I'm working as a peer leader for the QAY program. I help plan and facilitate group sessions and events along with beautiful Imogen and also-beautiful Gabriel.

ACAS just has this magical fairy dust quality to it. It's like an oasis for me and so many others who spend so much energy navigating and surviving in these bodies and systems.

I've met so many amazing people here, both service providers and guests. Everyone is so genuine and kind and accepting. I've experienced myself the strength and courage that kind of energy and support can provide, and I've had the privilege and joy of hearing that others have felt the same after taking part in our events.

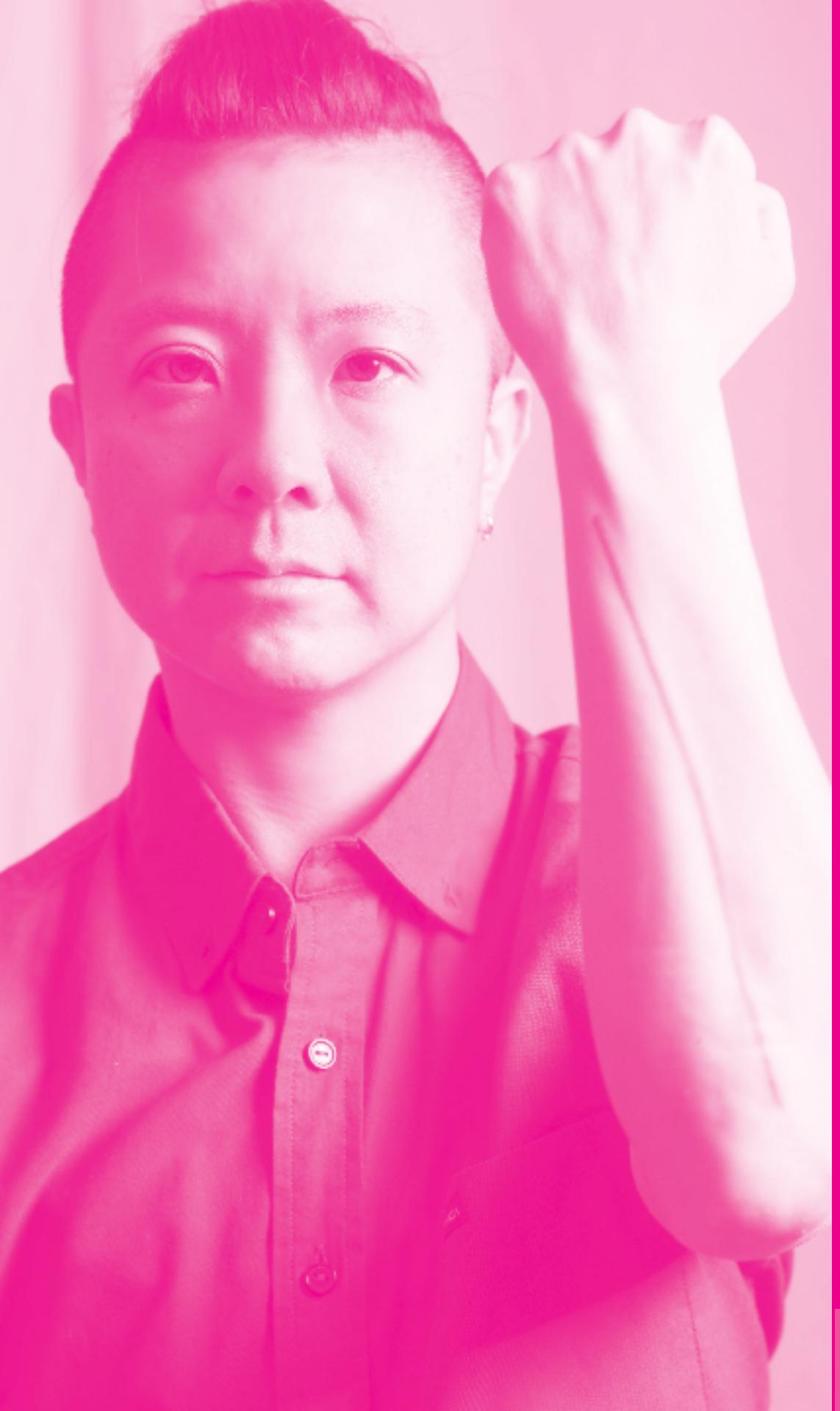


## JASON LEM

I was one of the co-founders of QAY - along with Ruthann, Florence, Karen and Peter. I was a summer student and contract staff in 2000 and 2001. I was Vice President, Administration on the Board of Directors for 2 years in my 20s.

I have seen multiple generations of QAY leaders take our place and grow the organization into a wonderful, unique and critical group for building self-esteem, friendships/mutual support, and healthy resilience. I have life long friends from QAY and love seeing how it's grown and changed completely. Having been a contract staff twice, I have seen the direct impact that ACAS's work has on the lives of E/SE Asian PHAs and prevention efforts. As Board Member, I experienced how an agency takes youth engagement seriously - and was able to hone my leadership skills, while continuing to have an impact on longer-term organizational outcomes, policy initiatives and interagency/government relations/politics. ACAS felt like family and I hope it continues to have the positive impact on the community that it has had on me! Though I am now working in the private sector in New York City, ACAS's impact continues to positively impact my life :)





# KAREN B. K. CHAN

I began as a wide-eyed, young volunteer planning AmalgamAsian, a queer Asian conference in 1998. Since then, I've been a staff member for both the Youth Education/Outreach and the Women's Support programs, a highlight of which was launching QAY with Peter Ho with our first bubble tea lounge event. Later, I was a project coordinator for Facts For Friction, a 4-day gathering for queer East & Southeast Asian Youth in 2003. Over the years, I continue to be connected to the ACAS family by running workshops, hosting and attending events, and generally making merry.

ACAS is a second home, a family, an old friend, a newly imagined relationship to kin, a hub of activity, and an archive of stories and histories. It's not only a response to HIV/AIDS, but an active resistance to racism, homophobia, and other kinds of exclusion. ACAS has nurtured me and many others. It created new ways of being for each of us; it made them not only possible but hopeful and vibrant, and it wove those beings together.



# ZACK AMIRAT

Right now I'm working as a peer leader for the QAY program. I help plan and facilitate group sessions and events along with beautiful Imogen and also-beautiful Gabriel.

ACAS just has this magical fairy dust quality to it, it's like an oasis for me and so many others who spend so much energy navigating and surviving in these bodies and systems. I've met so many amazing people here, both service providers and guests. Everyone is so genuine and kind and accepting. I've experienced myself the strength and courage that kind of energy and support can provide, and I've had the privilege and joy of hearing that others have felt the same after taking part in our events.





## ANDREW MIAO

My late husband, Patrick Truong, introduced me to ACAS when I first arrived in Canada in 2008. I had volunteered with Men's Program, Settlement Program (closed in 2011) and Support Program. Afterward, I became the Volunteer Coordinator and now the Support Program Coordinator. There are so many opportunities at ACAS and so many ways to get involved and contribute to the community. I am looking forward to growing with ACAS!

Many individuals living with HIV experience stigma and barriers to accessing services. It touches me to see how many lives have changed because of us, ACAS – how individuals are connected to services and community support, how they find refuge in their peer network, how they find inner strength and resiliency to overcome challenges, and how they start to thrive and pursue their dreams. I have seen so many folks whose lives have been positively impacted by the work of ACAS. I am one of those lucky persons myself.





# TAMMY LAMKHONG

I first found out about ACAS from a pamphlet they distributed at the Thai Buddhist temple a few years ago. I read about the services they had and brought my sister to ACAS for the services. We were warmly welcomed by staff who were sincere and supportive. From that day forward, I became a volunteer with ACAS because I wanted to give back to the organization that helped me and my sister. Though people at ACAS come from different countries and from all walks of life, we all give each other understanding and support. And that is why I still continue volunteering with ACAS.



# EPISON LAU

I have joined ACAS for almost one year. In this year, I participated a lot in workshops, sessions and outreach events to spread knowledge of STI and to let more people know about ACAS. I also attended training courses hosted by ACAS in order to provide better support to peers in the future.

At ACAS, I gained huge support and I harvested friendship. Furthermore, I have seen huge improvement of myself by all the knowledge obtained from ACAS. I have also witnessed many beautiful stories of people being encouraged by ACAS.





## JI-YOON (JESS) LEE

My work at ACAS focuses more on the experiences of cis and trans women and non-binary people who want to learn more about sexual health, HIV, and healthy relationships. I began working at ACAS since 2017 and have delivered many different programs. The projects that I have had the opportunity to work on were meaningful and exciting. I often got to speak to various East and Southeast Asian communities about a topic that we ourselves don't always have the chance to have. One of my favourite projects was the Raising Sexually Healthy Children workshop for new Korean, Thai, and Japanese mothers. It was very special to feel that direct and long term impact of talking to new parents on the importance of having uncomfortable conversations with their children.

ACAS exists to be a safe place for the marginalized among us. Over the past years, I have seen the strength and growth in the Southeast and East Asian community. I am so grateful that a place like ACAS can exist.





# RYAN TRAN

I first became involved at ACAS as a youth. 16 years old and just starting to come out, I came to my first Queer Asian Youth (QAY) meeting where volunteers planned regular social events. I would laugh and laugh and end up smiling so much at these meetings that I would always come back. But mostly, it was because the people made me feel welcomed, included, and accepted to be myself that it was easy to be comfortable. I guess after several years at QAY, I eventually "graduated" and was recruited to volunteer for bathhouse outreach with the Men's Program. After some experience with the Men's Program, I transitioned from volunteer to employee and have been working in various roles on the Men's team for 5 years now.

QAY helped create a stable and supportive community for me to come out to and by working at ACAS, I wanted to be able to create that same welcoming and inclusive community for others. In the age of online dating apps, a lot of people still struggle to meet people but I believe ACAS is one of the best places to make real connections with other LGBTQ Asian folks who can relate to you. And on top of that, I still regularly get asked by many community members about sexual health, testing, HIV, and PrEP. The work that ACAS does is very important and still needed for the overall well-being and sexual health of the LGBTQ Asian community.





## LEO LIAO

I have been volunteering for ACAS since 2012, and have been involved in lots of events, focusing on the Men's group. Some of these events include ABN, AX, ACAS Pride March, PinDot March, ACAS Gala, Chinatown Fest. I have done things like doing the announcements in different languages at ABNs, distributing condoms, helping out in the safe sex educational workshops, peer support, all kinds of fund raising and some translation work.

ACAS is a like a family for all Asian LGBTQ+ members in GTA, especially when they need some emotional and educational supports on related issues such as LGBTQ+, safer sex, STIs prevention and relationships.



A black and white headshot of a young man with short dark hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a zip-up jacket over a dark t-shirt.

# JACK LI

I have been with ACAS for 5 years. I started my role as a nursing student and after my graduation I became a volunteer for the support program. As a volunteer for the support program, I am involved in educational workshops, community outreach activities and counselling.

I have witnessed the power of people coming together, sharing their lived experiences as LGBTQ+ and persons living with HIV. Through the recognition of individual stories and life histories, we are able to empower each other to take control over different aspects of their lives. This includes but are not limited to, finding a job, seeking out health care and maintaining a healthy life style. With the existing societal and health inequities in our community, we are really making progress in changing those environments. At a personal level, I have discovered a lot about myself, more specifically my passion for health education. Being involved in health promotion workshops, I have learned that not everyone has the tools or health literacy to really navigate the health care system and use those resources to maintain good health.

A portrait of the same young man from the previous image, but with a strong orange tint applied across the entire frame. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.



# AGNES TONG

I am currently volunteering as an administrative assistant here. My work includes providing administrative and clerical work for all members working in ACAS. Another responsibility that I very much enjoy is meeting and greeting many of our community members who come to our door, whether seeking services or just to swing by and visit us. I always enjoy talking to them, I have really learned a lot from all of you. :)

Sadly, I haven't been providing services at ACAS for a long enough period to see the impact I have made here. However, I have to say that whenever I see any member leaving the door in front of me smiling, I know that we have made a better day for them. :)





# GABRIEL BACANI

I've been working both as the youth program coordinator and Health Promotion Project Leader for QAY for more than 4 years. I help organize and facilitate spaces where queer and trans Asian youth feel safer to express themselves, whether it be through discussions or other forms of creative expression. What I enjoy most about my job are the people I encounter. We are constantly learning and growing together to make QAY feel more like a home.

ACAS is a one-of-a-kind organization and has had an immense impact on the community. We are constantly growing, learning and adapting to the environment and political climate. This organization is providing necessary space for East and Southeast Asian folks who are queer and trans and living with HIV/AIDS. People have made meaningful connections through ACAS, and come here to form community.

# SUCRE LI

I'm Sucre, Men's outreach program coordinator at ACAS. I started my journey with ACAS since summer 2018. Unexpectedly, I formed a close relationship with the community ever since.

My work mainly involves delivering educational workshops, doing outreach, as well as supporting volunteers and community members. Through one year's work at ACAS, I find that lots of people see ACAS as their second home. They share their joy and laughter, also their concerns and struggles. ACAS offers LGBTQ2S folks and PHAs a place to relax, to learn and to make friends. I am happy and grateful that I can be part of this organization, to help people in need, spread sexual health knowledge, making our community a warm, loving family.





# AMUTHA SAMGAM

I am Amutha Samgam and began my involvement with ACAS in 2003. Throughout the years, I have been a client, volunteer, board member to becoming a staff twice. It is a place where I have grown, had the opportunity to learn many things that helped me shaped who I am now and a place where I continue to deliver work that I am truly passionate about. ACAS is my second home, a source of my pride and joy!



# ARIES CHEUNG

I have been volunteering for ACAS since it's inauguration. Most of my volunteer involvement has been organizing events, facilitating workshops and developing special programs. With my passion for the arts, I have advocated community building through creative process, such as filmmaking, theatre, visual arts and media/public speaking. My interests have been on the mentorship and empowerment of under-represented communities within Asian LGBTQ communities. I have helped develop and organize events such as Bamboo Shoot: video competitions; Asian Youth Artists and Performers Against HIV/AIDS; Temple Street: Asians living with HIV/AIDS stage production at the International AIDS Conference; Pink Dot and STARS 100 trans-women and -men talent showcase.

During the early 90's when support for people living with HIV/AIDS was gravely needed, ACAS began its commitment of improving the quality of lives of many. Through out the long years of battles against HIV/AIDS stigma, homophobia and racism, ACAS has established a solid foundation as not just an organization, but also a community, a family and a home for those in need. For the disenfranchised, it is a space for comfort and safety, for self expression and for community building. I think ACAS's greatest achievement is it's evolution: ACAS has been able to respond to the ever evolving needs of the underserved. From gay men living with HIV/AIDS to at risk youth, women, straight men, to the recent inclusion of trans and non-binary communities, ACAS's constant strive for servicing the hard-to-reach populations is an inspiration for the contemporary and for the generations to come.





# MICHELLE TAM

My name is Michelle Tam and I am the current Vice-Chair and member of the Board of Directors at ACAS. I was introduced to ACAS as a participant in the Queer Asian Youth program and then later joined the Women's Education and Outreach program. I began to get more involved in an active leadership role when I was invited to be a panelist for Pillow Talk, an annual women's health forum organized for and by East and Southeast Asian cis and trans women. I was given more

opportunities to be a leader in formal and informal ways within the community and soon after, I was asked to join the Board. What I have seen at ACAS is an impact like no other for queer and trans East and South East Asians. It is a space and place that inspires and nurtures young leaders, creative minds and innovative ideas. Not only does ACAS bring people together, but it also provides a space for new friends and communities to emerge within and outside of ACAS. The programs and services that ACAS provides builds experiences, skills and connections that have lasting impacts, even if we may not know it. For me and some others that I know, ACAS has been a wonderful supportive space to train and propel us into succeeding in many aspects of our lives.





## CARMEN SUBBBI

I started as a volunteer with ACAS in 1997, a year after I arrived from the Philippines and worked as the Volunteer Coordinator/ Women Outreach Program Coordinator. I learned a lot about the program as well as working with volunteers and immigrants and women of colour, people living with HIV/ AIDS, LGBTQ+ folks, and the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people that ACAS serves. I learned to advocate for myself and others. I understand racism and diversity which has been part of my life and has always been part of the community. ACAS has empowered women of colour like me, as an immigrant like me and the community. It has provided knowledge, information, empowerment and acknowledgment of the LGBTQ+ community among East and Southeast Asians living in the GTA.





# CHRISTIAN HUI

As a queer Asian settler immigrant living with HIV, I consider ACAS to be my second home -a place where I can just be me regardless of my serostatus or sexual identity. I first connected with ACAS in 2010 as a service user, then became a Support Program mentee through the support and guidance of late Patrick Truong. As a staff at ACAS, I have served in a number of roles and am currently the CHAMP Community Engagement and Ontario Positive Asians (OPA+) Coordinator implementing a multi-year anti HIV-stigma intervention along side Toronto's ethnoracial AIDS Service Organizations: CAAT, APAA, ASAAP and CSSP.

ACAS has not only helped me overcome my internalized stigma as a queer Asian man living with HIV and grow as a person, it has also made tangible differences in improving the lives of East and Southeast Asians living with HIV, men who like men, cis- and trans-women, and queer Asian youth. ACAS is one of the founding partner agencies of PinkDotTO, an annual event which celebrates and promotes love and understanding amongst youth and families of the Asian LGBTQ2S+ community. Along with ASAAP, ACAS is also one of the founding supporters of OPA+, an independent network of Asians living with HIV.





# KENNETH POON (+ OLSON)

I have been the Health Promotion Coordinator at ACAS for the last 8 years. My role is to develop educational workshops for all service users who are affected by and live with HIV. The workshop range topics from HIV treatment and prevention to holistic wellness. The workshops are designed to have culture and language in mind and are attended by an average of 35 participants. The goal is to allow participants to gain knowledge to take control of their own health and wellbeing. Moreover, the workshops aim to increase social connection and reduce isolation, while building a strong relationship amongst peers. I am also responsible for setting up the therapeutic care program through which we provide services like massage, acupuncture and Thai massage to all service users within the support program. This year we launched the Sip of C.A.R.E. project in which we use a life coach model to train P.H.A. peers.

This year is ACAS's 25th year anniversary. It is such an astonishing moment for our organization. We have had many excellent experience in the past 25 years. Many service users consider ACAS as a home away from home. They feel that every time they step into our organization, they are understood and that their opinions and ideas are valued. I have witnessed many of ACAS staff willing to share and learn from our client's resilience and tenacity. Because of our patience, understanding and passion, ACAS is one of the strongest racialized LGBTQ+ organizations in Toronto.

***Please come and join us in celebrating  
ACAS's 25th anniversary!***



ACAS



THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT  
OVER THE YEARS!



YOUR CONTINUED CONTRIBUTIONS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE  
PLEASE VISIT US AT [ACAS.ORG](http://ACAS.ORG) FOR THE LATEST