

2017 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Kent Wong ◆

Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award



Kent Wong is an accomplished teacher and labor activist with an impressive career spanning several decades. He has dedicated his life to the labor movement and advancing the cause of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as an attorney, activist, and educator.

For the past 25 years, Wong has served as the director of the UCLA Labor Center—a resource for workers' rights and economic justice. The UCLA Labor Center provides 300 internships each year, and actively recruits and places young activists, especially young activists of color, in the labor movement.

He was the founding President of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), AFL-CIO, the first national organization of Asian American union members and workers. For more than 20 years APALA has focused on organizing Asian American and Pacific Islander workers in the struggle for the civil rights and economic justice of all workers.

Wong has also been at the forefront of the immigrant rights movement, especially involving immigrant youth. He taught the first course in the country on undocumented students, and has published three books on the topic.

Under his leadership, the UCLA Labor Center has launched "Dream Summer," the first national fellowship and scholarship program for undocumented immigrant youth. The Center has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships for undocumented students in the past six years, and has provided leadership development opportunities for a new generation of undocumented youth.

An accomplished author, Wong has published more than ten books on the labor movement, immigrant rights, and education. His most recent book is *Nonviolence and Social Movements: The Teachings of Rev. James L. Lawson Jr.*

Currently, Kent Wong is Vice President of the California Federation of Teachers—representing 120,000 teachers and educational workers. He is also co-chair of the California Assembly Speaker's Commission on Labor Education, and chair of the New World Foundation. Kent is involved in global labor solidarity in the Pacific Rim with countries including China, Vietnam, Japan, Canada, Mexico and El Salvador.

Says APALA Executive Director Gregory Cendana: "Kent Wong continues to find time to support, nurture, and uplift the next generation of social justice organizers and leaders." When Cendana was a student at UCLA, Wong was his mentor, professor and inspiration.