

with grace

OUR PERSONAL STORIES



*Photo:
Alyssa (on right) with her family
in Manila, Philippines.*

Alyssa Ching

CURRICULUM DEVELOPER

My heritage is Filipina-Chinese American. My parents immigrated from the Philippines and settled in Sacramento, CA. As I've gotten older, I've realized how much my values align with my Filipino heritage. It is almost as if they were there all along, but I just needed to return to them after trying to assimilate for so long. For example, protecting the environment is a huge priority in the Philippines. I am actively working on changing my lifestyle to be more eco-friendly. I also want to brush up on my Tagalog language skills because connection to others is another value of mine, and being able to communicate with my family and loved ones with ease.

Brittney Braganza

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Due to my job role, I'm usually the first person colleagues speak to here at MIND. I love being able to build and cultivate relationships here - I think I get that from my parents. Although I am a natural introvert, both of my parents are very outgoing and social. My mom is part Italian from the Midwest, and my father is from the Philippines which makes me super proud to be an Asian American. My life is beautifully blended with both cultures and gives me an amazing opportunity to have a diverse set of friends and family to learn and grow with throughout my life.

I'm happy to continue to get to do that here at MIND!

*Photo:
Brittney & husband
snorkeling in Bohol,
Philippines*



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Chris Hara

VERIZON INNOVATIVE LEARNING SCHOOLS (VILS) PROGRAM MANAGER

I was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, to a mother that emigrated from Hong Kong and a father raised in Honolulu, Hawaii. Growing up, I minimized my Chinese and Japanese heritage as a means of fitting in. As an adult, I regret that short-sighted rejection of my identity. Now, I am proud to share my family's rich history, traditions, and foods to add depth to what being American means. I hope you too are inspired this month to reconnect with your roots.



Photo: Summer 2020

*Photo:
Jules (left) & Jo (right)
at a waterfall restaurant
in San Pablo City, Phillippines.*



Jo & Jules Zafra

SR. VISUAL DESIGNER & ILLUSTRATOR

Hello! (Kumusta!) A lot of people think we're twins - or even the same person because we look a lot alike - even though we are 14 years apart! We are second generation Filipina-American sisters born and raised in Orange County. The way we defy stereotypes is by every woman on our mother's side of the family being a nurse, but we chose a different path for ourselves. We both ended up pursuing careers in art and design! We're proud of being Asian-American and love to celebrate the fusion of food, culture, and art of both heritages.

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Photo:
Karin in Kona, Hawaii

Karin Wu

EVP & EXEC DIRECTOR, SOCIAL IMPACT

The Chinese-Brazilian's Guide to Chicken Fried Steak in America.

That's going to be the title of my book someday. My mother was born in beautiful Yunnan, China but her family fled the communist regime and emigrated to Taiwan, where eventually she met my father while serving in the military. In search of adventure, they ended up in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where my brothers and I were born and raised. We are all proud Asian Americans now but no matter where in the world our home is, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, English and Spanish are spoken interchangeably at the dinner table!

Nina Wu

CREATIVE CONTENT MANAGER

I'm from Florida, whereas my parents are from southern China. For me, being Asian-American means living in the in-between. In China, I'm read as American. In the U.S., I'm read as foreign.

I grew up feeling the pressure to "choose a side," but now I realize this in-between space is where I can build community and find belonging. I use other aspects of my identity as a queer artist, dancer, and educator who's not afraid to speak up, to challenge the expectations and expand the breadth of what the Asian-American experience and identity is.

Photo:
[@myheartsiings](#)

