

University of California, Santa Barbara  
Davidson Library  
Department of Special Collections  
California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives

**GUIDE TO  
THE NELLIE WONG PAPERS,  
1972 - 2001**

**Collection Number: CEMA 14.**

**Size Collection: 10 linear feet, 21 Boxes**

**Acquisition Information: Donated by Nellie Wong, July 1998.**

**Access restrictions: None.**

**Use Restriction: Copyrights and production rights reside with donor.**

**Processing Information: Processing done by Todd Chatman and Gerardo Colmenar, and CEMA staff, December 20, 2000; latest revision made October 22, 2002.**

**Location: Del Norte.**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A Chinese-American poet and union activist, Nellie Wong was born and raised in the Oakland Chinatown of the 1940's. After the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans to relocation camps during World War II, Wong worked in her family's great China Restaurant in Oakland's Chinatown. Later, she traveled across the Bay to pursue studies in creative writing at San Francisco State University. Meanwhile, Wong worked at the Bethlehem Steel Corporation as a secretary from 1964-82. Wong began writing poetry in the early 1970's. Wong is one of the founding members of *Unbound Feet*, a writing collective of Chinese-American women who read together and lectured at universities throughout California, in the late 1970's. Wong's poems deal with themes involving Asian Americans, especially the sense of leaving "home" behind. "I care about the roots of Asian-American culture and how and why they came here," says Wong, referring to the long history of Asians' immigration to America. "It's something every Asian family has experienced."

In discussing her work, Wong states, "A lot of my poems come from the workplace; that's where I've experienced a great deal of sexism and racism." Wong has published three collections of poetry: *Death of Long Steam Lady* (1986), and *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park* (1977) and *Stolen Moments* (1997). Her poem, "Song of Farewell", was installed in 1996 on an F-Line Muni platform in the middle of the Embarcadero roadway near Greenwich Street. The poem, chosen by the San Francisco Arts Commission, is part of the Waterfront Transportation Project Historic and Interpretive Signage Program along San Francisco's North Embarcadero. Based on the thoughts and feelings of a man leaving China and the wife he is leaving behind in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "Song of Farewell" is about separation, departure, and ultimately death, says Wong. One of her articles, entitled, "*Asian American Women and politics*" recently appeared in Asian American anthology entitled, *Legacy to Liberation: politics and culture of revolutionary asian pacific america* (2000). In 1983, Wong served as a delegate for the first US Women Writers Tour to China. She has also been a visiting professor in women's studies at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (1985).

Wong is a member of Poets & Writers, NY; Radical Women, The Freedom Socialist Party; the National Asian American Telecommunications Association; and the University Professional & Technical Employees, and is a delegate to the San Francisco Central Labor Council. In 1989 she was honored by the San Francisco Women's Foundation with the Women of Words award. Wong prides herself on her feminist and socialist viewpoints. "The more I see some people fighting back, the more I see everyone acquiring the strength to fight back," says Wong. "Otherwise I'd just shut my door and say, 'good-bye world.' But that's not me."

Wong, together with Mitsuye Yamada, was the subject of a 1981 film "Mitsuye & Nellie, Asian American Poets," produced by Light-Saraf Productions about the first-generation of Chinese and Japanese wives and daughters allowed into America by U.S. immigration constraints. Nellie Wong's papers were donated to CEMA in June 1998.

## SCOPE NOTE

The **Nellie Wong Papers** consists of personal and professional materials generated by Wong during the period 1972-1998. The bulk of the collection contains Wong's writings, both prose and poetry (including manuscripts and numerous drafts), and related correspondence, publicity and professional files. Also included are several folders correspondence from fellow writers, friends, students, and the public. The second largest component of the collection, are the subject files, which includes numerous folders on specific individuals, conferences, and subjects. Altogether the Nellie Wong Papers provides much insight into Wong's political, creative and social life as an Asian American.

## SERIES DESCRIPTION

The **Personal / Biographical** series is limited to one box covering the period from 1970s to 1990s. The series contains several student class papers on Nellie Wong, including an undergraduate thesis entitled, *Mitsuye Yamada and Nellie Wong: Politics, Identity, Connections*\*. The series contains transcripts of interviews of Wong, newspaper clippings and personal correspondence. Two folders in this series contain materials relating to the video documentary entitled, *Mitsuye and Nellie: Two American Poets* 1981.

The **Correspondence** series (1975-1988) contains materials relating to Wong's correspondence with editors of various literary periodicals and journals, including publishers. The Personal correspondence folders contain letters from friends, individuals, and other writers that include their own poems and stories. Consisting of 2 boxes, the bulk of the correspondences relate to Wong's submission letters, copyright permissions, and matters relating to her poetry. Two folders contain letters to the editor providing insight into Wong's political and social views. Included in this series is a folder containing letters of recommendations that Nellie Wong wrote for colleagues. The series is arranged alphabetically and chronologically.

The **Literary Works** series contains published and unpublished materials covering the period of 1972 –1997. The series is subdivided into **Poems** and **General Writings**. Consisting of 5 boxes the **Poems** sub-series contains published and unpublished poems arranged according to categories created by Wong. It is also arranged in chronological order and alphabetical by title. Finished Poems contains final versions of poems without editing marks. Drafts of Poems include multiple copies of poems containing revisions at various stages of their creation, which give insight into Wong's development as a poet and her writing process. Poems Pending and Reviews contain files of Wong's poems sent for submission and related correspondence. Included in this series are Wong's published books with related documents, *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park* (1977), *The Death of Long Steam Lady* (1986), *Give Me No Flowers* (1985), and *Stolen Moments* (1997).

The **General Writings** sub-series consists of Wong's creative works in other genres which includes, shortstories, essays, drafts of speeches, monologues, class papers, and a play entitled, "A Marriage for Merilee." Since some of these works were written for specific events, duplicates appear in other series. For example, the series **Lectures and Appearances** contain duplicate drafts of talks and speeches

The **Lectures and Appearances** series contains announcements, correspondence, drafts of talks, and related documents on Wong's participation at conferences, poetry readings, political events, and workshops. Folders are labeled according to specific events and presentations. The folder labeled Minority workshop contains student's creative works and records. Several folders labeled miscellaneous containing announcements and publicity. This series contains materials relating to Wong's political and social activism and affiliation with organizations. Two audiocassettes are included. One is labeled "Directions in Chinese American Literature Talk Story Conference" (June 21, 1978) and the other is Asian Pacific Week Interview and Program (n.d.).

**Subject Files** consisting of 8 boxes, this series constitute the bulk of the collection, containing articles, correspondence, newspaper clippings, miscellaneous print materials on a range of social, cultural, and political events and topics. The collection also contains a large number of folders on specific individuals about whom Wong has known or written. Included in this series are materials relating to Wong's affiliations to political organizations and related materials on social and political activism. Several posters that belong in this series are kept in an oversize container.

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\* Mitsuye Yamada is a colleague and friend of Nellie Wong who along with other Asian American Women formed the Unbound Feet Collective.

## CONTAINER LIST

### SERIES I: PERSONAL/ BIOGRAPHICAL

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1-3	Undergraduate honors paper on Nellie Wong entitled, <i>Mitsuye Yamada and Nellie Wong: Poetry Politics Identity: Connection</i> , April 16, 1990. Including a letter from the student, April 20, 1990
1	4	Student papers entitled, A Journey through an Experience, March 17, 1980
1	5	Analysis of Developmental Change, March 10, 1980
1	6	Nellie Wong: a Woman Who Makes Sense, (Fall Qtr. 1980)
1	7	Nellie Wong: Worker/Writer by Choice, March 17, 1994
1	8	Letter from student, April 7, 1994
1	9	Interview scripts taken with N. Wong Gloria Anzaldua & Randolph Conner, (interviewers), July 1978 Interview with Merle Woo, Karen Brodine (interviewer), (n.d.)
1	10-12	Newspaper clippings and related articles, (some materials in Italian) 1980-1983
1	13-20	Materials relating to video film <i>Mitsuye and Nellie: Two American Poets</i> , correspondence 1978-1980 <i>Mitsuye and Nellie</i> , publicity 1982-1983
4	14	Lectures & Public Appearances- Nellie Wong
4	15	Poetry Appearances & Articles
4	16	Feminism & Activism program- Nellie Wong

### SERIES II: CORRESPONDENCE

Box	Folder	Contents
<b>Personal Correspondence</b>		
1	21-26	Personal correspondence 1970 – 1990 (1 photograph, box 1, folder 10)
1	27	Personal correspondence n.d.
1	28-29	Writings by others
1	30-31	Student writings influenced by Wong's poetry
<b>Literary Correspondence</b>		
2	1	<i>A Press Ltd</i> , 1978
2	2	<i>Academy of American Poet</i> , 1993
2	3	<i>Against the Grain</i> , 1982
2	4	<i>Ain't I a Woman</i> , 1979
2	5	<i>Alcatraz Editions</i> , 1981-1983
2	6	<i>Amerasia Journal</i> , 1976
2	7	<i>Asian American Art Projects</i> , 1978
2	8	<i>Asian American Journey</i> , 1981
2	9	<i>Asian Directions</i> , 1979
2	10	<i>Basement Writers Workshop</i> , 1977-1978
2	11	<i>Bay Area Women Writers</i> , 1981
2	12	<i>Berkeley Fiction Review</i> , 1983
2	13	<i>Birth Stone</i> , 1983
2	14	<i>Blue Collar Press</i> , 1978
2	15	<i>Bridge: Asian American Perspectives</i> , 1983
2	16	<i>Chicory Blue Press</i> , 1994-1998

2	17	<i>City Arts Monthly</i> , 1982
2	18	<i>Color Press</i> , 1994
2	19	<i>Conditions</i> , 1977-1981
2	20	<i>Contact II</i> , 1983
2	21	<i>Cooper Union Station</i> , 1980
2	22	<i>Crossing Press</i> , 1994
2	23	<i>East-West Chinese American News Weekly</i> , 1976-1979
2	24	<i>Echoes from Gold Mountain</i> , 1977-1979
2	25	<i>Electrum</i> , 1984
2	26	<i>Eleven</i> , 1984
2	27	<i>Ethnic Studies Editorial Board and Editorial Board</i> , 1984
2	28	<i>A Gift of Tongues</i> , 1978-1982
2	29	<i>Greenfield Review</i> , 1983-1994
2	30	<i>Hampton Brown Company</i> , 1994
2	31	<i>Hanging Loose</i> , 1981-1982
2	32	<i>Harper Collins</i> , 1993-1994
2	33	<i>Hartmus Press</i> , 1977-1979
2	34	<i>Heresies</i> , 1983
2	35	<i>Iowa Review</i> , 1981
2	36	<i>Journal of Ethnic Studies</i> , 1979
2	37	<i>Kelsey Street Press</i> , 1977-1997
2	38	<i>Loon</i> , 1977
2	39	<i>Ms. Magazine</i> , 1975-1976
2	40	<i>National League for Nursing</i> , 1993
3	1	<i>New Boston Review</i> , 1980
3	2	<i>New World Press</i> , 1978-1979
3	3	<i>New York Asian Women's Center</i> , 1991
3	4	<i>New York Feminist Review</i> , 1979
3	5	<i>North American Women Poets</i> , 1976
3	6	<i>Off Our Backs</i> , 1982
3	7	<i>Oxford University Press</i> , 1994
3	8	<i>Pacifica Review</i> , 1978
3	9	<i>Pennywhistle Press</i> , 1993-1996
3	10	<i>Plexus</i> , 1976-1980
3	11	<i>Poetic Justice</i> , 1983
3	12	<i>Poetry Center and American Poetry Archives</i> , 1977-1994 (contains letter pertaining to the commissioned poem for San Francisco Muni)
3	13	<i>Poetry Flash</i> , 1979-1981
3	14	<i>Prisma, Ethnic Studies, Mills College</i> , 1979-1980
3	15	<i>Realities Library</i> , 1983
3	16	<i>Red Bass</i> , 1983
3	17	<i>Room</i> , 1978
3	18	<i>Sailing the Road Clear</i> , 1977-1978
3	19	<i>San Diego Poet's Press</i> , 1983
3	20	<i>Secretarial Pool</i> , 1979
3	21	<i>Synapse</i> , 1984-1986
3	22	<i>Truck Press</i> , 1978-1979
3	23	<i>University of New Mexico</i> , 1980-1981
3	24	<i>Valencia Street</i> , 1982
3	25	<i>West End Press</i> , 1991-1993
3	26	<i>Wild Iris</i> , 1975
3	27	<i>Women: a Journal of Liberation</i> , 1982
3	28	<i>Women's Journal</i> , 1976-1977
3	29	<i>Yellow, Black, Brown</i> , 1978
3	30	<i>13<sup>th</sup> Moon</i> , 1980-1981

3	31-33	Miscellany, 1975-1998
		<b>Letters to the editors</b>
3	34	1970s
3	35	1980s
		<b>Letters of Recommendations</b> (written by Nellie Wong)
3	36	1978 - 1982

### SERIES III: LITERARY WRITINGS

Box	Folder	Contents
		<b>Poetry Subseries</b>
		<i>Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park</i>
4	1	<i>Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park</i> materials relating to its publication, including portraits of Wong (b/w); drafts of poems.
4	2	Drafts of poems, sample design of book.
4	3	Publication agreement, a blank copyright form.
4	4	Reviews. 1977-1979
4	5	Correspondence with publisher regarding contract and book sales 1977-1978
4	6	Correspondence (1979-1984) with publisher.
4	7	Personal correspondence comments regarding DHRP, requests for copies, "Guest book" list for book reading, Oct. 6, 1977
		<i>Death of Long Steam Lady</i>
4	8	Drafts of poem
4	9	Monograph copy and photocopy of a signed copy (located in the Davidson Library Special Collections).
4	10	Correspondence with West End Press and related materials 1986
4	11	Reviews and correspondence 1985-1986
4	12	Publicity. 1985-1986
4	13	<i>The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America</i> related correspondence. 1991-1995
5	1	<i>It's in the Blood</i> 1978
5	2-3	<i>Give me no Flowers</i> 1985
5	4	<i>Stolen Moments</i> , (2 copies 1 signed located in Special Collections)
5	5	Poems, anthologies
5	6	Awards including commissioned poem
		<b>Finished Poems</b>
5	7	"Titles of Poems" by Nellie Wong, 1973-1997, list of published poems
5	8	A
5	9-10	B
5	11	C
5	12	D
6	1	E
6	2	F
6	3	G
6	4	H
6	5	I
6	6	J

6	7	K-L
6	8	M
6	9	N
6	10	O
6	11	P
6	12-13	R
6	14-15	S
6	16-18	T
6	19	T-U
6	20	V-W
6	21-22	W
6	23	Y

**Drafts of Poems, 1970s – 1990s**

7	1	A
7	2	B
7	3	D
7	5	E
7	6	F
7	7	G (including copies of essay <i>Glow from the Dark...</i> )
7	8	H
7	9	I – J
7	10	L
7	11	M
7	12	N
7	13	O
8	1	P
8	2-3	R
8	4-5	S
8	6-7	T
8	8	U
8	9	V
8	10-11	W
8	12	Y
8	13-14	Miscellany ca 1970-1980

**Pending Poems**

9	1	1977-1979
9	2	1982
9	3-4	1983
9	5	1984
9	6-7	1985
9	8-9	1985-1986

**Class writings**

10	1	1972
10	2	1973
10	3	1974
10	4	1975
10	5	1976
10	6-8	1977
10	9	1978
10	10	n.d.

### Non-Poetry Writings (including writings related to politics and social activism)

11	1	<i>After the Wake</i> n.d.
11	2	<i>Another Voice on Asian American Women</i> 1980
11	3	<i>Asian American Women, Feminism and Creativity</i> 1980
11	4	<i>Broad Shoulders</i> 1982
11	5	<i>Continuing the Dialogue: Asian American Women</i> 1980
11	6-7	<i>Death of Long Steam Lady</i> 1978
11	8	<i>Enter the Mirror</i> 1979
11	9	<i>Freedom</i> 1981
11	10	<i>Heart Beats: Concerns of an Asian American Feminist</i> 1979 <i>For Sisters who Leaped</i> 1978 (poem)
11	11	<i>How to Arm the Sunlight</i> 1968
11	12	<i>I Don't Eat Green Things</i> n.d.
11	13-14	<i>I Only Want Some Golf Clubs</i> 1971
11	15	<i>In Search of the Self as Hero</i> 1980
11	16	<i>Interrogation of MS. Security-Runs-A-Risk</i> 1979 (play)
11	17	<i>Ironing</i> 1980
11	18	<i>Leadership</i> 1981
11	19	<i>Living Dialogue</i> n.d.
11	20	<i>Mirror Images: Questions that Never Stops</i> 1980
11	21	<i>The Night that Clara Won</i> 1982
11	22	<i>On the Eve of the New Year</i> 1968
11	23-25	<i>Operation Hamburger and Saturday</i> (with correspondence and notes), 1975-1977
12	1	<i>Please Come to a Luau</i> 1968
12	2	<i>Politics of Asian American Writing</i> 1981
12	3	<i>Practice</i> 1980
12	4	<i>Red Ropes</i> 1970
12	5	<i>Rise of Women Writers in Asian American Literature</i> 1980 (San Francisco Journal)
12	6	<i>Thank God It's Friday</i> 1971
12	7	<i>Through the Stardust and Flying Home</i> 1981
12	8-9	<i>Typewriterbacktalk</i>
12	10	<i>The visit</i>
12	11	<i>Waiting</i>
12	12	<i>When in Mexico</i>
12	13-14	<i>When the turkey is bare</i>
12	15	<i>Window full of shoes</i>
		<b>Other writings</b>
12	16	Journal entries 1970s-1990s
12	17-19	Miscellany
12	20	Outlines of short stories (assignments) 1972
12	21	Play; <i>Marriage for Merilee</i> , (12/9/71 1 copy; 1/14/81 2 copies 1 with one complete draft); announcements 2/13/79
12	22	Reviews written by Wong
12	23	Writings related to politics and social activism

### SERIES IV: LECTURES AND APPEARANCES

Box	Folder	Contents
13	1	Everybody's Minority Writing Workshop Poetry Mills College 1978
13	2	Great western book: Minneapolis, MN 1985-1986
13	3	Mid Peninsula Young Women's Christian Association 1978-1980

13	4	National Asian American Conference 1993
13	5	Oakland Center Stage 1982
13	6	Oakland Festival of the Arts 1982
13	7	Poetry reading list 1975-1978
13	8	Radio Commentary, KPFK 1978
13	9	Stanford 1980-1986
13	10	University of California Campuses 1985-1986
13	11	Unbound feet 1980
13	12	Women's voices from Asian America 1979
13	13	Year Of The Secretaries Talk 1984
13	14-16	1970s – 1990s
13	17	Undated materials

**See OVERSIZE Box 21 for posters relating to conferences and related literary events.**

**See Special Collections for two audiocassettes, “Chinese American Literature Talk Story Conference, Honolulu, HI, June 21, 1978 (60-minute tape) (A4172/CS), A/P Week n.d. (60 minute tape) (A4171/CS)**

### **SERIES V: SUBJECT FILES**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
14	1	Alliance Against Women’s Oppression 1981
14	2	Angel Island 1931-1979
14	3-4	Asian American 1977-1987
14	5	Asian American, book reviews 1979-1981
14	6	Asian American, performing arts 1979-1981
14	7-8	Asian American plays, reviews 1977-1984
14	9	Asian American women, bibliographies 1976-1981
14	10-11	Asian American women 1976-1985
15	1-2	Asian American women, groups 1972-1984
15	3	Asian Health Caucus, presentation 1979-1984
15	4	Asian Pacific American Heritage Week Festival 1980
15	5	Asian Pacific American Women’s Conference 1980-1981
15	6-7	Asian Pacific American Women’s Organizations 1980-1981
15	8	Asians in Mass Media (with newsletters) 1977-1978
16	1	Berge Poem 1979-1981
16	2	California Asian Pacific Women’s Conference 1979-1980
16	3-4	Chan, Charlie 1979-1981
16	5	Chang, Helen Ong 1976-1981
16	6	Chiang, Ching “Madame Mao” 1976-1981
16	7-8	Chinese America 1972-1984
17	1	Chuang, Hua, (Crossings) 1968
17	2	Davis, Angela 1984
17	3	Dialogues, women’s plays 1976
17	4	Filipino America 1981-1985
17	5	Film showing, <i>Mitsuye and Nellie</i> , Los Angeles, 1982
17	6	Garment Workers Forum 1981-1982
17	7	Haddad, Carol J 1982
17	8	Hagedorn, Jessica, no date
17	9	Gidra clippings, 20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue 1990
17	10	Japanese America 1977-1982

17	11	Kingston, Maxine Hong 1978-1981
17	12	Kingston, Maxine Hong, <i>Woman Warrior</i> 1976-1979
17	13	Lee, Chol Soo 1978-1979
17	14	Left Write Unity Conference 1980-1982
18	1	Light, Millie, no date
18	2	Lim, Genny 1979-1980
18	3-4	<i>Mitsuye and Nellie</i> , film premier and related materials 1981
18	5	Newsletters and other subscriptions 1977-1998
18	6	Ng, Fae Myenne 1977-1980
18	7	Noda, Barbara 1978-1980
18	8	Plath, Sylvia 1974-1975
18	9	Poets and Writers 1977-1981
18	10	Racism, articles 1978-1980
18	11	Reeves, Beulah (from Kelly E.) 1975-1978
18	12	Rich, Adrienne 1974
18	13	Saadawi, Nawal El 1973-1977
18	14	Secretaries week 1979-1984
18	15	Simpson-Mazoli Bill 1983-1986
19	1	Stereotypes, Images, etc. Asian Americans 1977-1980
19	2	Tan, Bee Bee 1977-1984
19	3	Telemaque, Eleanor Hong 1979-1980
19	4	Third World Women Writers Forum, 1978-1980
19	5	Third World Writers and Thinkers Symposium, Sacramento State 1976
19	6	<i>This Bridge Called my Back</i> 1979-1982
19	7	Toguri, Iva 1975-1980
19	8	Tsui, Kitty 1981-1983
19	9	Unbound Feet, Notes 1980
19	10	Women Inc, benefit poetry reading, 1979
19	11-12	Women International 1978-1982
20	1	Women Writers 1974-1980
20	2	Women's Leadership Conference, 1980-1984
20	3	Wong, Nanying, Stella 1977-1978
20	4	Women Writers 1978-1985
20	5	Writings, Notes on 1942-1980
20	6-8	Yamada, Mitsuye, with correspondence. (photograph, folder 6) 1978-1994
20	9	Yamamoto, Hisaye 1960
20	10	Yamauchi, Wakako, no date
20	11	Yoshimura, Wendi, 1977-1980

## OVERSIZE BOX

Box	Folder	Contents
21	1	<b>Posters</b> Asian Pacific cultural Month, n.d. C.A.N. Charlie Chan, n.d. Film Series Benefit for Women's Building in San Francisco, 1978 Great Midwestern Bookshow, The 5 <sup>th</sup> Annual, (2 copies and newspaper), 1985 Left Write! A Unity Conference of Writers on the Left, Four Benefit Poetry Readings, 1981 Left Write! A Unity Conference of Writers on the Left, 1981 National Women's History Week, 1982

Paper Angels: A Play By Genny Lim, 1982  
Six Authors To Read At Millberry, n.d.

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**Journals**

*Plexus*, Newspaper Clipping: Reverberations, 1980

*The Register*, Newspaper Clipping: A Struggle For Acceptance Continues, 1982

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**Miscellany**

Book Cover Paste-Up for The Death of Long Steam Lady, n.d.

Literary Correspondence Flyer on Sphericity By Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, n.d.

Photos of Nellie Wong:

Black and white photo, 1981

Black and white photo, ca. late 1970s –early 1980s

Small poster: “Artists Respond to Proposition 187” Exhibition, September 15-  
October 20, 1985.