

# Gunindu S. Abeysekera

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## EDUCATION

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- 2022–2027**    **Ph.D., Culture & Performance**  
University of California, Los Angeles - Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance  
“Devil” Dance to National Icon: Colonial and Nationalist Visuality 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](http://bit.ly/Anubhava)    Written Thesis: [bit.ly/GuninduAbeysekeraMATHesis](http://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

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- 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 M126 - 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 126 - Whose Monument Where (5 units)
- 2024-present**    **Graphic Designer; A/V Producer**, [Chitrasena Dance Company](#) (Sri Lanka)
- 2023-present**    **Creative Director of Media; Dramaturgy**, [SandaWaruna: Art of Dance](#) (U.S.)
- 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

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Abeysekera, Gunindu. 2026. *Returning the Gayze: A Recreation and Reflection of Lionel Wendt’s Queer Sri Lankan Photographs*. Journal of Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas. (forthcoming)

Doshi, Amrita et al. 2022. *Together We Rise: Voices from the Frontlines of South Asian Gender-Based Violence Work*. South Asian SOAR.  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62a3b1bd0acfc42f343a20a6/t/63a6318c33052041c41ff812/1671836058815/Together+We+Rise+-+Full+Report>

## ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

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- 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 & **Guest Lecturer** – *Bend it Like Beckham* and the Bildungsroman
- 24 APR 2019 **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

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- 7 NOV 2026 **History and Politics of Kandyan Dance** – Upcoming lecture-performance for the Norton Simon Museum’s forthcoming exhibition: [The Art of Kandy: Sri Lanka’s Last Kingdom](#).  
**Keynote Lecture; Dramaturg**  
**The Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA**
- 24 OCT 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**  
**Dance Studies Association’s 2026 Conference: “Speculative Choreographies: Bodies, Economies, and Movement in a World in Flux”**
- 20–21 JUN 2026 **Cursed/Consecrated** – Upcoming collaboration between an Odissi dancer from eastern India and a Kandyan and Low-Country dancer from Sri Lanka. Drawing from legends of women cast as dangerous, excessive, and cursed, this performance traces how these myths are shaped, repeated, and unsettled over time.  
**Lead Producer, Dramaturg, Drummer, and Dancer**  
**The Fountain Theatre, Los Angeles, CA**
- 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](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](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](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**

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- 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

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**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** "Anubhava 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 -** "South Asian Art Week" Art showcase, film screening, and open mic night  
**1 MAR 2018** *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"

**11 OCT 2017** "Chai Night" Discussion Series, "Diversity in South Asia"  
South Asian Student Union - UC Irvine

## AWARDS

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**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

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|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Canon 5D Mark IV</b> | Proficient | <b>Google Workspace</b> | Proficient |
| <b>Final Cut Pro X</b>  | Proficient | <b>Website Design</b>   | Proficient |
| <b>Adobe Photoshop</b>  | Adequate   | <b>Excel</b>            | Adequate   |
| <b>Apple Procreate</b>  | Adequate   | <b>Social Media</b>     | Proficient |

## LANGUAGES

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|----------------|------------|
| <b>English</b> | Fluent     |
| <b>Sinhala</b> | Fluent     |
| <b>French</b>  | Proficient |

## REFERENCES

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### Academic:

#### Aparna Sharma

Professor - Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UC Los Angeles  
PhD Dissertation Chair  
[aparnasharma@arts.ucla.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:bshroff@uci.edu)

### Artistic:

**Heshma Wignaraja**

Artistic Director, [Chitrasena Dance Company](#)  
[heshma@chitrasenadance.lk](mailto:heshma@chitrasenadance.lk)

**Ramya Harishankar**

Founder, Artistic Director - [Arpana Dance Company](#)  
Co-Founder, Former Board Member - [Ektaa Center](#)  
[ramya@danceramya.com](mailto:ramya@danceramya.com)

**Dinali Mallikage-Fernando**

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

### Community Organizing:

**Andrea Mora**

Director - [FRESH Basic Needs Hub](#)  
[andrea.g@uci.edu](mailto:andrea.g@uci.edu)

**Farrah N. Khan**

Mayor - [City of Irvine](#) (former)  
Executive Director - [Newport Mesa Irvine Interfaith Council](#)  
[farrahkhan@cityofirvine.org](mailto:farrahkhan@cityofirvine.org)

Additional references available upon request.