



NORTHERN MARIANAS  
**HUMANITIES**  
COUNCIL

# 2023

## Governor's Humanities Awards

Tuesday  
October 17, 2023  
6:00 PM

Hyatt Regency Resort  
Regency Ballroom

# PROGRAM

## **Cultural Opening**

Donald B. Mendiola

## **Welcoming Remarks**

Dr. Bobby James A. Cruz

## **Special Remarks**

Governor Arnold I. Palacios

## **Presentation of Governor's Humanities Awards**

Marjorie A. Daria

Robert C. Harrell

Leo G. Pangelinan

Kimberly C. Mendiola

Michael A. White

Leonard Leon

## **Presentation of Board Service Awards**

Dr. Bobby James A. Cruz

Gretchen A. Smith

## **Board Resolution for Ivan K. Propst**

Gretchen A. Smith

## **Closing Remarks**

Leo G. Pangelinan

Lynette L. Villagomez

2023

Governor's Humanities Awards

RECIPIENTS



NORTHERN MARIANAS  
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COUNCIL



## Ajani S. Burrell

**Research and  
Publications  
in the Humanities**

Ajani S. Burrell is an assistant professor and chair of the Languages and Humanities Department at Northern Marianas College (NMC). He is currently on sabbatical leave to complete a doctoral program at Johannes Gutenberg Universität - Mainz in Germany focused on exploring contemporary indigenous narrative literature of the Marianas.

Burrell served as the lead collection editor for *A Marianas Mosaic: Signs and Shifts in Contemporary Island Life*, published in February 2023 by the University of Guam Press in conjunction with NMC's Proa Publications. He was also one of twenty-one contributors to the collection. In his essay, "Repping the Marianas," he analyzes logos, taglines, and marketing material from local clothing brands, as well as extensive interviews with these creators and designers. In his second essay, "May I Borrow Some Soy Sauce?" Burrell describes how neighbors in Rota are increasingly less likely to ask each other for small favors and speculates about some possible causes. In addition to his academic submissions, Burrell has published prose in several literary magazines and journals.



## **William J. Fife, III**

**Outstanding  
Humanities Teacher  
(In a Classroom  
Setting)**

William J. Fife III, Esq. is an associate professor in the Department of Social Sciences & Fine Arts at Northern Marianas College (NMC), A "Hoosier" originally from Indianapolis, Indiana, Fife moved to Saipan in 2016. Before joining NMC, Professor Fife had 12 years of public service experience working for Indigenous peoples of the Pacific including with the U.S. Peace Corps in the Kingdom of Tonga, Micronesia Legal Services Corporation in the Marshall Islands and the CNMI, and the CNMI Public School System at Kagman High School. He is licensed to practice in the Supreme Court and Federal District Courts in the State of Indiana, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the CNMI.

Fife has been teaching History and Principles of Democratic Institutions at the Northern Marianas College since 2022. He also taught History at Kagman High School for 5 years, from 2018-2023. The style of teaching that Fife has been known to utilize effectively in the classroom is the Socratic Method, allowing students to develop their critical thinking skills. In addition to this, he introduces concepts and terms that are readily accepted in the CNMI and provides the historical context from which these terms are derived. Many students have expressed having never perceived NMI history the way Fife teaches it. Through his unique teaching style, his passion for indigenous rights, and for connecting with students, he has helped students realize the importance of strengthening their cultural identity.

Outside of the classroom, Fife immerses himself in legal research and has authored book chapters and articles to help in the fight for the protection of rights for the Chamorro and Refaluwasch peoples of the CNMI. He coined the term "the Discovery Cases", and his recent publication focuses on the intersections of indigenous rights, genocidal colonialism, and addressing American second-class citizenship.



## Carmen S. Taimanao

**Outstanding  
Humanities Teacher  
(In a Non-Classroom  
Setting)**

Carmen S. Taimanao is a retired education luminary and a distinguished Chamorro language resource. She began her teaching career in 1966 at Rota Elementary School and was recognized as a trail blazing Chamorro bilingual teacher from 1970-1973. She worked as a curriculum writer for the CNMI Public School System's Bilingual Program thereafter and rose to become its project director until her retirement in 1986. She came out of retirement a decade later to fill this role again in 2000.

In 1994, Taimanao transitioned into the role of vice principal and then principal for Mount Carmel School while simultaneously teaching and developing curriculum for the Chamorro language course at Northern Marianas College.

Taimanao's enduring impact, particularly with regard to preserving and teaching the Chamorro language, extends beyond her work in the classroom or schools. She has translated numerous English language books to support Chamorro language literacy programs. Among the many books Taimanao translated are *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Carrot Seed*, *Tell Me a Story Mama*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, and *Peter 's Chair* which have been used to advance literacy under the Motherread Fatherread CNMI program. As a member of the Chamorro Carolinian Language Policy Commission, she mentored colleagues, led efforts to certify language translators throughout the CNMI, and participated in researching and implementing orthography standards. She is also a pioneer in establishing the CNMI chapter for the Pacific Islands Bilingual Bicultural Association to promote bilingual and bicultural educational activities throughout Micronesia, Hawai'i, and American Samoa.



## **Deborah A. Fleming**

### **Preservation of CNMI History**

Deborah A. Fleming was born on the island of Saipan and raised on Tinian where she currently resides. Throughout her life, Fleming drew inspiration from her elders, Chamorro cultural practitioners, and a strong desire to be a good steward of our islands' natural and cultural resources. Her journey as a widely recognized historian in our community is rooted in her interests in the oral history accounts of the Chamorro culture and people as told by the man'âmku and her own personal research into the cultural and historic sites found throughout the Marianas, especially on Tinian. Her efforts to preserve the history of the Marianas and that of her ancestors is manifested in the numerous walking and hiking tours she has led to connect visitors to the unique history and heritage found on Tinian. Fleming can still be seen today trekking through the harsh jungles and cliff lines of Tinian leading groups to reveal the island's many hidden culturally and historically significant sites. Accordingly, she has been enlisted as both a cultural advisor and historian on various archeological, infrastructure, and humanities projects affecting her community on Tinian for decades.

Fleming co-founded the Tinian Women's Association (TWA) to preserve the indigenous Chamorro culture for future generations and in 2016, was named one of the lead plaintiffs through the TWA in a joint lawsuit that challenged the U.S. Department of Defense's planned use of Pagan and Tinian for military training exercises. An example of her courage and resolve to take action to protect and preserve sacred cultural and historic spaces throughout the Marianas.



## **Milton F. Coleman, Jr.**

### **Preservation of Traditional Cultural Practices**

Milton F. Coleman, Jr. was born and raised in Saipan. In the early 1990's, as a volunteer working on the construction of the 54' wooden voyaging canoe, the HawaiiLoa, Coleman earned the trust of Kahuna Kālai Wa'a (Master Hawaiian canoe builder) Wright Bowman Jr. who asked him to be his apprentice. With the blessing of Bowman, Coleman then spent six cherished years building canoes and sailing under the tutelage of Grand Master Navigator Dr. Pius Mau Piailug ("Papa Mau") who shared traditional navigation with the Hawaiians in the hope that the tradition would be preserved for future generations. He had the honor of sailing on several long distance voyages with the Hoku-le'a, Makali'i, Hawaii'iloa, and Simion Hokulea.

Since then, he has led and participated in the building of various styles of sailing and voyaging canoes which are tangible expressions of knowledge and passion for our seafaring heritage in the Pacific. These experiences led him to teach and support canoe programs with Hawai'i's Bishop Museum, Hawai'i Public Charter School, Kamehameha Schools' Aina-based Education Department, University of Hawai'i's Civic Engagement Program, Malama Honua Public Charter School, Ke Kula Nui o Waimanalo and the NMI Canoe Federation. Coleman holds a USCG Master/Captain license and most recently was honorarily and humbly initiated as a Navigator in a Pwo ceremony conducted on Satawal under the Weriyaeng traditional school of navigation.

This wealth of experience and knowledge brought Coleman to Saipan, where in January 2023 he became the Director of Sailing & Seamanship at 500 Sails where his immediate contributions to the preservation of cultural seafaring traditions have enriched the cultural vitality of our community.





## Donald B. Mendiola

### Lifetime Achievement in the Humanities

Donald B. Mendiola, is a highly esteemed Suruhuãnu/Yo'amte (Traditional Healer), Master Weaver, Fa'fa'nague'n kuttura yan languahi (Chamorro language and heritage expert/ teacher), and author of *Ámot Chamorro: A Historical Snapshot of the CNMI's Medicinal Herbs and Shrubs*. A native of Saipan, Mendiola's journey as a Suruhuãnu began at the age of eight under the guidance of his grandmother, Tan Ana Mendiola. These early teachings, focused at first on identifying various types of local medicinal plants, led to the acquisition of practical and spiritual healing knowledge and skills bequeathed to him by over 30 elders from across the Marianas archipelago. He attributes his gifts for healing to God and serves the afflicted on a daily basis through various herbal remedies, massage, and processes for revealing and releasing spiritual wounds and traumas.

Mendiola served as a Chamorro Language and Heritage Studies teacher for over 30 years. His classroom is a space of cultural immersion, where students not only learn the Chamorro language, but also the stories, traditions, and values of the indigenous cultures of the Marianas, nurturing a sense of pride and belonging. In this role, he has coached teams from Hopwood Middle School who consistently place in the annual University of Guam's CHAMORU Language Competition. Outside of the classroom, Mendiola is a contributing member of the CNMI's Chamorro Language Dictionary Revision Committee, a certified translator/interpreter for the CNMI courts and legislature, and Vice Chair of the CNMI's Chamorro and Carolinian Language Policy Commission.

In recognition of his invaluable service, Mendiola received numerous accolades, including: the Governor's Humanities Award for Preservation of Traditional Cultural Practices (2010) and Outstanding Humanities Teacher (2013); the Regional Heritage Award by the Consortium for Pacific Arts and Culture; and separate CNMI House and Senate Resolutions. In 2022, he was awarded the Honorary Degree of Master of Micronesian Traditional Knowledge from the University of Guam in recognition of a lifetime of service to the preservation and advancement.

# BOARD SERVICE AWARDS

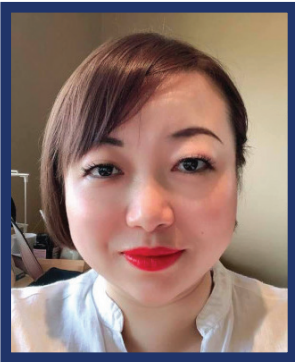


## **TRACY M. GUERRERO**

Member, Board of Directors  
*April 27, 2017 - April 28, 2023*

Board Vice Chair  
*May 1, 2018 - April 28, 2020*

Board Chair  
*April 28, 2021 - April 25, 2022*



## **NI N. DELEON GUERRERO**

Member, Board of Directors  
*April 27, 2017 - April 28, 2023*

Development Chair  
*April 27, 2017 - April 28, 2021*



## **ALLEN M. PEREZ**

Member, Board of Directors  
*February 7, 2020 - February 8, 2023*

# RECENT PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS

2022

**Frances Manibusan Sablan**

Lifetime Achievement Award

**Mario Benito**

Preservation of Traditional Practices

**Sofina Quitugua Tomokane**

Preservation of Cultural Practices

**Dr. Beylul Solomon**

Research & Publication in the Humanities

**April Quiambao Repeki**

Outstanding Humanities Teacher (Non-Classroom Setting)

**Gloria Saralu Rasiang**

Outstanding Humanities Teacher (Classroom Setting)

2021

**Catherine Perry**

Preservation of CNMI History

**Denton-Joe O. Pangelinan**

Preservation of CNMI History

**Walt F.J. Goodridge**

Research & Publications in the Humanities,

Preservation of CNMI History, and Outstanding Humanities Teacher

**Antonio U. Pialug**

Preservation of Traditional Cultural Practices

**Dr. Sylvia C. Frain**

Research and Publications in the Humanities

2020

**Stephanie Soder**

Preservation of CNMI History

**Anita Ayuyu Sablan**

Outstanding Humanities Teacher

**Eusebio Camacho Borja**

Preservation for Traditional Cultural Practices

**Ambrose Milton Bennett**

Lifetime Achievement in the Humanities

2019

**Lynne Michael**

Research and Publication in the Humanities

**Emma Perez**

Outstanding Humanities Teacher (Non-Classroom Setting)

**Dr. Chas Algaier**

Outstanding Humanities Teacher (Classroom Setting)

**Eric Joel Reyes**

Preservation of CNMI History

**Dr. Boyd Dixon**

Lifetime Achievement in the Humanities

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The Northern Marianas Humanities Council is a non-profit, grants-making corporation established in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in 1991. It has maintained 501 (C) 3 tax status since 1994. It is affiliated with and receives annual grant support from the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities and additional support from other federal, state and private grants and donations.

A thirteen-member volunteer board of directors, reflecting a broad cross section of the community, governs the Council's programs and operations. The Council administers Council conducted programs and activities overseen by staff and awards competitive Community Grants to groups and organizations in support of humanities projects. The Council's programs and Community Grants are undertaken in accordance with its Strategic Master Plan. The Council is committed to providing high quality public humanities programming to the people of the Commonwealth.

***“It is the Northern Marianas Humanities Council’s mission to navigate and explore the human experiences of the indigenous and diverse peoples of the Commonwealth by enriching their lives through research, dialogue, programs, and publications.”***

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