



PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE: THE CORKY LEE STORY to air on PBS May 13

The Center for Asian American Media (CAAM) presents this new documentary film exploring the life and career of acclaimed Chinese American photographer, Corky Lee.



ARLINGTON, VA; May 6, 2024 – PBS and the [Center for Asian American Media \(CAAM\)](#) announce the premiere of **PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE: THE CORKY LEE STORY**, a new documentary film from All is Well Pictures in Association with Ford Foundation and Scandobean Productions.

Following a theatrical release in New York and Los Angeles, the film will make its television debut on Monday, May 13, 10:00-

11:00 p.m. ET (check local listings) on PBS, PBS.org, and the PBS app.

For 50 years, Chinese American photographer Corky Lee documented the celebrations, struggles, and daily lives of Asian American Pacific Islanders with epic focus. Determined to push mainstream media to include AAPI culture in the visual record of American history, Lee produced an astonishing archive of nearly a million compelling photographs. His work takes on new urgency with the alarming rise in anti-Asian attacks during the Covid pandemic. Filmmaker Jennifer Takaki's intimate portrait reveals the triumphs and tragedies of the man behind the lens.

Corky Lee was born in 1947 in New York to Chinese immigrants who owned several laundry mats in Queens. He majored in history at Queens College and became a community organizer in Manhattan's Chinatown in the 1970s. Over the next five decades he photographed countless protests and cultural events in the Asian American Pacific Islander community. Lee's photographs documented the birth and growth of the Asian American movement for social justice, and he became known as "The Undisputed, Unofficial, Asian American Photographer Laureate." His death in 2021 at the age of 73 due to COVID-19 was mourned in the press worldwide.

"When my path unexpectedly crossed with photographer Corky Lee, I was immediately hooked. His vast knowledge of American history, mixed with his dedication to documenting the diversity of his beloved Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, and his unwavering commitment to push his images out to mainstream media made Corky one of the most interesting people I have ever met," said filmmaker Jennifer Takaki. "Corky widened the lens in which I view the world and for that, I am



forever appreciative. My hope for the film is for viewers to learn about the importance of AAPI history through Corky Lee's photography and ultimately instill confidence, pride, and a sense of belonging to all."

PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE: THE CORKY LEE STORY is presented by the [Center for Asian American Media \(CAAM\)](#) and produced by All is Well Pictures in Association with Ford Foundation and Scandobean Productions. Lily M. Fan, George Hirose, and Hillary Hirose serve as executive producers. Jennifer Takaki is producer and director. Linda Lew Woo, David Koh, and Nicole Dimiceli are producers. Linda Hattendorf is editor and Wendy Llinas is executive in charge for PBS.

PHOTOGRAPHIC JUSTICE: THE CORKY LEE STORY will premiere in May during Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, along with a new episode of **GREAT PERFORMANCES: NOW HEAR THIS** titled "**The Composer is Yoo**," premiering May 3, at 9 p.m. ET (check local listings). Throughout May, PBS will also encore other great films that shine a light on AANHPI experiences and filmmakers including **FANNY: The Right to Rock**, **ASIAN AMERICANS, RISING AGAINST ASIAN HATE**, **INDEPENDENT LENS "The Donut King"** and additional titles streaming on [PBS.org](#), the PBS app and PBS Passport.

ABOUT CORKY LEE

Corky Lee was born in 1947 in New York, the first son of Chinese immigrants who owned several laundries in Queens. He majored in history at Queens College and became a community organizer fighting for tenant rights in Manhattan's Chinatown in the 1970s. It was here that he first began to use photography as an organizing tool for social change. He was a key participant in the birth and growth of the Asian American movement for social justice and photographed innumerable protests and cultural events in the Asian American Pacific Islander community over the next five decades. A self-taught photographer known as "The Undisputed, Unofficial, Asian American Photographer Laureate," he amassed perhaps the largest known photographic archive of the rich diversity of AAPI life on the east coast. He viewed his camera as a "sword to combat indifference, injustice, and discrimination." His mission was "photographic justice" - a term he coined for his efforts to ensure that American history included accurate visual representations of AAPI life. The alarming rise in hate crimes against Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic made his quest even more urgent. His death in 2021 at the age of 73 due to COVID-19 was a tragic loss for the AAPI community and was mourned in the press worldwide.



ABOUT CAAM

[The Center for Asian American Media \(CAAM\)](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian American experiences to the broadest audience possible. We do this by funding, producing, distributing, and exhibiting works in film, television and digital media. For 40 years, CAAM has exposed audiences to new voices and communities, advancing our collective understanding of the American experience through programs specifically designed to engage the Asian American community and the public at large.

ABOUT PBS

[PBS](#), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 42 million adults on linear primetime television, more than 15 million users on PBS-owned streaming platforms, and 56 million people view PBS content on social media, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature, and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front-row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS's broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to [PBS LearningMedia](#) for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. As the number one educational media brand, [PBS KIDS](#) helps children 2-8 build critical skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality content on TV — including a PBS KIDS channel — and streaming free on [pbskids.org](#) and the [PBS KIDS Video app](#), games on the [PBS KIDS Games app](#), and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [PBS.org](#), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](#) or by following [PBS Communications on X](#) (formerly Twitter).

Media Contacts:

PBS

Stephanie Kennard, PBS, skennard@pbs.org

CAAM

Grace Hwang Lynch, ghwanglynch@caamedia.org

For images and additional up-to-date information on this and other PBS programs, visit PBS PressRoom at [pbs.org/pressroom](#).