

Gunindu S. Abeysekera

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EDUCATION

- 2022–** **Ph.D., Culture & Performance**
University of California, Los Angeles - Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance
“Devil” Dance to National Icon: Colonial and Nationalist Films of Kandyan Dance in Sri Lanka
Advanced to Doctoral Candidacy on November 8, 2025
- 2018–2019** **M.A., Asian American Studies**
University of California, Irvine
Thesis: *Anubhava: Historytelling Through Bharatanatyam Dance in the South Asian American Diaspora (Documentary Film & Written Thesis)*
Film: bit.ly/Anubhava Written Thesis: bit.ly/GuninduAbeysekeraMATHesis
- 2015–2018** **B.A., Film & Media Studies**
Minor: International Studies
University of California, Irvine
Dean’s Honor List: Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Winter 2017, Fall 2017

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2026-present** **Teaching Fellow**, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance
Winter 26: Senior Projects Practicum 1
Spring 26: Senior Projects Practicum 2
- 2023-2025** **Teaching Assistant**, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance
Fall 23: W51 - Aliens, Psychics, and Ghosts (5 units)
Winter 24: WAC 33 - Colonialism & Resistance (5 units)
Spring 24: WAC 100A - Art as Social Action (5 units); WAC 79 - Food Politics (5 units)
Fall 24: WAC 1 - Intro to World Arts & Cultures (5 units)
Winter 25: Dance 44 - World Dance Histories (5 units)
Spring 25: Dance 101 - Theories of Performance (5 units)

Fall 25: WAC 124 - Intro to Field-Based Methods (5 units); WAC M79 - Food Politics (5 units)
- 2024-present** **Graphic Designer**, [Chitrasena Dance Company](#) (Sri Lanka)
- 2023-present** **Creative Direction, Media**, [SandaWaruna: Art of Dance](#)
- Summer 2022** **Communications Fellow**, [South Asian SOAR](#): Survivors, Organizations, and Allies - Rising
- 2017-2022** **Co-Founder & Program Coordinator**, [YALU](#): Youth Advancement, Leadership, & Unification
- 2017-2020** **2019-2020: Outreach & Engagement Coordinator**, [UC Irvine FRESH Basic Needs Hub](#)
2017-2019: Student Marketing Manager, UC Irvine FRESH Basic Needs Hub
- 2018-2019** **Graduate Researcher**, [Office of Inclusive Excellence](#) - University of California, Irvine
- 2017-2018** **Undergraduate Seminar Instructor**, [UTeach](#) - University of California, Irvine
- 2017-2018** **Co-Founder & Director of Media & Communications**, South Asian Student Union at UCI
- 2015-2016** **Marketing Intern & Media Producer**, Farrah Khan for Irvine City Council (2016 campaign)

PUBLICATIONS

Doshi, Amrita et al. 2022. *Together We Rise: Voices from the Frontlines of South Asian Gender-Based Violence Work*. South Asian SOAR.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

- 6 MAR 2026** **Co-Oral Presenter, Paper** – Drishti Kavya: Visual Poetics and Politics of Screen Dance with Mihika Banerjee*
Panel - pending
2026 UC Riverside Critical Dance Experiments Conference
- 20 FEB 2026** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – “Discursive Genealogies of Kandyan Dance through Visual Culture”
Panel – Movements and Mediascapes: Visualizing Power in Post-Colonial South Asia
UCLA Center for India and South Asia Works-in-Progress Conference
- 19 NOV 2025** **Keynote Teach-In Lecturer** – “Archive to Ourchive”
“Make Words; Not War” hosted by UCLA Cultural Affairs and The Word on Wednesday
- 13 NOV 2025** **Guest Lecturer** – “Archive and Repertoire: Telling the Stories of Our Communities Through Film and Dance”
Course: Global Perspectives in Dance, Professor Wilfred Souly - Loyola Marymount University
- 7 FEB 2025** **Oral Presenter** – “Colonial Representations of Kandyan Dance in Sri Lanka”
Panel – History & Performance
[Movement Rhizome](#): *Quillian International Symposium on Sri Lanka: Randolph College, Virginia*
- 30 SEP 2024** **Co-Oral Presenter** – “Devi Worship: Ritual Drag Performance for the Goddess Pattini in Sri Lanka” with Ravindu Ranawaka*
Panel – Body Beautiful, Body Monstrous
UCLA Queer Graduate Conference
- 9 AUG 2024** **Chair and Respondent, Panel** – Transforming Mere Mortals Through the Ves Costume
Samāla Heritage Festival: Kandy, Sri Lanka
- 27 APR 2024** **Co-Panelist, Roundtable Discussion** – Aiyo: Reimagining Anti-Colonial Resistance and Futurities in Sri Lanka and the Diaspora
Association for Asian American Studies Annual Conference
- 26 APR 2024** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – “Los Angeles ‘Nuwara’: Politics of Performing Arts Festivities in the Sri Lankan American Diaspora”
Chair, Panel – Diasporic Reframings & Critical Refugee Studies: South and Southeast Asian/American Studies
Association for Asian American Studies Annual Conference
- 19 MAY 2023** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – “Returning the Gayze: A Recreation and Reflection of Lionel Wendt’s Queer Sri Lankan Photographs”
Panel – Scrambling the Archive
UCLA Queer Graduate Conference
- 8 APR 2023** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – “Returning the Gayze: A Recreation and Reflection of Lionel Wendt’s Queer Sri Lankan Photographs”
Panel – Queer Counterpublics: Creating Spaces for Community and Survival in the South Asian Diaspora
Association for Asian American Studies Annual Conference
- 12 MAR 2022** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – “Translating Our Realities, Transforming Our Diaspora: A Sri Lankan American’s Experiences Curating the Language-Learning Blog @SpeakInSinhala”

South Asian Studies Association Annual Conference - Virtual (Zoom)

- 2 NOV 2021** **Guest Lecturer** – “Experimental Ethnography: Community Resilience and Digital Media”
Course: South Asian American Experiences, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 13 JUL 2021** **Guest Lecturer** – “Alternative Archives: Telling the Stories of Our Communities through Film”
Course: Asian American Film & Video: Poetics & Politics, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 30 APR 2021** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – Anubhāva: Historytelling Through Bharatanatyam Dance in the South Asian American Diaspora
Panel – Space, Place, and Temporalities
White Rose South Asia Conference 2021, University of Leeds, UK - Virtual (Zoom)
- 26 APR 2021** **Workshop Presenter** – Nostalgia Without Memory: Love & Resistance Stories by a Sri Lankan Immigrant
Event – Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Heritage Events:
Los Medanos Community College - Virtual (Zoom)
- 7 FEB 2021** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – Anubhāva: Historytelling Through Bharatanatyam Dance in the South Asian American Diaspora
Panel – Art Form, Gender, and the Literary Imagination
South Asian Studies Association Annual Conference - Virtual (Zoom)
- 2 FEB 2021** **Presenter** – Preserving Our Communities Through Digital Storytelling in the Diaspora
Event – South Asian Awareness Week
South Asian Federation at UC Riverside
- 16 NOV 2020** **Guest Lecturer** – Archiving Through Digital Media & Art
Course: South Asian American Experiences, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 10 JUL 2020** **Guest Lecturer** – Oral Herstories: Preserving our Communities Through Storytelling
Course: Asian American Women, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 14 MAY 2020** **Presenter** – Expressing Myself Through Art in the Sri Lankan American Diaspora
Event Series – Shelter in the Storm: Asian American Artists
Asian American Studies at UC Irvine - Virtual (Zoom)
- 9 APR 2020**
(Postponed
COVID-19) **Oral Presenter, Paper** – Anubhāva: Historytelling Through Bharatanatyam Dance in the South Asian American Diaspora
Panel – Archiving Our Resilience: Memory, Identity, and Community in the South and Southeast Asian Diaspora
Association for Asian American Studies Annual Conference - Washington D.C.
- 26 NOV 2019** **Guest Lecturer** - Oral Herstories: Preserving our Communities Through Storytelling on my MA dissertation and documentary films, *Serendipitous* and *Anubhāva*
Course: Asian American History, Professor Dorothy Fujita-Rony - UC Irvine
- 4 NOV 2019** **Guest Lecturer** – Preserving our Communities Through Storytelling with my documentary films, *Serendipitous* and *Anubhāva*
Course: South Asian American Experiences, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 26 AUG 2019** **Guest Lecturer** – Preserving our Communities Through Storytelling with my documentary films, *Serendipitous* and *Anubhāva*
Course: Asian American Stories: Love, Family, Immigration, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 22 APR 2019 & 24 APR 2019** **Guest Lecturer** – *Bend it Like Beckham* and the Bildungsroman
Course: Formative Fictions: Coming of Age in Asian America, Professor Julia H. Lee - UC Irvine

- 7 FEB 2019** **Panelist** – Navigating Grad School as a Queer Person of Color
Event – Ask a Grad Panel
Womxn’s Hub at UC Irvine
- 30 JAN 2019** **Teach-In Lecturer & Workshop Facilitator** – Colonialism and Memory
Students for Justice in Palestine Teach-In Workshop - UC Irvine
- 21 MAY 2018** **Oral Presenter, Paper** – Politics of *Padmavati*: A Survey of the Patriarchal Hold on Feminine Power
Panel – The Unthought in Discourses on Nation, Coalition, and Law
Undergraduate Critical Theory Conference at UC Irvine
- 12 FEB 2018** **Workshop Facilitator & Panel Moderator** – Shadeism & Anti-Blackness in South Asia with Professor Frank Wilderson
South Asian Student Union and African American Studies Department - UC Irvine
- 5 NOV 2018** **Guest Lecturer** – (Re)Creating Culture in the Diaspora with my documentary film, *Serendipitous*
Course: South Asian American Experiences, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine
- 6 NOV 2017** **Guest Lecturer** – “1.5 Generation & Memory in the Sri Lankan-American Diaspora” with my documentary film, *Serendipitous*
Course: South Asian American Experiences, Professor Beheroze Shroff - UC Irvine

ARTISTIC PROJECTS

- 6 MAR 2026** **Drishti Kavya** – Experimental dance film on the collaborative labor between a dance filmmaker and a dancer. The accompanying paper will be presented and premiered at UCR’s Critical Dance Experiments Conference 2026.
 Co-Director with Mihika Banerjee, Videographer, and Editor
- 6 MAR 2026** **From Ritual to Stage: A Woman’s Journey Through Sri Lankan Dance** – An archival media-based dance production exploring a dancer’s (Sandani Sulochani) response to colonial and nationalist representations of Sri Lanka’s Kandyan dance.
 Co-Creative Director and Media Designer
UC Riverside’s Critical Dance Experiments Conference 2026
- 26–28 SEP 2025** **Namo Vajiraye: The Unfolding Legacy** – Chitrasena Dance Company
 Performance and exhibition for the 1-year death anniversary of Sri Lanka’s first female dancer, Vajira Chitrasena. I created all the graphics, videos, and other visual materials for the promotion, exhibition, and performance.
The Lionel Wendt Theatre – Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 8 SEP 2025** **Dwandha - The Drum and Dance Duet** – Dance film for SandaWaruna Art of Dance
 Videographer and Editor
<https://youtu.be/HixNQYDe2YU>
- 7 MAR 2025** **Bāla Giri Liya** – Dance film for SandaWaruna Art of Dance
 Videographer and Editor
https://youtu.be/oDL0jTB_NMQ
- 16 DEC 2024** **Seetha Sulan** – Dance film for SandaWaruna Art of Dance
 Videographer and Editor
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjmuNsd0x_s&t=3s
- 28 AUG 2024** **“Gun Down”** – Music video for Shenali

Director, Videographer and Editor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNkmXk0YIzY>

APR 2023

Returning to a Lost Tradition Documentary Film

Videographer and Editor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ5nGmEmUNA&t=4s>

2020–2022

30+ Dance Film with Bharatanatyam Dancer, Sukanya Kumar

Videographer and Editor

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAUmTMS090QQYLske95BsF6ALDLx_B6-c

20 MAY 2021

Bhumika – Dance film for Arpana Dance Company

Videographer and Editor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D6hUCQzi0>

APRIL 2020

Hendrick's Tea House

Graphic Designer, Product Designer, Photographer, Videographer

<https://www.hendricksteahouse.com/>

FALL 2020

Count Us In Documentary on AAPI Census Participation, OCAPICA

Videographer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW6vyWZ9AQQ>

Photography Portfolio: <https://www.gunindu.com/photography>

Digital Art Portfolio: <https://www.gunindu.com/graphic-design-digital-art>

ONGOING PROJECTS

2024

Digitizing the D'Lo Srijaerajah Collection for the South Asian American Digital Archive

2020

@SpeakInSinhala

Blog creator and curator

Daily Instagram blog with a Sinhala “word of the day” and artwork relating to social justice

2020

Archive ISLAND: Introducing Sri Lankan American Narratives in the Diaspora

Project creator and interviewer

Multimedia ethnography through YALU: *Youth Advancement, Leadership, & Unification*

2018

Pen Pal with Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka

Project creator and organizer

Pen pal letter exchange program between 60 Sri Lankan-American youth through YALU and Sri Lankan youth volunteers at *Sarvodaya Shanti Sena* in Sri Lanka

EVENT & PROGRAM COORDINATION

3 JAN 2026

“Heal Lanka: Charity Fundraiser for Flood Relief in Sri Lanka”

14 NOV 2019

“Food for Thought: A Conversation on Community Microfarming & the Movement for Equitable Food Systems in OC”

UCI FRESH Basic Needs Hub; UCI Sustainability Resource Center

31 MAY 2019

“Anubhāva Film Premiere & Dance Workshop” Exhibition of my MA Thesis

Department of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Irvine

23 APR 2019

“Honoring the Victims of Sri Lanka” Candlelight Vigil & Interfaith Ceremonies

Youth Advancement, Leadership, & Unification; South Asian Student Union; Sri Lanka United - UCI

31 MAY 2018

“Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Hindutva in the U.S.” with Professor Vinayak Chaturvedi

South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine

- 24 MAY 2018** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Basic Needs Security” with the FRESH Basic Needs Hub
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 12 APR 2018** “South Asian Culture Night: Diversity in the Diaspora” Cultural Showcase and Philanthropic Fundraiser for Non-Profits, South Asian Network and Women Lead Nepal (\$1,619 raised)
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 5 MAR 2018** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Interpersonal Violence in South Asian Communities” with South Asian Network (OC Non-Profit)
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 27 FEB 2018 -
1 MAR 2018** “South Asian Art Week” Art showcase, film screening, and open mic night
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 12 FEB 2018** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Shadeism & Anti-Blackness in South Asia” Lecture, panel, and fundraiser for Black Lives Matter
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 5 FEB 2018** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “South Asian LGBT+ Identities” with Satarang LA
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 22 JAN 2018** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Mental Health & South Asia”
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 15 NOV 2017** “Chai Night” Discussion Series & Workshop, “South Asian Professionals” with South Asian Network (OC Non-Profit)
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 15 NOV 2017** “Decolonize Your Wardrobe” Student Demonstration
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 8 NOV 2017** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “South Asian Womxn & Activists”
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 1 NOV 2017** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Feminisms of South Asia”
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine
- 11 OCT 2017** “Chai Night” Discussion Series, “Diversity in South Asia”
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine

AWARDS

- 2025** **Dr. Sambhi Memorial Summer Fellowship, Center for India and South Asia (UCLA)**
- 2024** **Dissertation Planning Grant, American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies (AISLS)**
- 2022** **Finalist: Dubai Independent Film Festival**
For the dance film, “Bhumika” I co-directed, filmed, and edited
- 2021** **Semi-Finalist: San Francisco Indie Short Festival**
For the dance film, “Bhumika,” I co-directed, filmed, and edited
- 2018** **John Liu Asian American Studies Fellowship**
Received a \$1,000 scholarship for the pursuit of my M.A. through UC Irvine
- 2018** **Best Multicultural Organization at UC Irvine, South Asian Student Union**
- 2018** **UCI Cross Cultural Center’s Praxis Award, South Asian Student Union**

2017 **Franco Tonelli Memorial Prize for Television and Digital Media Theory & Criticism**
Received \$200 for my essay, "The Intersectionalities of Gender and Race through Hip-Hop Culture and Music," from the UCI Department of Film & Media Studies

TECHNOLOGICAL PROFICIENCIES

Canon 5D Mark IV	Proficient	Google Programs	Proficient
Final Cut Pro X	Proficient	Website Development	Proficient
Adobe Photoshop	Adequate	Excel	Adequate
Apple Procreate	Adequate	Social Media	Proficient

LANGUAGES

English	Fluent
Sinhala	Fluent
French	Proficient

REFERENCES

Academic:

Aparna Sharma

Professor - Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UC Los Angeles

PhD Dissertation Chair

aparnasharma@arts.ucla.edu

Judy Tzu-Chun Wu

Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Professor - Department of Asian American Studies at UC Irvine

MA Dissertation Chair

j.wu@uci.edu

Beheroze Shroff

Lecturer - Department of Asian American Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies at UC Irvine

Undergraduate Mentor

bshroff@uci.edu

Artistic:

Heshma Wignaraja

Artistic Director, [Chitrasena Dance Company](#)

heshma@chitrasenadance.lk

Ramya Harishankar

Founder, Artistic Director, and Principal Guru - [Arpana Dance Company](#)

Founder and Former Board Member - [Ektaa Center](#)

ramya@danceramya.com

Andrea Mora

Director - [FRESH Basic Needs Hub](#)

andrea.g@uci.edu

Farrah N. Khan

Mayor - [City of Irvine](#)

Executive Director - [Newport Mesa Irvine Interfaith Council](#)

farrakhkhan@cityofirvine.org

Dinali Mallikage-Fernando

Founder and CEO - [Hendrick's Tea House](#)
dmallikage@gmail.com

Additional references available upon request.