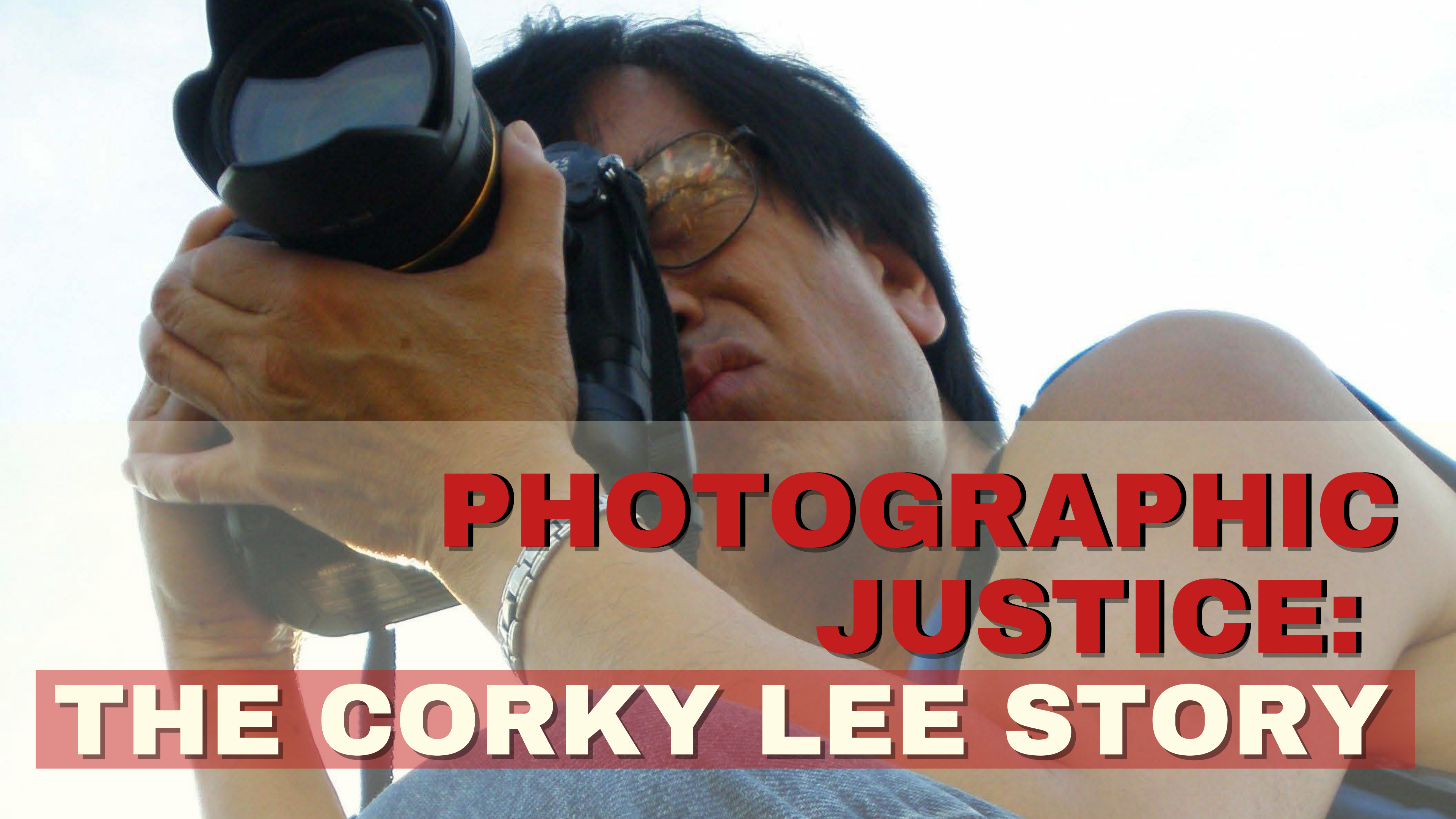




PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE:

THE CORKY LEE STORY



SYNOPSIS:

An intimate portrait of Chinese American photographer Corky Lee whose pioneering work documented the richness and complexity of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) experience for half a century.

Lee's fascinating photographs of daily life, cultural celebrations, and social justice movements reveal a rare record of a community often overlooked by mainstream media – and demonstrate the power of photography as a tool for advocacy and social change.

WHO WAS CORKY LEE?

A fierce advocate for inclusion of the AAPI community in the national discourse, Corky Lee consistently challenged stereotypes and discrimination with his camera. He documented AAPI activism in the US long before the Asian American Movement was acknowledged by the press. Lee's images have played a key role in highlighting the many struggles and contributions of Asian American Pacific Islanders in modern American history, and in advocating for positive change and advancement of this often-overlooked community.

THIS FILM:

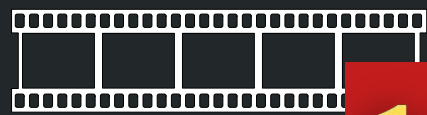
Inspirational and emotional, Photographic Justice: The Corky Lee Story reveals the unknown struggles of the man who captured nearly a million images of Asian America over five decades.

HIS LEGACY:

By bringing awareness of Corky Lee's life and work to a broader audience, this film aims to ensure that all Americans will celebrate and learn from his photographs for generations to come.

ARTISTIC VISION FOR THE FILM:

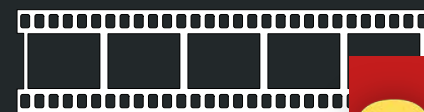
The film weaves together rare verite footage of Corky's daily life; interviews with Corky and noted historians, authors, and activists; archival footage; and most importantly a rich trove of Corky's stunning photographs spanning 50 years.



1975



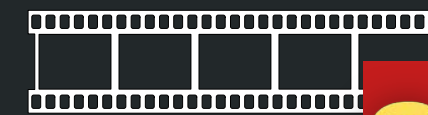
His photographs put the issue of police brutality in Chinatown on the front page of the New York Post,



2001



showed Sikhs and Filipinos battling racist stereotyping after 9/11,



2020



and bore witness to the devastating economic and social impact of the Covid pandemic on New York's AAPI community in 2020.



WHY NOW?

PANDEMIC:

Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have been wrongly blamed for the pandemic due to COVID-19's origin in China.

RISE OF HATE:

Hate crimes against the AAPI community in New York City have risen 833% since 2019 according to the California State University's Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism (CSUSB).

AAPI HATE CRIMES UNDERREPORTED:

Between March 2020 and September 2021, more than 10,300 incidents of hate against Asian and Pacific Islanders across the U.S. have been reported to Stop AAPI Hate. Their report states that this represents only a fraction of the incidents that actually occur nationwide.

SARAH BOXER

Getting Asian-Americans Into the Picture



Corky Lee's picture of a Sikh candlelight vigil in Central Park on Sept. 15, 2001.

STATE OF THE ART

Asian Studies

Picturing the truths that bind the Asian-American experience.

By Udayan Gupta



Celebrating India Independence Day in New York, 1987: the contradiction many Asian-Americans face in "going native."

Asians are probably the fastest growing, most vibrant immigrant group in the United States. But with the exclusion of a handful of artists such as playwright David Henry Hwang and filmmaker Wayne Wang, few have documented the Asian-American experience in any depth. Certainly no photographer has, except perhaps Corky Lee, a 42-year-old Chinese-American who has been reporting on Asian-Americans for 20 years.

The assignment is uniquely ambitious, not simply because Lee has been working mostly on his own initiative, but because the community of Asians in America consists of a plethora of races and languages—groups whose experiences differ widely. Koreans, Vietnamese, and Filipinos who have emigrated in the last decade clearly encounter a different set of cultural conditions from those Chinese and Japanese whose American roots—and scars—may go back a generation or more.

Still, such fragmentation doesn't seem to have stopped the New York-based Lee. "Whenever anything happens in the Asian community, Corky always seems to be present," says filmmaker Peter Chow, who runs Asian Cinevision in New York, one of the largest Asian-American media groups in the country. Chow notes that Lee's self-styled photojournalism has successfully cut across specific nationalities to create a unified image of Asians seeking to find their place in America.

Now after two decades of toiling in near obscurity, Lee is getting some recognition. Twenty of his photographs were recently on display at a gallery operated by the Bank of Boston. The same small-scale showing will soon be traveling to Denver, San Francisco, and Honolulu. In October, a large group of his photographs of Chinese-Americans went on view in New York. And a book on Filipinos to be published by Chelsea House next year will feature Lee's photographs of that community.

Lee likes to describe himself as the "undisputed, unofficial Asian-American photographer laureate." Indeed, he has traveled widely to capture forgotten elements of the Asian experience; his work has been published in *Time*, the *New York Times*, and the *China Daily News* and carried by Associated Press. But photography doesn't pay the rent for Lee. He supports himself by working as a salesman at a newspaper printing company, and on off hours he scrambles to photograph everything Asian under the sun.

Sometimes that means slipping into a Chinatown bar at dawn and fast-talking the police into letting him be the first to photograph a murder scene. At other times, he has to convince officials at a press conference affecting Asians why he desperately needs a press pass. Lee also tracks down his subjects in less hostile situations—at parades, on picket

lines, attending public ceremonies, as well as in their homes and places of work, such as the kosher delicatessen in Queens owned by a Korean family.

A former student of American history at Queens College, Lee says his photographs "are only a small attempt to rectify omissions in our history textbooks." His work often contains signs that underscore his own social concerns. In a photograph of striking Chinatown textile workers in New York placards reading "In Union There Is Strength" and "Garment Workers Let's Defend Ourselves" deliver the full import of the message and drive home Lee's thesis that the Asian immigrant is a political animal.

Any true portrayal of Asians in America demands that their politics be accurately represented, Lee says. Many Asians are caught between the turmoil that continues to affect their homeland and the varying degrees of racism and suspicion they encounter as newcomers to the United States. Lee firmly stands by both the politics and the sentimentality in his work. Without the two, he says, "our immigrant experience just isn't complete."

Udayan Gupta, a native of Patna, India, is a staff reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

22 AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER December 1989

Arts&Leisure

The New York Times

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 1997



The Battle Of 'Miss Saigon'

MAINSTREAM MEDIA

The AAPI community continues to advocate for visibility in this country. Corky Lee relentlessly pushed the mainstream press to represent this community authentically and advance dialogue through his photographs.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

Today, partly sunny, 42°. Tonight, partly cloudy, low 30°. Tomorrow, most areas of rain late in the high 40°. Weather map.

VOL. CLXII, No. 56,078

© 2013 The New York Times

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2013

\$6 beyond the greater New York metropolitan area.

ARTS | STONY BROOK

Making a Sometimes Invisible Minority Visible

Tongue in cheek, Corky Lee calls himself the photographer laureate of Asian-Americans.

By KAREN LIPSON

STONY BROOK, N.Y. — On Sept. 15, 2001, Corky Lee, a freelance photographer, showed up at a candlelight vigil held in Central Park by Sikh-Americans, who had become a target of violence after the 9/11 attacks.

"I got there and realized I was the only non-South Asian photographer there," recalled Mr. Lee — the son of Chinese immigrants — who had learned about the vigil at an Asian-American gathering earlier that day. So he quickly started shooting the scene: His photo of a turbaned, bearded



2001, 9/11 Sikhs Against Terrorism, © Corky Lee



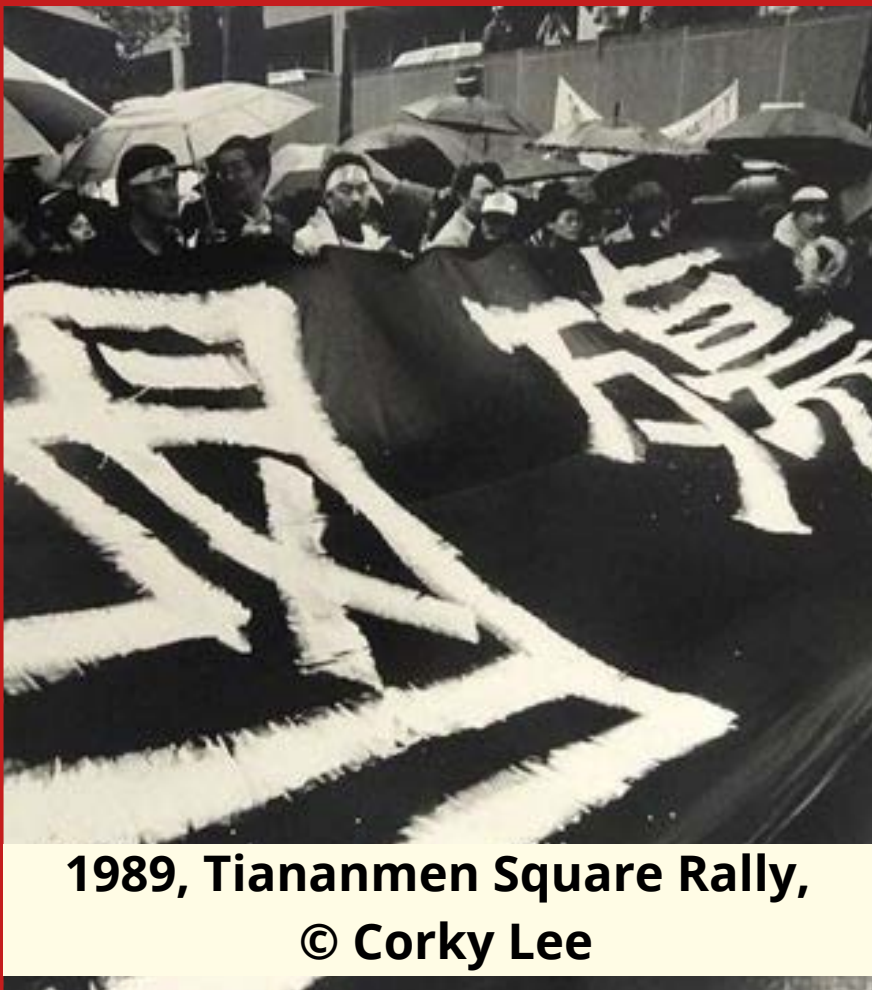
2001, Post 9/11 Rally, © Corky Lee



1975, Police Brutality Protest, © Corky Lee



2020, Stop the Hate Rally, © Corky Lee



1989, Tiananmen Square Rally,
© Corky Lee



BEYOND STEREOTYPES

This film seeks to educate younger generations, Asians and non-Asians alike, to see beyond stereotypes at a crucial moment when AAPI identity and culture is under attack.

"It's not important that people remember me. **It's more important that they remember my photos.**"

-Corky Lee

WHY US?



After meeting Corky Lee in 2003 and recognizing then the importance of sharing his life story, Director Jennifer Takaki followed him for nearly 20 years, diligently documenting triumphs and tragedy.

Jennifer's close relationship with Corky imbues the film with an intimate, honest perspective and purpose: honor Corky's life and work -- and expand the audience for his photographic legacy. Her poignant film offers a unique and moving memorial to one man's mission to bring justice to his community through photography.



JENNIFER TAKAKI
director/producer

Jennifer's background is in broadcast news, including six years in Hong Kong where she worked in news and entertainment. She also produces corporate videos and personal documentaries for individuals and families. She is based in New York City.



LINDA HATTENDORF
editor

Linda directed "The Cats of Mirikitani" which was broadcast nationally on the PBS series "Independent Lens", toured several countries theatrically, and won awards in more than 30 film festivals around the world. Her editing work has been broadcast on PBS, A&E, TCM, The Sundance Channel and more.



**GEORGE AND
HILLARY HIROSE**
executive producers

George & Hillary Hirose met at Bard College and have been married for over 38 years. They live in NYC where they raised their daughter, and have actively engaged in community activism and social justice issues for many years.



LILY M. FAN
executive producer

Lily Fan founded Scandobean Productions in 2010. Over the years, her projects have expanded from theater to documentary films. 'The Fight' won the Special Jury Award for Social Impact Filmmaking at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival. Lily was an Executive Producer of 'Weiner,' U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize winner at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.



LINDA LEW WOO
producer

Linda Lew Woo is a native New Yorker and a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology. In 1968, she was crowned “Miss Chinatown New York” and became a visible representative of the Chinese-American community. Her 53 year friendship with Corky included collaborating on charitable and community outreach projects.



DAVID KOH
co-producer

David Koh is an Award Winning Film Producer, Curator & Sales Agent. He has been involved in over a dozen Academy nominated films and several that have won. He currently co-manages a portfolio of over 20+ projects a year through the label Curatorial.



NICOLE DIMICELI
co-producer

Nicole DiMiceli is a Film Producer and Stylist. She is partnered with Producer David Koh in a production company, Curatorial, where she co-manages a slate of projects. She has worked in film, television and media with CNBC, Martha Stewart, Conde Nast, NBC, CBS and the Maury Show, among others.



JOEL GOODMAN
composer

Joel has scored over 150 films and television programs that have received 5 Oscar nominations, 20 Emmy awards and over 30 Emmy nominations. A native New Yorker, he splits his time between Paris, Los Angeles and New York.

INTERVIEWS INCLUDE:

STARRING: CORKY LEE

Karlin Chan

Ching Yeh Chen

Fay Chiang

Rocky Chin

Cynthia Dantzic

Carol Huang

Peter Kwong

Cynthia Lee

Jimmy Lee

John 'Johann' Lee

Ping Hong Jung Lee

Richie Lee

Fee Lan Lee (Fee Mak)

Russell Leong

Philip Levine

Tzi Ma

Norm Mineta

Edmund Newton

Norm Nelson

Shirley Ng

Josh Rogers

Ryan Lee Wong

Theodora Yoshikami

Karen Zhou

***PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE* in the press:**

NBC News, "How Corky Lee's Legacy Goes Far Beyond Photography" (left and middle)

Jennifer Takaki, the director and producer of the documentary, "Photographic Justice: The Corky Lee Story," which led her to follow him for 18 years, said he was humble but was truly worthy of his self-appointed name "the undisputed, unofficial Asian American photographer laureate."

“

"He had no huge platform other than his camera, his being and his efforts. But through that, he has touched millions of lives," said Jennifer Takaki, director and producer of the documentary, "Photographic Justice: The Corky Lee Story."

CNN, "Corky Lee, legendary Asian American photographer, dies at 73" (right)

"When I think about my past, what stands out most is how hard and how long the journey has been," Lee says in the [film's trailer](#). "In all my photographs, I'm trying to include as vignettes, pages that should be in American history books, that have been omitted or taken out."

"The pursuit of photographic justice, you have to keep going on because there's so much that needs to be done," he adds.

Lee was "one of the main documentarians of the Asian American movement," curator Ryan Lee Wong is quoted as saying in the trailer. "This is important because social movements are so hard to capture -- and Corky was really there at just about every rally and movement and event."

Lee's death was met with an outpouring of grief and gratitude from the Asian American community on Wednesday.

Jennifer Takaki, the director of "Photographic Justice," [posted on Facebook](#) that Lee was a "true hero."

"Our film will pay tribute to his legacy and his never ending pursuit of photographic justice. RIP Corky, you are loved and will be forever missed," she wrote.

Center for Asian American Media, "Photographic Justice: Rest in Power Corky Lee"

"What made his photos especially unique was that there were so many cultural aspects to each one," said Jennifer Takaki, director and producer of the documentary film, *Photographic Justice: The Corky Lee Story*, expected to come out in 2021. "He was an incredible subject to film, natural and engaging on camera, but also very articulate, interesting, and of course, especially knowledgeable about all things Asian American."

PRESS INQUIRIES:

Please contact us for photos by Corky Lee as well as photos of:

Corky Lee

Corky Lee's family

Jennifer Takaki

Contact: Linda Lew Woo, Producer

Phone: (646) 893-8581

Email: showcase88@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.photographicjustice.com

MADE IN PART WITH FUNDS FROM:

JustFilms
FORDFOUNDATION

ARCHIVAL MUSIC PROVIDED BY:



SLANT

Song: "It's Tough
Being Corky Lee"
Performed by
SLANT, Rick
Ebihara as Song
Writer, SLANT
Performance
Group - Rick
Ebihara, Wayland
Quintero and
Perry Yung.



Songs from the
album "A Grain of
Sand:" Performed
by Chris Iljima,
Nobuko Miyamoto
and Charlie Chin.

PHOTOS BY: CORKY LEE