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**NEA honors teacher and labor activist Kent Wong with human and civil rights award**  
*Annual gala also marks 50th anniversary of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner*

BOSTON—An accomplished teacher and labor activist, Kent Wong has been awarded the [NEA Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award](#) for his life’s dedication to the labor movement and advancing the cause of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Since 1967, NEA has recognized and honored those who have fought — and continue to fight — for human and civil rights. This year, NEA honors the outstanding work of 12 American social justice heroes at its annual [Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner](#) on Saturday, July 1, in Boston. The theme of the awards dinner is “Living the Legacy: After 50 Years, Still We Rise.”

“Kent Wong embodies the spirit of Dr. Maya Angelou’s beloved poem, ‘Still I Rise,’” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “Through his deeds and actions, this human and civil rights hero is still rising and carrying the torch forward. Tonight, we renew our commitment to stand for racial and social justice and pledge to continue to shed a light on his work as he guides and inspires us all.”

For the past 25 years, Wong has served as director of the UCLA Labor Center – a resource for workers’ rights and economic justice in Los Angeles, California. Under his leadership, the UCLA Labor Center launched “Dream Summer,” the first national fellowship and scholarship program for undocumented immigrant youth. Over the past six years, the center has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships and has provided leadership development opportunities for countless undocumented students.

An attorney by training, he is also an accomplished author who has published more than 10 books on the labor movement, immigrant rights, and education. Wong has also been at the forefront of the immigrant youth rights movement. He taught one of the first courses in the country involving undocumented students, and has published three books on the topic.

Currently, Wong is also an active developer of global labor solidarity in the Pacific Rim, vice president of the California Federation of Teachers, co-chair of the California Assembly Speaker’s Commission on Labor Education, and chair of the New World Foundation. And despite all of this, Kent Wong finds the time to support, nurture, and uplift the next generation of social justice organizers and leaders as a professor and mentor at UCLA. Wong is also the founding president of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), AFL-CIO, the first national organization of Asian American union members and workers.

To read Wong’s full bio, please click [here](#). Watch this [video](#) of attorney and educator Kent Wong as he champions the rights of workers and immigrants while inspiring a new generation of social justice activists.

NEA also recognized the [anniversary of its merger with the American Teachers Association \(ATA\)](#), which represented black teachers in segregated schools. ATA originally created the Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner, and, as part of the merger, NEA continues this important tradition 50 years later.

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*The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.*